



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
ALASKA ROAD COMMISSION
JUNEAU, ALASKA

Mr. Lowell M. Puckett
Regional Administrator
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
Anchorage, Alaska

December 5, 1949

Dear Mr. Puckett:

This is in reply to your letters to this office of September 7, September 19, and October 5, 1949, and we also refer incidentally to your letter of September 9, 1949, to Mr. Kenneth J. Kadow, Director, Alaska Field Staff, a copy of which was furnished to our office. The matters referred to in your letters have been under close study for the past several weeks, and it is realized that you are governed by regulations which we must endeavor to meet. It must be recognized that these regulations impose a considerable burden upon the Alaska Road Commission and will serve to increase the cost of our work. In the interest of economy and efficiency of road construction, it is desirable to simplify as far as possible the procedures required.

On November 29th, 1949, a conference was held between you and our engineering personnel in Juneau at which time some of the matters covered in your letters were discussed in the light of our studies. The present letter is an effort to cover our conclusions at this conference.

Rights-of-way; Withdrawals or Easements

There is enclosed herewith a copy of a letter we have written to Mr. James P. Davis, Director, Division of Territories & Island Possessions, calling attention to apparent inconsistency between Public Land Order No. 601 and the act of July 24, 1947 (Pub. Law 229, 80th Cong., 1st Session, 48 U.S.C., 1946 Ed., Supp. 1, 321D). Public Law 229 was passed at the request of the Department of the Interior in order to simplify the acquisition of rights-of-way through lands upon which entry had been made. It is our contention that this Law was intended to avoid the difficulty of determining for each entry or patent the exact location of the road. Public Land Order No. 601, on the other hand, calls for withdrawals, and unless present regulations governing withdrawals can be broadened to permit the passage of a road through land upon which entry has been made without invalidating the entry, the purpose of Public Law 229 is defeated. We will support strongly any action you may take to correct this situation.

Maps of Road Locations

The Alaska Road Commission does not have the necessary engineering and drafting staff available at the present time to reduce our maps of

new road locations in all cases to a scale of 1,000 to 2,000 feet to the inch. On the other hand, maps on the scale of 400 feet to the inch are standard for construction purposes and can readily be furnished. At the conference it was suggested that you consider accepting maps on the scale of 400 feet to the inch and let us know the minimum number of sets you will require. If you will inform us further about this, we will endeavor to comply and we will also advise your office in each case of the width of right-of-way applicable to each particular road in question. Maps of existing roads not hitherto mapped will be provided as rapidly as they can be surveyed, and we will use the 1,000 feet to the inch scale for such maps. A party will start on this in the spring, and our District Engineer in Anchorage is being directed to contact you regarding the most urgent locations.

Use of Gravel

The Alaska Road Commission is in entire agreement with your office that gravel permits are sufficient for construction purposes and that gravel withdrawals should only be sought where a particular pit is desired for permanent maintenance purposes. We will endeavor to see that our applications for gravel permits and withdrawals are kept current. A special case arises where the gravel must be obtained from the beds of navigable streams. Your letter of October 5, 1949, indicates the legal difficulties involved in this case. A copy of our letter of December 1, 1949, to Mr. James P. Davis, Director, Division of Territories & Island Possessions, Department of the Interior, is enclosed, wherein we request Federal legislation intended to permit the use of gravel from navigable streams in Alaska for road purposes. It should be noted that in certain places the beds of navigable streams are our only practicable source of such gravel.

Arrangement and Screening of Gravel Pits

It is realized that much can be done to improve our practices in this regard. An effort will be made to conform to the desires of your office and our District Engineers will be informed of the action by them necessary for this purpose. We agree with your remarks about the limitation of size of gravel pits. Matters of arrangement with reference to the road must be considered in the light of economy, as well as beauty; however, we will do what we can in this regard.

Timber

It appears that most of the area in which roads are built by the Alaska Road Commission are not covered with timber which actually has a merchantable value. Therefore, it was suggested at the conference that the Bureau of Land Management restrict its attention to timber that is of a size too heavy to be handled with a bulldozer. If the principle could be established that timber which is small enough to be cleared by a bulldozer is not considered "merchantable," then the problem would be greatly simplified, both for your office and for ours. It is requested, therefore, that you consider the adoption of this policy and advise us accord-

ingly. We will then undertake to follow carefully your regulations for the disposal and use of merchantable timber and hope you will leave us a free hand in the disposal of the smaller timber, not coming within merchantable classification. Here again, considerations of appearance conflict in some cases with considerations of economy. We are fully cognizant with both requirements and will endeavor to improve our practices, insofar as this can be accomplished without greatly increasing costs.

Fire Hazards

With regard to fire hazards it has been our experience in the past that burning of cut timber was sometimes the cause of forest fires. For this reason, and for reasons of economy, it is not considered desirable in all cases to burn the timber cleared from land necessary for road construction. In this case also, we will endeavor to improve our practices so as to avoid objectionable appearance.

I hope that the policies enunciated in this letter will go far toward removing causes of complaint which your Bureau has had in the past against the Alaska Road Commission. I desire, however, to emphasize the fact that even the minimum compliance with the regulations as set forth in your letters will very measurably increase our road construction costs and thereby decrease the amount of road that can be constructed with the funds available to us. Also, it may be necessary to assign an employee or employees to the full time duty of interpreting and complying with your regulations and of making the necessary follow up to insure that our District offices also conform to these requirements. The total cost of this cannot be accurately estimated at this time.

Sincerely yours,

John R. Noyes
Commissioner of
Roads for Alaska

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