

**From:** [Myers, Sarah E E \(DFG\)](#)  
**To:** [William A. Klatt](#)  
**Cc:** [Peltier, Tim C \(DFG\)](#); [Ivey, Samuel S \(DFG\)](#); [Dubour, Adam J \(DFG\)](#)  
**Subject:** RE: MEA Routing Study - Fish & Game Review  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 20, 2021 11:01:00 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Hi Will,

I have sent a request for comments to the area wildlife biologist Tim Peltier, area sport fish biologist Sam Ivey, and Adam Dubour from Access Defense. I have received the following comments:

Sport Fish:

I do have some concerns over routes that would cross the Little Susitna River in currently undeveloped areas, especially if a route would create new access points to the upper river or trails that would cut across upland tributaries draining into the river. Routes that potentially could impact salmon habitat either through development of the route or by eventual ATV usage (river and tributary crossings) should be avoided, especially if alternative routes along existing roads are options. The Little Susitna River is major producer of Chinook, coho, chum, sockeye and pink salmon and the river supports approximately 30,000 angling days of sport fishing effort in its lower reaches. About 10,000 coho salmon are harvested annually. Chinook salmon have been in low abundance since 2007; the need to preserve habitat associated with spawning and rearing is of high importance. Route E G F, from west to east, encompasses an area that past aerial surveys dating back to 1979 have shown to be the main spawning grounds for Chinook salmon. The creation of a crossing at the east and west ends of this route could impact Chinook spawning habitat and increase illegal poaching of salmon if new access points were created. The Little Susitna River is closed to all salmon fishing upstream of the parks highway. Poaching on spawning salmon is already an issue at other crossings in the vicinity of this project. There are numerous small tributaries draining into the Little Susitna that the E F G route would cut across on its way west through upland terrain and then south to Church Road. New trails may lead to future ATV use where tributary crossings may impact habitat associated with downstream salmon production.

Wildlife:

Tim Peltier- I don't think I could put it better than Sam has. I too have concerns about the most northern route. I think that it would open up the area to more ATV use, which in itself may not be a bad thing, but they also mention that the area would cross wetlands, and we have seen plenty of damage from ATVs in wetlands. I think that in terms of impacting wildlife, sticking to routes that go along existing road corridors would have less of an impact, and if the vegetation is kept down, might actually decrease the chances for moose vehicle collisions along the proposed routes. We should encourage the MEA to stay clear of undeveloped areas. It is not that a power line in an undeveloped area would alter wildlife movement, but if there was a lot of human activity in these areas as a result of the clearing that may. In addition, while a lot of the northern route bisects an area where trails already exist, it may also go through some of the non-motorized portion of the Hatcher Pass area. Above ground powerlines may also be a migratory bird hazard, but I guess that's for the feds to address.

Access Defense:

I looked at this but I don't see any legal public access issues except to note that the utility lines would cross multiple section line easements that would remain valid for public access purposes.

Habitat:

In regards to comments from the Habitat Section, a fish habitat permit may be required for activities associated with the bed or banks of fish bearing water bodies. In addition, in selecting routes, routes that minimize opening up unauthorized off-road vehicle (ORV) access on anadromous water bodies is preferable. We recognize that this can be difficult to accommodate however, once a route starts and knowledge spreads, unauthorized ORV use can denude the banks of vegetation, degrade the banks, widen the stream channel, and depending on the location, ORVs may drive through spawning areas and increased turbidity can entomb and kill eggs in the gravel downstream. I'm not sure what can be done on MEA's end to prevent unauthorized ORV use in the utility corridor but preventative measures are appreciated.

Sincerely,

**Sarah E. E. (Wilber) Myers**

Habitat Biologist IV, Mat-Su Area Manager

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[\\*ADF&G Habitat Section Permits Link\\*](#)

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**From:** William A. Klatt <William.Klatt@mea.coop>

**Sent:** Wednesday, September 15, 2021 2:59 PM

**To:** Myers, Sarah E E (DFG) <sarah.myers@alaska.gov>

**Cc:** Jon D. Sinclair <jon.sinclair@mea.coop>; Jennifer I. Castro <Jennifer.Castro@mea.coop>

**Subject:** MEA Routing Study - Fish & Game Review

Hi Sarah,

Thanks for speaking with me today. As a follow up to our conversation, here is a link to more information regarding MEA's study for routing a new transmission line and siting two new substations: <https://www.mea.coop/major-projects/fishhook-to-pittman-transmission-line-and-substation-siting-study>.

We received feedback from residents that they would like us to contact Fish & Game concerning potential impacts of a transmission line to fish habitat & spawning activities, moose, birds (such as

cranes), etc. This has mostly been a concern with residents along the northern routes that go through relatively undeveloped areas or near wetlands. It seems that much of their concern is not directly relating to the lines themselves, but rather the removal of trees and cleared easements that encourage trespass. We've heard a lot about potential ATV trespass for hunting, fishing, and recreation that could cause disturbance of creeks, wildlife, habitat, and to livestock such as Elk. We've considered ways to limit access to easements, primarily through barricades and signage, since many are through private property or along section line easements. Could you weigh in on these routes and let us know if you have concerns and/or ways to reduce impact.

Our Public Open House is coming up on September 29<sup>th</sup> from 6-8:30pm which would be a good opportunity to learn more about the project, or we can schedule a Zoom meeting to provide more information to Fish & Game. I'm also more than happy to answer any questions and can be the MEA contact for any groups involved within Fish & Game.

Thanks again,  
Will Klatt, P.E.  
Site Engineer

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