STUDY INITIATION FACT SHEET

1. Project Name: Section 206, Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration, Little Tonsina River, Near Mile Post 74.2 Richardson Highway, Alaska

P2# 466184 **Prog code # 466184**

2. Authority: Section 206 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996, Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration

3. Sponsor Agency and POC: Copper River Watershed Project (CRWP); Kristin Carpenter, Executive Director, kristin@copperriver.org, P.O. Box 1560, Cordova, AK 99574, phone (907) 424-3334 | fax (907) 424-4318, Website: www.copperriver.org

4. Congressional Delegation:

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK)
Representative Don Young (R-AK)

5. Location: The project area is a stretch of the Little Tonsina River that drains into the Tonsina River; which then flows approximately 25 miles to the Copper River and eventually to the Gulf of Alaska. Twenty-three communities dot the 26,500 square miles of the Copper River watershed. Town populations range from 2,500 people in Cordova, located west of the Copper River delta, to 35 people in McCarthy, a village in an upper basin of the watershed.

6. Problem: A river crossing with two culverts at the Alyeska Pipeline Access Road located near the mouth of the Little Tonsina River, blocks salmon access to at least 12 miles of upstream spawning and rearing habitat in the Little Tonsina; which does not include the tributaries. CRWP along with its partners developed a protocol for evaluating the Copper River watershed culverts that assigns numerical values to culvert conditions (e.g., constriction, perch, and velocity) and ecological conditions (i.e., fish presence/absence and quantity/quality of fish habitat) associated with road crossings. The culvert appears to become perched at lower flows based on information and photographs provided on the CWRP website. This crossing is ranked as having a High Ecological Value with a Worst Culvert Condition. This crossing is located near milepost 74.2 on the Richardson Highway within the Valdez (C-4) Quadrangle, Alaska, T.3.S., R.1.S., Section 21, east half. The global position system location is approximately Lat. 61.59437 N, Long. -145.22308.

7. Eligibility Criteria:

a. Does the problem meet the eligibility requirements of the study authority? Yes According to ER1105-2-100, Appendix E, Section V – Ecosystem Restoration, paragraph E-27. Federal Interest. "*Numerous Federal Laws and*

executive orders establish National policy for Federal interest in the protection, restoration, conservation and management of environmental resources. … water resource authorizations have enhanced opportunities for Corps involvement in studies and projects to specifically address objectives related to the restoration of ecological resources and ecosystem management.… Examples of legislation that broadly supports Federal Involvement in the restoration and protection of ecological resources include:

- *Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965, as amended*
- *Water Resources Development Acts of 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1996 and 1999*

The programmatic authority for study, design and implementation of ecosystem restoration and protection projects is Section 206, Aquatic System WRDA of 1996, as amended. Section 206 of WRDA 96 (Public Law 104-303) authorizes the Secretary to carry out projects for aquatic ecosystem restoration and protection if the Secretary determines that the project will improve the quality of the environment, is in the public interest, and is cost-effective.

The Corps restoration policy is described in more detail in ER1165-2-501 and EP 1165-2-502. Corps ecosystem restoration projects may be single-purpose ecosystem restoration or multiple purpose projects, and may not be able to address every functional and structural characteristic, nor may it be necessary where the nature and degree of impairment are limited to only one or a few of these parameters. The purpose of the activities are to restore significant ecosystem function with an intent to fully reestablish the attribute of a naturalistic, functioning, and self-regulating system.

