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Submitted Via Electronic Submission

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Burke Wick
Cooper Lake Relicensing Project Manager
Chugach Electric Association, Inc.
5601 Minnesota Drive
P.O. Box 196300
Anchorage, AK 99519-6300

RE: Reconnaissance of Cooper Creek for Whitewater Boating

Dear Burke:

American Whitewater is highly appreciative of Chugach Electric's efforts to conduct a field reconnaissance for Cooper Creek below the dam on June 26, 2003. The field reconnaissance provided valuable objective information necessary in this relicensing proceeding for determining whitewater opportunities in the bypassed reach below Cooper Lake dam. This field study was a necessary component in the relicense process to document the whitewater resources affected by the project.

Cooper Creek, particularly below the confluence with Stetson offers some interesting Class III whitewater opportunities. According to comments made during the closeout focus group discussion several individuals stated that there are few Class III opportunities for paddlers in the Kenai. Nonetheless, based on our observations during the field reconnaissance American Whitewater does not feel it is necessary to proceed with additional studies of whitewater opportunities impacted by the hydropower project due to a number of factors. These factors include limited accessibility to the bypassed reach due to closure of the dam road, riparian encroachment and channel reduction directly below Cooper Lake dam due to decreased instream flows, and other whitewater opportunities in the adjacent area of the Kenai. The most important factor affecting American Whitewater's decision not to pursue further studies is the lack of access along the dam road. Should the dam road be opened to the public then we feel Cooper Creek below the confluence with Stetson Creek would be a desirable whitewater run for the public. As it stands now the road closure coupled with the drag to the river will likely preclude most use except for the most hardy boaters.

In light of the existing whitewater opportunities in Cooper Creek American Whitewater recommends Chugach Electric install a USGS equivalent gage location near the confluence with the Kenai. The information from this gage should be accessible to the public via real-time through a web site and flow phone. This gage information will be useful for resource agencies as well as the public. In addition, Chugach electric should assist the USFS with rehabilitation of the parking area on river right just upstream from the confluence with the Kenai. This location could be used for parking.

Again, American Whitewater thanks Chugach Electric for undertaking this field reconnaissance study of whitewater opportunities in the bypassed reach.

Sincerely,

John T. Gangemi
Conservation Director

CC: Dave Blanchet
Bill Macfarlane
Jason Kent
Cassie Thomas
Robert Ruffner
Doug Whittaker
Steve Padula

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