



January 8, 2021

Andy Loranger, Refuge Manager
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Kenai National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 2139, Ski Hill Rd.
Soldotna, AK 99669-2139

Dear Mr. Loranger:

The State of Alaska reviewed the information provided for the Jim's Landing Boat Launch Access and Parking Improvements within the Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area in the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) as provided on the following website: <https://usfws-jims.blogspot.com/>. The following comments represent the consolidated views of state agencies.

The State appreciates the state-federal cooperation and involvement in the project development and looks forward to continued collaboration with refuge staff. The project will be valuable in support of the Refuge's purpose to provide opportunities for fish and wildlife-oriented recreation.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks (ADNR/DPOR) determined the proposed designs are consistent with the Kenai River Special Management Area Plan requirements for a boat launch in the Kenai River. The final project will require permits from ADNR/DPOR and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Any work performed in State of Alaska rights-of-way, such as modifying the connections to the Sterling Highway or Skilak Road, will require a permit from the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

The State agrees that there is a need for improvements to this facility to address several issues, including high water velocities at the boat ramp, general congestion at the site, limited parking capacity, and current pedestrian safety concerns. We look forward to reviewing the hydrology studies that are being conducted in the vicinity of the boat launch as water velocities at the boat ramp are treacherous at times. Minimizing work below ordinary high water and within wetlands is also an important consideration when choosing a final design. Overflow parking currently located on the north side of the Sterling Highway forces pedestrians to cross the highway at an uncontrolled crossing where traffic reaches 8,000 vehicles per day in the summer. Relocating the overflow parking lot to the south side of the Sterling Highway will alleviate these safety issues.

It is unclear how much notice was provided for the December 8, 2020 public meeting. Some commenters noted on the project's Facebook page that they learned of the meeting from the posting the night before the scheduled meeting. Considering the popularity of Jim's Landing, we recommend the Refuge ensure adequate public notice of future comment periods and meetings, as well as employ outreach efforts that target residents throughout southcentral Alaska. We also recommend the Refuge's website provide information about the project, associated meetings, and comment opportunities, including a link to the current blog website.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. We look forward to continued collaboration on the project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Magee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of the last name being a large, prominent "M".

Susan Magee
ANILCA Program Coordinator