

**SEWARD / BEAR CREEK FLOOD SERVICE AREA
WORK SESSION
SEAVIEW PLAZA BUILDING, SUITE 122
Monday 1 November 2010**

The work session convened during the SBCFSA regular board meeting at 7:10 PM.

A. ATTENDANCE

BOARD MEMBERS

Chairman Bill Williamson
Vice Chairman Bob White
Terry Federer
Tena Morgan
Mac Eads

STAFF

Christina Stauffer
Service Area Coordinator

B. PURPOSE

The purpose of this work session was to gather Seward flood mitigation history from two local citizens, Duane Levan and Mac Eads, so that the board could benefit from their experience.

C. SUMMARY

Chairman Bill Williamson introduced Duane Levan and Mac Eads and explained the purpose of the work session. He asked that anyone else in attendance who had anything to add to this history was welcome to comment.

Vice Chairman Bob White stated that most of the available Seward flood history is from newspaper accounts and government reports. There is very little on the ground documentation and it is becoming more and more important to the service area to know what that history is in dealing with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other issues. The SBCFSA is also interested in compiling a written history that shows that fighting flooding has been a constant battle since the city was founded. This will give us some leverage when we go to apply for grants and for other reasons. Bob asked Duane when he started working for the State of Alaska.

Duane Levan said that he started with the State of Alaska after the earthquake in 1964 as an equipment operator and he worked in that capacity until the 1980's. He added that he has lived in Seward continuously since 1946.

Bob White asked Duane, in regard to his dealings with the State of Alaska, Department of Transportation (ADOT), what they used to do as an annual maintenance in Box Canyon.

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Duane Levan responded that in the whole system, he had no knowledge of anyone doing anything in the line of keeping roads open other than Mac out on Lowell Point

and a few people like that that went out and did it on their own in the old days. The state took care of Box Canyon. The main reason for the work on Box Canyon was that the state built what is now Old Exit Glacier Road, just across the bridge. The road went up behind the Pit Bar, parallel to Clear Creek there, and crossed near Gillespie's house across a little log bridge. It went up from there and went pretty much straight southwest and then we made a corner because of property lines. The reason we crossed there was because there was a swamp up against the mountain behind where Gillespie's lived up to where Seavey's live. We worked our way around that swamp and that is why the road went up in that particular area. We completed the road partway up to the Forest Service land and then the local chamber of commerce got some money going and Herman Leirer also got involved and hired a private contractor, Foster Brothers, to finish the road.

Bob White asked if the then worked annually up in Box Canyon to keep that channel contained so it would not wash the road out.

Duane Levan replied that they tried to keep the channel of the creek over to the west side of the valley against the mountains where the bridge is now. That was so the creek when it was in flood stage would not come down over the road by Seavey's. If it did that it would come right down our road. At the same time the Resurrection was overflowing and coming down another road by Dr. Gentles old property. In those days you just took a CAT and pushed the overburden aside. Really what you were doing was building a trench. So when the Resurrection overflowed it came down through Clear Creek along the road. Other than that, Clear Creek itself was just a little spring creek that came out of the valley and off the mountains.

Bob White asked how much time Duane spent in there with a CAT on an annual basis.

Duane Levan responded that it really did not take much time up in Box Canyon because there is just a short area there where you need to control the creek. There is just a short stretch up to the corner where it narrows down and little way downstream from that. Later there was a dike there. All we did was push the gravel over way to make a channel down and keep the creek in. It was just a few hours a year.

Bob White went on to ask about Salmon Creek. He said ADOT used to have a CAT go in there.

Duane Levan said no on Salmon Creek. The only problem we had with Salmon Creek was that, before they raised the road, occasionally it flooded the highway just

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north of the Pit Bar. Then the contractor who was raising the road at that time and widening it went in there and put some rock in behind the old warehouse. Other than that we never messed with Salmon Creek. Salmon Creek to us was not a problem.

Mac Eads added that Salmon Creek was not a problem until after the earthquake. All that area went down about 4 or 5 feet and that raised the water level and the tides and backed up the water into the land. The wells now go up and down with the tide. The bigger the tide, the bigger the flood danger there.

Bob White stated that there were several channels of Salmon Creek from the railroad to the bridge where it is now. The old bridge was roughly where it is now.

Duane Levan said he had worked on that bridge and had driven piling there after the earthquake to redo the bridge over Salmon Creek.

Bob White pointed out that the aerial photographs showed several channels of Salmon Creek between where the Seward Highway is and where that bridge is now where Salmon Creek used to flow through before they put in Old Nash Road.

Duane Levan agreed saying that Salmon Creek would go around some but before they put in the new Nash Road, that whole country around there was swamp and the water flowed through the ground. The old Nash Road was at ground level and only a short way off the road was water. Consequently, any high water at all would flood that. It also did the same thing on the Seward Highway from the Pit Bar on to Nash Road from the north. Salmon Creek and that system through there would come up over the highway. On the south side of the road, those people always had water in their yards.

