MEMORANDUM State of Alaska

TO: Tom Kron
Area Biologist
Division of F.R.E.D.

DATE: April 15, 1980

FILE NO:

TELEPHONE NO: (907) 465-4270

SUBJECT: Turner Lake

RECEIVED APR 28 1980 ADF&G SITKA

FROM: Donald M. Stewart
Regional Supervisor
Division of Sport Fish

In preparing our response to the United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters request concerning the subject matter we feel it pertinent to include as much background information on Turner Lake as possible. We feel this background information should be included in the reply signed by the Commissioner.

As early as 1961 the Department recommended that Turner Lake be designated a "high-quality recreational area". A "high-quality recreational fishing area" is defined by our region as "a watershed of outstanding natural aesthetic beauty in a wilderness setting with fishing characteristics that add up to an exceptional angling experience."

The rational and criteria used for developing this definition and designating specific waters in Southeast Alaska are as follows:

1) There is and will be a future need for quality recreational fishing waters in Southeast Alaska.
2) Logging is rapidly encroaching on quality fishing areas. (out of the twenty systems designated as "high-quality areas" approximately one-half have been logged to one degree or another).
3) Native wild fish populations should be maintained for future generations to enjoy.
4) Some watersheds should be kept in pristine conditions for future scientific study ie., population dynamics, disease etc.
5) The genetic integrity of fish in the wild state should be maintained in some watersheds.

Based on the above our policy in the management of fish resources in these quality fishing waters is the preservation and maintenance of the natural ecosystems processes.

In 1972 the Department of Fish and Game under Joseph R. Blum, Chief, Habitat Section signature, recommended to Vincent N. Olson, Forest Supervisor, North Tongass National Forest that Turner Lake be studied for classification as a dispersed recreational area in the Tongass Multiple Use Plan under Federal Regulation U-3(a), (attachment 1). Which read in part "(a) Areas which should be managed principally for recreation use substantially in their natural condition . . . ".

Again in 1972, Bob Armstrong gave a verbal presentation for the Department to the Seaton Congressional Committee in Anchorage concerning the

impacts of logging on fisheries resources and identified the need for "a select number of our outstanding fishing areas should be left in their natural state" (attachment 2).

In January of 1975 Governor Hammond gave a presentation to the American Fisheries Society in Juneau (attachment 3) that addressed the steps we should take to protect and utilize the full potential of Alaska's fishery resources. In step 5 pages 11 and 12 of the Governor's presentation he made it abundantly clear that we should "begin now to identify, classify and protect our outstanding recreational fishing waters throughout Alaska". On page 13 he points out that the Department has selected several outstanding fishing waters in Southeast Alaska that should be classified as dispersed recreation areas.

The point in citing the above examples is that there has been, is now, and will be a future need for a diversified management program that considers all types of recreational anglers and that designating a specific number of high-quality recreational fishing areas in Southeast Alaska is a part of our management program and philosophy that answers that particular demand. Further, the need for these high-quality recreational fishing areas has been recognized by the State Administration, Department of Fish and Game and Federal agencies, not just the Regional Sport Fish Division and Turner Lake has been designated a high-quality recreational fishing area by the Department and has been assigned this status in the Tongass Land Use Management Plan.

On December 6, 1977, Governor Hammond wrote John A. Sandor, Regional Forester with copies to the Honorable Ted Stevens, Mike Gravel, Don Young, Robert L. Leggett and John F. Seiberling regarding Potential Sites for Salmon Enhancement in Southeast Alaska (attachment 4) and attached a report "Salmon Enhancement in Southeast Alaska" prepared by Daniel M. Bishop, consultant, Environaid, for the two Southeast Alaskan Regional Aquaculture Associations. This document considered six rehabilitation or enhancement technologies. Turner Lake was considered as a potential site among the many sites reviewed and was excluded from consideration because of the difficult commercial harvest and management problems, having no potential and/or development not being consistent with the philosophy and management strategy for high-quality recreational fishing areas.

In 1979 the F.R.E.D. Division asked our Division to review six fish ladder sites in Southeastern that were being considered for inclusion in the 1980 Bond Issue. Turner Lake was one of the systems being considered and we opposed the recommendation based on our management strategy for high-quality recreational fishing areas (attachment 5).

Rupe Andrews followed up with a request to Deputy Commissioner, Don Collingsworth that a meeting be held to discuss the issue (attachment 6). A meeting was held in late April with Collingsworth, Andrews, Roys and I and the decision was made that Turner Lake would not be

included in the 1980 Bond Issue for laddering based on information I provided concerning Turner as a high-quality recreational fishing area.

The following information was brought up at the meeting in addition to our arguments for high-quality recreational areas.

1) Turner lake is very popular with recreationalists in that cabin use according to the U.S.F.S. has increased from 964 visitor days in 1970 to 2,100 visitor days in 1978.

2) Turner Lake has unique populations of trophy size cutthroat trout as well as Dolly Varden and kokanee populations.

3) A trip to Turner Lake is relatively inexpensive for locals as well as visitors who want a unique high-quality fishing experience.

4) A success of producing additional sockeye in this area and increased commercial fishing effort could have detrimental impacts on wild sockeye and chinook stocks. As an example in 1974 the gillnet fleet operated during the week of June 16 (Stat week 25) and incidentally captured 2,608 chinook salmon of which 1,387 were mature adult spawners. In light of present commercial and sport fish stringent regulations in the area this type of catch would be intolerable to management biologists and user groups alike.

5) It would be extremely difficuly for management to segregate wild stocks from artificial stocks in the day to day management of the fishery.

6) The outlet is extremely popular for sport fishing pink salmon and any development in this area would detract from the experience.

In addition to our above thoughts there is evidence to indicate that our non-anadromous systems are those that are producing our trophy size cutthroat (Schmidt, A. 1978). In anadromous systems cutthroat are not as available to the angler during the summer months, they tend to migrate out of the systems in May and return in September. (Armstrong, R. H. 1971).

In summation Tom, our Region is opposed to any activity that is not consistent with our philopophies and management strategies for high-quality recreational fishing areas. Turner Lake is a designated high-quality area and at this point in time any enhancement or rehabilitation effort would detract from the unique angling experience we are attempting to provide the anglers in Southeast Alaska.

cc: Dick Marriott
Ed Jones
Don Siedelman
Art Schmidt ✓
Attachments

Dave Cantillon
Bob Wilbur
Rupert Andrews
Lou Bandirola
Mark Warner

Literature Cited

Armstrong, R. H. 1971. Age, Food and Migration of Sea-run Cutthroat Trout, at Eva Lake, Southeastern Alaska Trans. Amer. Fish. Soc. Vol. 100, No. 2. pp. 302-306.

Schmidt, A. 1978. Inventory and Cataloging. High-Quality Fisheries Waters in Southeast Alaska. Annual Performance Report. Federal Aid in Fish Restoration. Study G-I-R. Vo. 19. 124 pp.