



# MEETING RECORD

DATE: 2/22/2005 TIME: 3PM JOB NO.: 200936  
 RECORDED BY: Sarah Schoen CLIENT: KABATA  
 MET WITH: Jack Puff OF The Municipality of Anchorage (MOA)  
Floodplains  
 MEETING LOCATION: HDR Conference Room  
 ROUTE TO: INFORMATION X ACTIONS  
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 SUBJECT OF MEETING: Knik Arm Crossing One-on-One Agency Scoping Meeting

## MEETING ATTENDEES

Jack Puff, MOA  
 Dale Paulson, KABATA/DOT  
 Karen Brown, URS  
 Robin Reich, HDR  
 Sarah Schoen, HDR

## ITEMS DISCUSSED:

Robin Reich (HDR) gave a project overview, started the meeting by introducing the project, and describing the current task of writing the EIS. The Notice of Intent (NOI) was filed in January, and scoping is continuing from now until August. Robin said that this is the start of the official one-on-one agency scoping meetings, but agencies have been involved for a while and have helped design studies along the way. The intent is that when scoping is finished, there will be no surprises, from agencies or from KABATA. The main objective of the project is to connect Anchorage to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB). KABATA is a government agency that was brought about through legislation and funded by congress. KABATA is basically an arm of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF). KABATA is trying to "streamline" the process by meeting with agencies early so there will not be any surprises. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the agency in charge of the project and environmental document.

Robin continued by mentioning that the purpose and need (P&N) statement is still in draft form and is expected to change as scoping continues. Robin explained that the P&N has five main intents. One need is to meet the legislative intent of connecting Anchorage to the MSB by a bridge. Connecting the Port of Anchorage (POA) and Port MacKenzie would help alleviate some of the POA's congestion by allowing expansion to happen in designated industrial areas of Port MacKenzie. With the new Homeland Security concerns, a link between Elmendorf Air Force Base (EAFB) and Port MacKenzie is beneficial. This link would be an alternative escape route in addition to the Glenn and Seward Highways for the Anchorage bowl in case of an emergency. Another important need is the need for a connection to the quickly growing Mat-Su valley.

Robin then gave a description of the project constraints. The POA is an industrial area that is busy and crowded, and has restrictions on traffic flow based on security concerns. Port traffic is not permitted to mix with public (through) traffic. Government Hill poses constraints based on homeowner issues. There are quality of life issues for the neighborhood. There are constraints involved with security and airspace at the Base. There are also environmental constraints such as: the deep trench through the approximate center of Knik Arm, essential fish habitat, and beluga whale habitat. Siltation of the POA is a large issue. The amount of constraints for such a small project area makes it hard to have many alternatives. Robin showed a figure of past alignments and commented on differences in current alignments. She said that the option of having the bridge more to the south (below the ports) was discounted because it would be in the way of boats headed to the ports and fishermen. Robin acknowledged that the project will have to accommodate with the Port MacKenzie plan, which is in development now. The logical termini for the project will be a result of the traffic modeling that is in progress now. Robin mentioned previous study alternatives (1984 draft EIS) and possible tie-ins to current roads.

Jack Puff (MOA) asked if the bridge could go over to Fire Island then continue on to Port MacKenzie.

Robin said that all suggestions will be considered.

Robin talked about the studies that were going on for the project. The beluga study is being led by LGL. Land-based observation points and summer and fall boat surveys were set up to study belugas in the Arm around Knik Arm. The study found that there is a resident group of between 100 and 150 belugas who appear to stay within Knik Arm from when observations started in July until around December. There were a few groups spotted in February, but most of the whales do not appear to have been in Arm since the middle of December. On a typical day the belugas ride the tide up the Arm and go out with the tide to around Eagle Bay. It is unknown why the belugas left after December. LGL also studied beluga acoustics, but encountered some difficulties.

Robin continued that there was a fisheries study in 1983 for the previous draft EIS for this project. The study was led by Jon Houghton, who is leading the fisheries study for the current EIS. Jon is using similar sample sites and techniques as were used in 1983. There were juvenile and adult salmon and longfin smelt caught between July and November (before the studies were aborted due to ice). More marine species were caught later in the year. A goal is to examine the connection between belugas and fish. A years worth of data will be collected. Orson Smith, a professor at UAA, conducted a study on the hydrology/oceanography of Knik Arm. The fisheries and beluga studies will be available for review in the next week; the agencies will receive the reports via disk.

Robin talked about possible alignments, structures, and the possibility of fill requirements. Cost and depth will be big factors in determining whether to build structure or fill. For anything deeper than about 40 feet structure and fill cost about the same amount.

Robin said that there will be a formal agency scoping meeting on March 29<sup>th</sup>.

Jack said that military lands are not within the MOA jurisdiction. Jack said that he is concerned about fill affecting sedimentation at the Port of Anchorage. He said that the Port road and Ship Creek area are within floodplains (Zone A). The area has been restudied by the Corps, but that report is not final. However, Jack regulates floodplains in the area using the new information. If the project is above the floodplain, there will be no influence on the tide level and he would not regulate. Ship Creek is tidal up to the dam (Zone A), but the tidal influence has not been studied.

Robin noted that the draft document is scheduled to come out in concurrence with the permit applications.

Jack said that involvement below elevation 19 feet would require filling out a floodplain application. If activity is proposed for area below 19 feet, hydrologists would need to report what they think would happen to the base flood elevation (BFE) based on the project. He does not expect a rise in the BFE in floodplains of Knik Arm. Ship Creek floodplains could be different; the BFE could rise if fill is placed in the floodplain (it will be up to hydrologist to make the call).

Robin asked if Jack had any other special concerns.

Jack said he is concerned with water quality and runoff from roads.

Dale asked if there had been any studies done.

Jack replied that there have not been any studies done on water quality and runoff from roads in the area.

Jack asked if Elmendorf will allow access across the base.

Robin said that we're talking to them. The base is under tighter security after 9/11 though.

Jack asked if we have talked to Ken Hudson (MSB floodplain coordinator). Robin confirmed that we have.

Karen Brown (URS) wondered if there were any Port MacKenzie restrictions right now. Jack said he did not think so.

Jack said that the Corps of Engineers (COE) will regulate floodplain management on Base (including preventing erosion).