United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Seward Ranger District | P.O. Box 390
334 Fourth Avenue
Seward, AK 99664-0390

File Code: 1920/2520
Date: February 27, 2008

Proposal for Stream and Riparian Restoration on Daves Creek at the Tern Lake Outlet

Dear Interested Citizen,

The Chugach National Forest, Seward Ranger District will be preparing an Environmental Assessment on a proposal to conduct a stream and riparian restoration project on Daves Creek, located on the Kenai Peninsula about 11 miles east of Cooper Landing, Alaska (***figure 1***). The purpose of this letter is to provide information about the project and request your comments on the proposed activities. Your comments will help guide the analysis and identify potential issues.

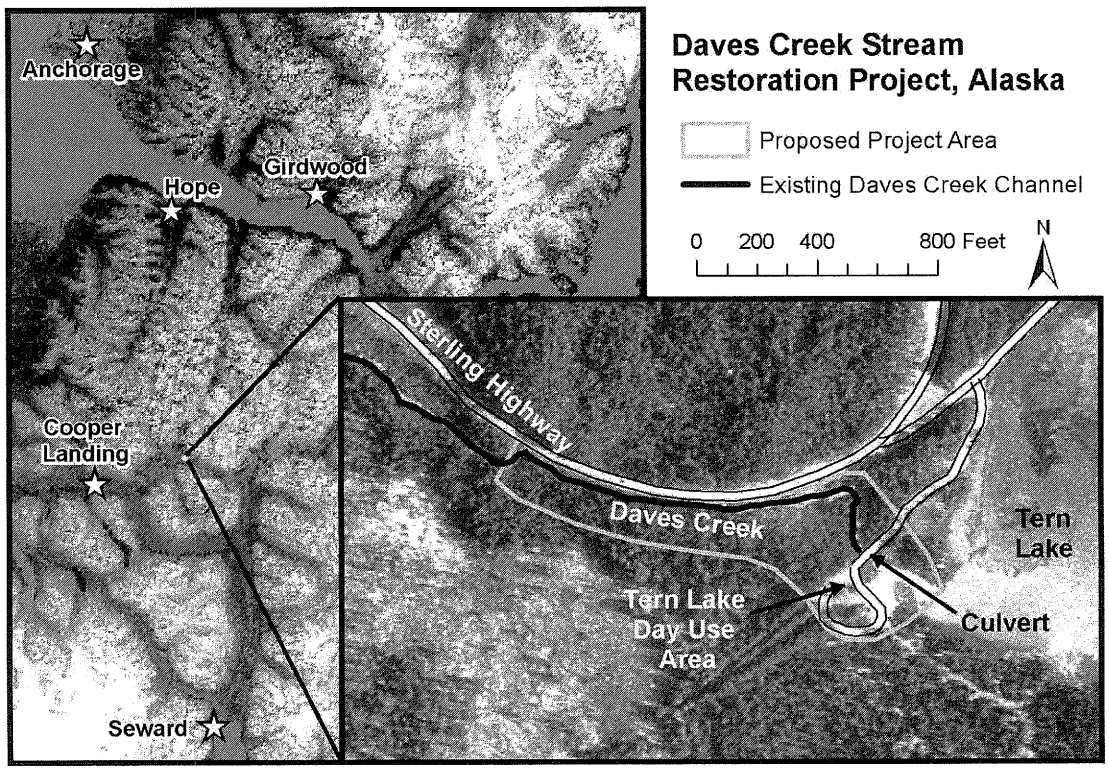

Figure 1: Location of the Daves Creek Stream Restoration Project.

The Environmental Assessment will evaluate a proposal to conduct the following activities:

- Replace the existing culvert on the outlet of Tern Lake to improve fish passage.
- Restore the stream channel, floodplain, and streamside vegetation of a ½ -mile segment of Daves Creek downstream of the Tern Lake outlet to improve fish and wildlife habitat, stream channel condition, and water quality.
- Replace the existing fish viewing platform at the Tern Lake outlet and enhance the existing trails in the immediate vicinity of the Tern Lake Day Use Area.

The proposed activities would take place within the proposed project area shown in ***figure 1***.

