Sand Trail Parking Area Project Proposal

1. Purpose & Need

The project will provide safe public parking for access to National Forest Lands utilizing Sand Trail. The route is a maintained motorized trail, approximately 15 feet wide. The trail is extremely important for many different user groups, providing recreation and subsistence access to the Chugach National Forest. Currently, there is no safe public parking area at the start of the trail at mile 9.5 of the Copper River Highway. This is problematic because the nearest safe area to park vehicles is over two miles away and forces users to illegally travel on the Copper River Highway, contending with vehicles traveling 55 mph or faster. Instead, ATV users illegally access the National Forest for recreational purposes at mile 7.0 of the Copper River Highway via the “golf course route”, crossing and disturbing critical salmon spawning and rearing habitat in the Ibeck Creek drainage in the process. By providing a safe area for parking vehicles and trailers at the trailhead of Sand Trail, this project will greatly relieve the current problems caused by ATV users and provide legal public access to National Forest Lands.

2. Proposed Action

This project will build an approximately 60’X 140’ parking area, large enough to accommodate 8 trucks with ATV trailers. The road prism of the Copper River Highway is elevated about 12 feet above the wetlands of the Copper River Delta. The shoulder of the Copper River Highway is abrupt and steeply sloped into the marsh below. The parking area will be built at MP 9.45 of the Copper River Highway on the north side of the road beginning at the west end of a 300-foot bridge that crosses a channel of the Scott River. The project would add to the existing fill of the highway staying within the road Right of Way. Site development will be accomplished with heavy equipment dumping fill and riprap into the area starting at the highway shoulder. The fill area will be capped with 6 inches of D-1 gravel, then paved, and painted with the appropriate lane designations. If paving is not an option, chip seal with survey inserts designating parking lanes may be feasible. Marked parking lanes are required to ensure efficient and complete utilization of the parking area.

3. Issues

The most pressing issues associated with the project are providing safe public parking, eliminating recreational ATV trespass, provide legal access to National Forest Lands, and reduce negative impacts to salmon on the Ibeck Creek drainage by eliminating unnecessary ATV stream crossings.