Bob White said that he guessed what he was getting at is that the channel was forced through that one cut where it is now and when they built the road up it cut off all the other alternate channels that Salmon Creek had and that was done after the earthquake. The new Nash Road was not built until after 1964, around 1968.

Duane Levan stated that the whole system from the warehouse on down, no one really went out into there. It was all alders. For years, all the years he worked there he had never seen standing water under the highway down by the Pit. Clear Creek was just a running little stream with rocks showing in the bottom of it. Now there is a lake down there and it was never that way before. Consequently maybe the road is holding it back in there. Something is holding it back.

Bob White said that the LiDAR flight shows us that the floodplain at the confluence of Clear Creek has gone up 6 to 9 feet over the years. That is what is backing that up. So the only real major player on Salmon Creek is the railroad up until the mid-60's.

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Mac Eads agreed that Bob was right about that. When the railroad put those culverts in it flooded and still floods part of our property. The creek is not channeled anywhere there. It just goes any way it wants to until it finds its way to the channel along the north side of Nash Road. That should be all channeled right up to those culverts that come under the highway. The culverts that come under the highway are not nearly adequate to carry the water that comes through to the railroad culverts. Consequently that backs the water up until it runs over Salmon Creek Road and over the rest of our property besides the river running over it.

Duane Levan said that he remembers that the railroad bridge from the time he worked on the highway was never cleared out underneath adequately. They could not clear it out because their system was to drive in new piling and saw the old ones off. As a result the river bed is full of sawed off pilings just under water and this holds back debris. It cannot clear itself.

Bob White commented that the railroad bridge was steel piling now but that there are still rotting off timbers in the river. It is the same thing on the Resurrection River where they had a lot of pilings. They still show when the water is slow. He asked if Duane remembers doing any work in Japp Creek at all.

Duane Levan replied that in Japp Creek they had worked for a couple weeks every fall. He said that in the 50's part of the highway and the air strip came against that little creek and they tried to maintain a channel. The reason they kept this channel to start with was that they had two cement bunkers up against the mountain there left from the Army. We kept our winter sand in one. Consequently, we kept a road going across the flats there near the garbage dump. We took an old tank car and knocked the ends out and put it in there as a big culvert. We had to go out there and put that back in every fall because it would wash out. You could go out there with a CAT and dig down and there were cottonwoods there that you could dig down beside them for 10 to 15 feet and you would still be hitting tree trunk. There has been a great deal more material deposited since then. Japp Creek has always been a big problem.

Mac Eads added that all of Forest Acres came out of Japp Creek in the past. No other stream feeds it.

Duane Levan said that two or three years ago he had walked through over by the mountain there and had gotten hold of the Fish & Game biologist. The material that has been filling up back there has built up. There used to be a little lake in there over by the corner which is now gone. All the feeder springs that used to be in there are filling up so Salmon cannot go in there anymore. There is a lot of material always coming down Japp Creek.

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Bob White brought up the Resurrection River and asked Duane if ADOT had ever done any maintenance work in there.

Duane Levan responded that what they had been trying to protect at that time was the old Nash Road. After the earthquake we had to go back in where the covered bridges had been and put in temporary bridges so people could use them. We would go in where Metco is now and would spend a couple of weeks in the fall pushing material mostly over to the north to protect the highway. We wanted to keep the water from going that way and over the highway on the other side of the bridge. We never did monkey with the first two channels. We always concentrated on the furthest channel. At that time, it was adequate to spend only a short time on this. At that time there used to be an old road that went down and around through the woods there about 200-300 yards to the east of where the airport is now, down to an old radio station on the beach. The Wagon Wheel Bar was down there. Between that road and the old air strip was a spring about 10 feet across that came out of the ground and fed a little creek. That has all filled in and moved as there is so much more material coming down the river than what Dieckgraeff at Metco can get rid of. You cannot get rid of enough gravel out of that river.

Bob White agreed with him on that and asked if they had ever done any maintenance down below the bridges.

Duane Levan answered no, not below the bridges. They would not let us get off the road at that time. We wanted to go down the stream to where that new road was because it would flood occasionally. There was a big pit there and it would fill up and spill over onto the road. The foreman wanted us to go down there with the CAT and muck it out of there but the highway bosses said that was too far off the highway right of way.

Bob White said the pit used to be a beaver pond. The beavers had dammed it up and made a little lake. The kids used to go out there and swim.

Duane Levan added that there used to be a gravel pit where Preacher's Pond is now. There was a dredge line and that went out on the road there.

Bill Williamson asked if anyone else had any questions.

Duane Levan stated that out on Lost Creek, he had known people who lived there for a long time and there was never a problem with the creek until the Old Mill subdivision was built. With Glacier Creek there was not a problem other than one time it flooded over the highway a little bit. One time in the fifties, Glacier Creek

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jumped its banks right where it comes out of the mountain and went into Bear lake. Fish & Game got very excited because they did not want that glacier water in that clear lake. They arranged for someone locally to go in with a CAT and fix that up.

Bob White asked if Duane remembered Glacier or Kwechak Creek coming out through Stoney Creek.

