

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release July 30, 1979

David Klinger 202/343-5634

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ASSESSES BIOLOGISTS' EFFECTIVENESS DURING ALASKA PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION IN NEW PUBLICATION

An appraisal of how well biologists were brought into the decisionmaking process and how much heed was paid to their recommendations by the architects of the 800-mile Trans-Alaska Pipeline is the basis of a new report by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Fish and Wildlife Protection in the Planning and Construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline describes how well an advisory group set up to protect fish and wildlife worked and what factors influenced its effectiveness.

This report looks at how fish and wildlife protection policy evolved in the years between the discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay in 1969 and the start of pipeline construction. It discusses the forces that led to the creation of the Joint Fish and Wildlife Advisory Team (JFWAT) in 1974 as an independent adjunct in the overall government surveillance system. It is not, however, an assessment of the individual environmental impacts of the pipeline itself.

"The principal usefulness of the study comes from the guidance it offers for the conduct of future projects requiring similar monitoring efforts," says Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. "As a study of significant environmental management issues, it will be of interest to government agencies, private industry, resource managers, and the environmental and academic communities."

(over)

Among the significant findings of this report, written by the University of Alaska's Institute of Social and Economic Research, is that the effectiveness of biologists was limited by the broad Federal Government policy that placed priority on completing the Trans-Alaska Pipeline quickly and insuring the integrity of the pipeline itself.

On the other hand, this study found that the advisory team that monitored the environmental effects during the construction phase of the pipeline project was in a unique position to promote fish and wildlife interests because of its independence from two larger surveillance groups set up by the Interior Department and the State of Alaska.

The Joint Fish and Wildlife Advisory Team was made up of biologists from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. It served as an advisor to Interior's Alaska Pipeline Office and Alaska's State Pipeline Coordinator on fish and wildlife matters.

The study found that its performance was handicapped by a number of factors, among them:

- o The unwillingness of government engineers to accept biologists' assessments of the urgency and significance of fish and wildlife impacts;
- o The general lack of understanding between engineers and biologists of each others' professions;
- o The inexperience of many biologists on the advisory team in monitoring large construction projects; and
- o Inconsistent enforcement of environmental stipulations by government field monitors.

Copies of Fish and Wildlife Protection in the Planning and Construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline are available for \$3.25 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Stock Number 024-010-00470-3).