

# STATE OF ALASKA

## THE LEGISLATURE

1987

Source

SCS CSHJR 29(Res)

Legislative  
Resolve No.

25



Relating to the Brooks River Falls fish ladder.

### BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS the National Park Service has recently stated that it will remove the fish ladder at Brooks Falls on the Brooks River in Katmai National Park; and

WHEREAS the fish ladder was installed at the falls in 1949 in response to the concerns of fisheries biologists who had recognized as early as the 1920's that a ladder was necessary to allow more sockeye salmon to migrate above the falls, and that it would allow pink, coho, and chum salmon access to the area above the falls; and

WHEREAS the partially successful attempt to construct a bypass of the falls in 1920 and the later construction of the present fish ladder were done with the knowledge and support of the appropriate national fisheries management and National Park Service personnel; and

WHEREAS on-site observers estimate that in recent years approximately one-half of the sockeye salmon that spawn above the falls use the fish ladder to get there; and

WHEREAS the salmon using the ladder annually account for an estimated \$134,000 of ex-vessel value to the Bristol Bay sockeye salmon fishery; and

WHEREAS the anticipated annual maintenance costs for the fish ladder are estimated to be less than one percent of the ex-vessel value; and

WHEREAS sockeye salmon are the economic mainstay of the Bristol Bay fishing industry and the major source of income for

the residents of the Bristol Bay region; and

WHEREAS the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and National Marine Fisheries Service biologists who have firsthand knowledge of the Brooks River system feel that the removal of the ladder will ultimately prove detrimental to the fishery resources of the river; and

WHEREAS the National Park Service is removing the fish ladder on the basis that the ladder

(1) is insignificant to the production of sockeye salmon;

(2) is inconsistent with National Park Service management objectives and federal mandates;

(3) allows exotic species and races of fish to enter the upper Brooks River ecosystem; and

(4) causes bank erosion and degrades the scenic quality of the Brooks River Falls; and

WHEREAS the State of Alaska has refuted each of these points and has presented its evidence and arguments to the Department of the Interior to no avail; and

WHEREAS fisheries biologists of the State of Alaska and the National Marine Fisheries Service believe that the ladder makes a significant contribution to sockeye salmon production, and they presented the scientific data to back up that belief; and

WHEREAS the State of Alaska has found no provisions in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act or in the legislative history of that Act that compel the National Park Service to remove the fish ladder; and

WHEREAS a careful review of historic species lists for fish, wildlife, and aquatic organisms upstream and downstream of the ladder does not provide an indication that exotic or nonindigenous species, disease vectors, or gene pools have entered the upper Brooks River drainage by way of the ladder; and

WHEREAS on-site inspection of the area by State of Alaska personnel has found no riverbank erosion caused by or in the area of the fish ladder; and

WHEREAS most people who visit the falls are not even aware that the ladder exists because of the heavy brush and vegetation that have grown around the ladder since 1949; and

WHEREAS it seems inconsistent for the National Park Service to say that the ladder is incompatible with the wilderness qualities of Katmai National Park when the service itself installed a viewer platform by the falls, accessed by a well traveled trail from a commercial lodge and the National Park Service headquarters, and from which there is a road into the heart of the beautiful Valley of 10,000 Smokes;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that the Secretary of the Interior is respectfully requested to intervene in the decision of the National Park Service to remove the Brooks

River Falls fish ladder in Katmai National Park and reverse that decision in the best interests of an important commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishery and the regional salmon-based ecosystem; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Interior is respectfully requested to direct the National Park Service to remove the boards that are blocking the outlet to the ladder and to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding that will allow the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to maintain and operate the ladder in a manner consistent with its historical use and with current uses of the area.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Ronald Reagan, President of the United States; to the Honorable Donald P. Hodel, Secretary of the Interior; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.