Duane Levan responded that it had flooded one time just this side of where Salmon Creek and Glacier Creek came together. It came across the road where the Mormon Church is now one time. It washed the railroad out and took part of the highway out.

Bob White stated that J.B. Woods had told him that it was around 1951 that the railroad had gone in and did a bunch of work in Glacier Creek. He asked Duane if he remembered anything about that.

Duane Levan replied that gravel he was aware that gravel was taken out right off the railroad to be used for the highway. The highway took material along mile 5 and 6 for use on the highway.

Bob White said that he was referring to evidence of a major stream bed where Glacier Creek comes down through just above Bruno and there is a real pronounced swale there. There are a bunch of houses built along it now. It looks like Glacier Creek used to go straight towards the highway there as opposed to running to the south.

Duane Levan stated that undoubtedly there was. He went on to say that there was another creek he wanted to talk about before they finished up and that was Sawmill Creek which goes under Nash Road. We had a bridge where that trailer court is. The last time he drove out that way he noticed that just downstream from there someone is building a house almost right under the bridge. That was an overflow for that creek at one time which got plugged somewhere up above. He said he was not sure of the cause. After that we had floods once or twice that washed out the approaches to the bridge there. If it had not been for McDonald taking material out from down below we would have had a big problem.

Bill Williamson noted that Sawmill was a high velocity creek as well. He said that this was good information. Bill asked if there were any other questions.

Bob White said that was about it.

Tena Morgan commented that this presentation had been awesome.

Bill Williamson thanked Duane for coming.

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Board members extended their thanks also.

Bill Williamson asked Mac Eads if he had anything to add.

Mac Eads said he was interested in Salmon Creek. Everything above Salmon Creek affects them. Mac said he thinks a short term fix for Salmon Creek would be a flood threshold right there at the railroad bridge, then a channel down along the railroad, underneath Nash Road and dump that water right straight into Resurrection where it wants to go anyway. That would stop that back up from the railroad bridge. The railroad bridge backs up that water clear up to Clear Creek. If that threshold was in there and kept the creek at a normal level unless it reaches flood stage. That would keep down the excess water that backs up in Clear Creek right now. Mac said he believes a straight shot through there would lower that water level two feet. That is basically a dam there with a right turn that the water cannot make. This causes the water to just go everywhere as it backs up, the gravel settles, the channel gets shallower. It just gets worse every flood. The faster you can keep that water going the better channels you will have because it scours itself. The railroad is reluctant about this and Mac said he did not know why they are. In 1986 when the major flood came through here it washed the railroad out right where they put those culverts in. There was 150 feet of track hanging right in midair there. They should be interested in anything that would help that situation. They still have water backing up over those culverts right now.

Bob White noted that the tracks had served as a suspension bridge back then and a lot of people walked across them to get out of Camelot and that area back there as scary as it was.

Mac Eads added that if the railroad could just be brought into the discussion and look at this plan a little bit maybe they would help. They already helped themselves by putting those culverts in. They do not want it to wash out again. If they are willing to help themselves they should be willing to help other people by extending that right on down. It would only take a culvert or a bridge under Nash Road there at least 6 feet in diameter if not 10 feet and it would handle all of that water.

Bob White asked if Mac was talking about running a channel between the highway and the railroad.

Mac Eads replied yes but they might not like that because it would be coming down and making a right hand turn through that bridge down there. That would be his suggestion, that they take it underneath Nash Road and the railroad at the same time.

Bob White suggested that maybe a more pronounced ditch adjacent to Nash Road along Eads property would work. With that ditch widened and the stream being

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dredged down through Eads property it could convey water without flooding and then a larger bridge could be put in Nash Road where the existing bridge is.

Mac Eads asked if Bob meant the bridge by Schiff's property. He mentioned that it needs to be dredged there as it was getting pretty shallow there. It will not take a bigger bridge, just getting the water into a channel and letting it scour itself out. Then maybe the level will go down.

Bob White stated that the problem with putting the water between the railroad and the highway, underneath Nash Road is as the lower part of the Resurrection backs up you could end up actually having the water flow to the north and adding to Salmon Creek from that direction. The lower part of the Resurrection also needs to be dealt with. Currently it makes a pretty good dam right there.

Mac Eads pointed out that the roadbed from the old Seward Highway where it intersected with Nash Road was still in there, it never washed out. A channel between the railroad and the highway would not have to be very deep but it would need to be rip rapped on both sides with rock for armor. Running water does not bother a straight channel hardly at all. All that costs money, though, and Mac said he was not sure where the money would come from. The railroad should be willing to help in this deal. The reason he thinks they should be interested is that the state owns the railroad and the state owns the highway. The legislature should be interested but no one seems to care.

Bill Williamson stated that the meeting needed to move on. He said that, to answer Mac's question, we have brought this up to the railroad already and they did not seem very interested. He said the board would keep bringing it up to them and maybe they would get interested. One of these days that track is going to wash away again and then they will be real interested. Bill closed out the work session portion of the meeting at 7:35 PM.

Christina Stauffer

Secretary

Work Session Notes Approved: 15 November 2010
Date of Approval