

Sterling Highway MP 45–60 Project

Summary of Measures to Minimize Harm (Mitigation)



The Record of Decision signed in 2018 included Section III, Measures to Minimize Harm. Following is a brief summary of the 28 pages of mitigation measures.

General/Access: The public will be notified of construction activity/lane closures. Access will be maintained to businesses and recreational facilities. Construction staging and parking would not occur at recreation facilities in summer and would require concurrence of the land manager.

Recreation:

- » A pedestrian underpass would be established for Art Anderson Slaughter Gulch Trail. The Bean Creek Trail would be rerouted westward to pass under the Juneau Creek bridge.
- » Pullouts would be retained/re-created in Kenai National Wildlife Refuge at MP 55.6 and 57.2.
- » Recreational parking would be managed by posting enforceable No Parking on Shoulder signs where necessary.
- » The Juneau Creek bridge would span over the Resurrection Pass Trail. The trail would remain open for use during construction (with detour). A new Forest Service trailhead would be built west of the bridge, with connecting trails on the bridge between the Bean Creek Trail and Resurrection Pass Trail. A pullout for access to the trails would be established east of the bridge and would be plowed by DOT&PF.
- » Pedestrian and horse trails from the trailhead and an overlook of Juneau Creek Falls would be established.
- » To compensate for impacts to the long-distance nature of the Resurrection Pass Trail, DOT&PF would construct a pedestrian connection (bridges) to enhance the long-distance nature of the Iditarod Trail—Southern Trek at the Snow River channels upstream of Kenai Lake.

Historic and Archaeological Preservation:

A Programmatic Agreement (PA) was signed and is in effect with ongoing consultation requirements. The PA requires:

- » Plans for data recovery at archaeological sites known or discovered during construction.
- » A professional publication compiling past and current research on the Sqilantnu Archaeological District, and a public education booklet on the District for a general audience.
- » A nomination of the Sqilantnu Archaeological District for the National Register of Historic Places.
- » Documentation of the historic Bean Creek Trail, and maintenance of public access during construction; trail rerouting where necessary; and an interpretive display at the trailhead.
- » Interpretive signs within the Sqilantnu Archaeological District.
- » Compilation of existing Kenaitze Indian Tribe oral histories into digital format.

Vegetation:

DOT&PF will consult with public land managers during final design to develop a comprehensive vegetation plan addressing clearing and replanting, treatment of invasive species, and multiple other topics. DOT&PF will negotiate an agreement to provide funding to the USFWS and Forest Service for post-construction monitoring and control of invasive species.

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Fish and Wildlife:

- » Fish bearing streams will be protected with construction timing and new or replacement culverts designed for fish passage.
- » DOT&PF is monitoring wildlife movements with many remote cameras and will fund post-construction monitoring.
- » Four large wildlife underpasses and one vegetated wildlife overpass of the highway (the first wildlife overpass in Alaska) will be constructed, plus other underpasses for smaller animals.
- » Bear-awareness signs will be created and posted at pullouts.
- » An eagle nest survey will be conducted and any active nests protected during construction.

Water and Wetlands:

DOT&PF has committed to building the new bridge over Juneau Creek without access into the base of the canyon. Among many best management practices, the ROD includes:

- » Keeping tracked or wheeled equipment out of the Kenai River.
- » Stabilizing exposed earthwork during construction, protecting vegetation to the extent possible, and revegetating exposed or damaged areas following construction.
- » Ensuring that any imported rock material for placement in and along the Kenai River was clean
- » Fueling and servicing equipment only at distances of more than 100 feet from wetlands and waters, except for low-mobility equipment such as pile drivers, and specifying detailed fueling procedures and spill contingency plans.

- » Retaining adequate spill containment and cleanup equipment and supplies on site.
- » Avoiding use of preservatives or chemicals that could pollute the Kenai River.

DOT&PF will consult with KNWR and Chugach National Forest regarding ways to minimize the project footprint in sensitive habitats as part of the final design. As compensation for wetland impacts, DOT&PF is committed to paying a fee to a qualified conservation organization to fund appropriate wetland conservation or enhancement activity.

Construction Noise:

Abatement measures may include scheduling pile driving or blasting to avoid periods of noise annoyance or adverse impacts to fish and wildlife, routing trucks and heavy equipment entering and exiting the project site away from residential areas to the extent practicable, and maintaining muffler systems on construction equipment. The public will be notified about the hours of operation for blasting and pile driving. Blasting and pile driving would be limited to typical waking hours (e.g., 8 am–8 pm). When no alternatives to conducting construction activities during nights, weekends, or holidays exist, DOT&PF would involve the public in developing the timing of such activities.

Visual:

Consultation will be undertaken with the Forest Service during design regarding Juneau Creek Bridge aesthetics. Intersection lighting would be the minimum necessary and fixtures would be shielded to reduce any greater than necessary visual impact. The Vegetation Plan would address v