Chatanika Dam Removal Opens
65 Miles of
King Salmon Habitat

Elaine Gross
Fairbanks Fish & Wildlife Office
HERE FROM 1927 TO 1942—In charge of the installation of the world's first completely automatic load and frequency control system (Leeds and Northrup) at Bonneville Dam, Oregon.
“Alaska doesn’t have any dams”

- 119 Federally or State controlled dams
- Hundreds of abandoned mining, logging or cannery dams
- Privately owned dams that are < 10’ tall and impound < 50 ac.ft. of water aren’t counted
- FERC waivers exempt some dams from biological review because they “do not interfere with overall production of salmon”
Chatanika River

- A clear water stream
- Paralleled by the Steese Highway for 28 miles
- Provides habitat for chum, king, and silver salmon; Arctic grayling; northern pike; and shee-fish
There are many similarities between the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and the Davidson Ditch.

They were the same diameter (46-56 inches) and remarkable examples of engineering for their day.
Dam History

- Fairbanks Exploration Company (FE) built the dam and ditch in 1925
- Chatanika Power Co. (CPC) leased dam from FE in the early 1960’s
- Great flood of 1967 removes part of the dam & spillway – No more power generation
- FE sold 199 acres (10 patented mining claims) to Merrill Stewart in 1980’s
- Stewart sells to Coppenburg in 1990
Removal Efforts

- 1970’s initial efforts to remove the dam
- 1980’s FERC attempted restoration
- 1990’s agencies cooperated in the effort
- 1998 FWS receives funding
- Grant Agreement put in place with Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Assn.
The Sheet Pile Would Not Budge!
- YR DFA biologists conduct foot surveys
- 12 juvenile chinook observed above dam site
- YR DFA and ADF&G will conduct more surveys

Media Attention
In Summary:

- 65 miles of salmon spawning habitat were opened
- YRDFA & ADF&G will continue surveys
- Document locations of all dams in Alaska
- Get the job done!

Acknowledgements

Contractor: Sanstrom & Sons
Anchorage