

October 24, 2005

Edrie Vinson
Environmental Project Manager
Federal Highway Administration
P.O. Box 21648
Juneau, Alaska 99802

Re: Knik Arm Bridge

Dear Edrie Vinson,

Knik Tribal Council is the governing body for the federally recognized Knik Tribe, who's Dena'ina and Athabascan descendants have inhabited Alaska's Matanuska-Susitna Valley since the end of the last Ice Age. The Council provides education and training, health, social and housing services to more than 5,000 Alaska Native residents of the Matanuska Susitna Borough. The Council's mission is:

To promote successful self-determination and cultural awareness for our members through better living conditions, education, wellness and hard work.

Historically, growth and development in south central Alaska have gravely impacted Knik Tribe's cultural resources, traditional sites, prosperity and wellness. The loss of Tak'at fish camp to U.S. military expansion and restriction of hunting and fishing opportunities in the region are prime examples of these impacts. Undeniably, construction of the proposed Knik Arm Bridge could potentially impact the Tribe in a similarly negative manner, as population growth and commercial development further encroach on the Tribe's traditional areas and practices.

The Tribe is concerned for the places near the proposed Knik Arm Bridge site that embody the history and culture of our people - fish and hunting camps, buildings, trails, traditional use areas, etc. A Historic Preservation Committee that will be endorsed by Knik Tribal Council and Knikatu Board of Directors (Knik ANCSA Village Corporation) as their representative has been formed, consisting of five Tribal base members, in an attempt to involve the Tribe in the development decisions that may dramatically affect the destiny of our people and culture.

On behalf of the Tribal membership, Knik Tribal Council is sincerely grateful for the opportunity provided by the federal highway administration for us to address these problems working with local, state and federal officials in a collaborative, constructive environment. We look forward to continued dialogue and assistance from your office as the Knik Arm Bridge project moves forward.

Cordially,

Jack Alcorn
Executive Director