

## JOINT STATEMENT OF MENDENHALL WETLANDS STAKEHOLDER GROUPS ON THE NORTH DOUGLAS CROSSING PROJECT

The undersigned stakeholder groups represent individuals who use or have a direct interest in the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge (MWSGR). We join in this statement regarding the North Douglas crossing project and the current effort to identify a community preferred alternative for a crossing corridor.

The report of Sheinberg Associates (April 2007) culminates a several month process of gathering information and data concerning a North Douglas crossing. We commend the project team for its efforts in seeking comment from various stakeholder groups and individuals. The report compiles a substantial amount of information that is of value to the City and Borough of Juneau and its citizens as they consider this project. In particular, the report identifies three primary concerns the public has about the project: (1) impact on the MWSGR; (2) costs of construction; and (3) impacts to airport operations. With these in mind, we agree on the following points:

1. The report states assumptions about which crossing corridor will have the least environmental impact on the MWSGR. Until an EIS is completed, however, the public will not have a true understanding of the environmental impacts associated with various crossing alternatives. For instance, if a demonstration is made that a crossing must traverse the MWSGR because no feasible alternative exists – a showing that has not been made to date – we believe it will be necessary for such a crossing to be a structure-supported roadway, not a fill embankment. An EIS that analyzes all feasible alternatives should be completed *before* a preferred crossing corridor is identified.
2. The report surveyed public opinion using cost figures that do not reflect the true cost of a crossing project. The full cost of a crossing must take into account (1) the cost of a structure-supported roadway; (2) costs associated with improvements that will be necessary to Egan Drive, *e.g.*, separated-grade intersections; and (3) costs that may be associated with connecting the crossing to a bench road on North Douglas. Without a full understanding of *all* the costs associated with the crossing, the CBJ and the public are not in a position to make a true evaluation of which corridor alternative is the most affordable and represents the best value.
3. According to the Project Summary Report (May 2005), at sec. 9.6.1, a crossing at Salmon Creek (1) avoids the MWSGR; (2) is the shortest crossing; (3) is the least costly “all structure” alternative; (4) diverts traffic from the existing Douglas Bridge; and (5) would have “[m]inimal environmental impacts compared to other options.” A crossing at Salmon Creek would serve identified project objectives of improved travel access between the Juneau mainland and Douglas Island, redundancy, and access to emergency services. A crossing at Salmon Creek would have the least impact on airport operations. Given public concerns regarding this project, in particular, impacts to MWSGR and project costs, a crossing alternative at Salmon Creek must be given serious consideration by the CBJ. The process to identify a community preferred alternative did not include the Salmon Creek alternative, which was a mistake.

Based on the foregoing, we believe it is premature to identify a crossing corridor now. We urge the Assembly not to act on the recommendation for stating a preference for a crossing at Vanderbilt Hill at this time. The Assembly should instead (1) move forward promptly to promote completion of an EIS that analyzes all reasonable alternatives; (2) refine the estimates of project costs to include all associated costs; and (3) take a hard look at the Salmon Creek alternative.

We do not oppose a North Douglas crossing. But if such a project is to be built, it must be done right. The decision to identify a crossing corridor must be based on a full understanding of the environmental impacts of the project and real comparisons of project costs. The current and future CBJ public will be well-served by a process that provides a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of this project and the merits of the various alternatives.

Steve J. Zim Board Member Date: 4/26/07  
Juneau Audubon Society

Joseph J. Cooper - Chairman Date: 7/25/07  
Mendenhall Refuge Citizens Advisory Group

CSLVD PRESIDENT Date: 7/26/07  
North Douglas Neighborhood Association