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14 July 1965

Dr. Howard D. Sauman, M.D.
Chairman, Sportsmen's Advisory Council
c/o White Pass & Yukon Hospital
Box 357
Skagway, Alaska

Dear Dr. Sauman:

We appreciate the interest and personal attention you have given to the public health aspects of the proposed sport fishing development of Lower Dewey Lake. I am delighted to learn of the advance planning loan for water system engineering being requested by the city from the Housing and Home Finance Agency. Basic improvement in the Skagway water supply and distribution system has been a long-standing goal of this Department.

The IHFA normally requests our comments on loan applications from Alaskan communities, and we will strongly endorse the need for major improvements in the Skagway water system.

However, we cannot grant approval for recreational development of a public water supply reservoir and its watershed, with the accompanying great increase in pollution and disease transmission hazards. This is particularly unwise in a locality where simple chlorination is the only available water treatment. To grant such approval, without concurrent positive steps being taken by the city to eliminate Lower Dewey Lake as the normal source of domestic supply would be to contradict well-established policies of this Department, the U. S. Public Health Service, and the American Public Health Association.

In view of the very encouraging interest in water system improvements demonstrated by the city of Skagway, we offer the following comments:

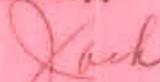
- (1) From discussing this proposal with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, we understand that, following fish poisoning and restocking (which may take four to six weeks, due to residual toxicity of the rotenone), it will be a minimum of two years before satisfactory fishing will be possible, and three years before the fish reach sufficient size to provide good fishing. The point is that the development of the Lower Dewey Lake sport fish resources is a process that will take several years, and therefore one on which a hurried decision need not be made, particularly when the approval requested will affect the public health environment of all the people in Skagway, fishermen and non-fishermen alike.

- (2) By the same token, due to the time involved in growth of the desirable fish species, we certainly would not require that water system modifications be actually under construction, before granting our approval for the reservoir fish poisoning. When the city of Skagway has obtained the necessary engineering plans and specifications for system improvements, utilizing a suitable source other than Lower Dewey Lake, and when reasonable evidence is presented that the system will be constructed as designed within the foreseeable future, we will be happy to grant our approval to the poisoning and subsequent recreational development of the reservoir area.

We are in complete accord with the desire of the city and the Sportsmen's Council to improve local recreation and boost the economy through expanded tourist attractions, so long as such projects comply with reasonable, widely-accepted public health standards.

Again, many thanks for your cooperation and assistance in this matter, and in working with the City Council on the HHFA loan application.

Sincerely,



Jack K. Lesh, M.D., M.P.H.
Regional Health Officer

JKL:vr

cc: Mr. Malcolm Moe
Mayor, City of Skagway

Mr. Roger D. Wadman
Dept. of Fish & Game