Please note that in March 2003, the Seward Ranger District proposed a series of new recreation developments in the Tern Lake area, including two new boardwalks with viewing platforms, a new wildlife viewing trail surrounding Tern Lake, a new lookout tower, and new parking facilities. That proposal is not being considered at this time and is not considered part of the proposal presented in this letter. The current proposal includes improvements to existing recreation developments only.

BACKGROUND

Daves Creek originates at the outlet of Tern Lake. The Daves Creek watershed is a tributary of Quartz Creek and the Kenai River. The Tern Lake / Daves Creek system provides high quality spawning and rearing habitat for Chinook, coho, and sockeye salmon, rainbow trout, Dolly Varden char, slimy sculpin, and round whitefish. The Tern Lake outlet is a premier location for viewing fish and wildlife, located at the junction of the Sterling and Seward Highways.

The proposed project will address the area around the Tern Lake outlet and the first ½-mile of Daves Creek downstream of the outlet, which have been impacted by the following influences:

- Construction of the Sterling Highway in the 1940s cut off portions of Daves Creek and moved the channel into a ditch along the south side of the highway. This straightened and simplified the stream channel, cutting off its floodplain and accelerating streamflow velocities along the highway embankment.
- A culvert over the Tern Lake outlet was constructed in the 1960s on the entrance road to the Tern Lake Campground. This culvert is currently a seasonal migration barrier to juvenile salmon, trout, and char, and affects Daves Creek's capability to pass flood flows out of Tern Lake.
- Because of the proximity of Daves Creek to the highway downstream of the culvert, highway widening projects and input of winter road sanding gravel into the stream channel continue to impact the quality of spawning and rearing habitat in Daves Creek.

Without intervention, these conditions are likely to persist for many years to come.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The Tern Lake culvert replacement accomplished in conjunction with the Daves Creek stream restoration would maximize the benefits to fish, wildlife, and the ecosystem of this area. The designs of the restoration, culvert replacement, and recreational facility improvements would be highly coordinated to provide the best aquatic organism passage and habitat conditions possible, while enhancing access and viewing of fish and wildlife for a variety of users.

Elements of the proposed project implementation include the following:

- Replacement of the existing Tern Lake outlet culvert with a suitable structure such as a bridge, in order to improve fish migration, maintain the low-water lake level, and improve conveyance of flood flows.
- Construction of up to 2000 feet of a new meandering stream channel that mimics natural conditions and includes pool-riffle sequences, floodplains, and fish habitat features such as woody debris, rearing pools, and spawning gravel.

- Re-vegetation of native plant species on constructed floodplains and stream banks along the newly constructed stream channel.
- Replacement of the existing fish viewing platform at the Tern Lake outlet.
- Accessible improvements to existing trails in the immediate vicinity of the Tern Lake outlet.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

The Forest Service is currently evaluating preliminary issues related to the impacts of the proposed project on Tern Lake, fish, wildlife, cultural resources, and recreational uses. Various alternatives for the construction of the crossing structure, the degree of channel reconstruction, and the type of recreational improvements will be considered during the analysis.

COMMENTS AND PUBLIC MEETINGS

We are interested in your thoughts and ideas on this proposed project. We would like to know of any issues that you can identify as important to consider during this analysis. Your comments will be used to identify the range of alternatives and the important issues to be addressed in the Environmental Assessment. If you wish to comment, please mail or e-mail written comments to:

Chugach National Forest
Attn: Bill MacFarlane, Daves Creek Restoration Project
3301 'C' Street, Suite 300
Anchorage, AK 99503-3998
wamacfarlane@fs.fed.us

Although comments will be accepted at any time, they will be most useful if submitted by **April 2, 2008**. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including your name and address, will be part of the public record and available for public inspection.

In addition, the Seward Ranger District will host a public meeting on **Saturday March 8, 2008 from 11:00 am until 1:00 pm at the Kenai Lake Work Center** to provide further information about this project and to provide an opportunity to make comments.

For additional information, please contact Bill MacFarlane at (907) 743-9434 or Brian Bair at (559) 920-1744. Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

Jeni Evans

JENI BRADLEY EVANS
District Ranger