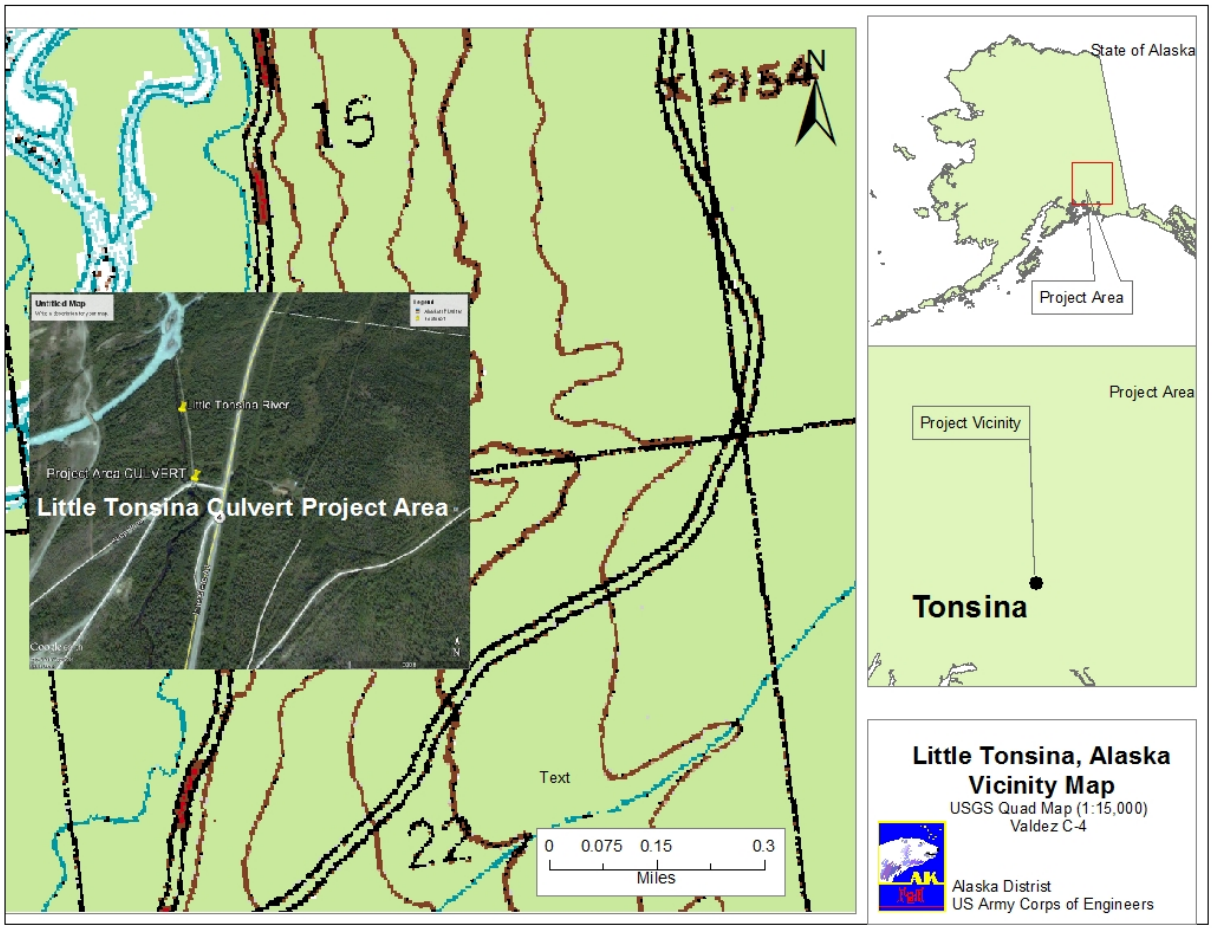
b. **Would typical Corps of Engineers solutions correct the problem?** Structures such as bridges or properly designed culverts are effective structural solutions for improving fish passage and access to upstream spawning and rearing habitat, and the migration of other aquatic organism up and downstream of the stream crossing. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game recommends a bridge as a replacement structure to allow consistent access to upstream spawning and rearing habitat.

c. **Are there any obvious benefits that could justify a potential study?** Yes, improving the stream crossing will have non-monetary and monetary benefits. Re-establishing consistent migration opportunities for fish and other aquatic organisms past the stream crossing would be a significant non-monetary benefit for fish and other aquatic organisms that rely on consistent migration routes to thrive. Approximately 12 linear river miles, not counting side channels and

tributaries, will have improved access for king salmon, a species of concern in the State of Alaska and currently hosted by the Little Tonsina. Improving this one stream crossing could potentially increase the number of salmon that can spawn, improve access to rearing habitat for juvenile salmon as well as their migration success to the ocean. These effects could increase adult salmon returns to the Copper River watershed increasing other social and monetary benefits with increased salmon harvesting through subsistence, commercial, and sport fishing opportunities.

d. Does the sponsor understand that cost sharing requirements and their responsibilities if the study proceeds to a cost shared activity (e.g. feasibility or construction)? Yes, the sponsor indicated a willingness to cost share in their letter requesting assistance as per request letter dated March 5, 2017.

8. Vicinity Map:



9. Description of Proposed Project: Project will most likely involve design and construction of a bridge or culvert(s) with some channel restoration in the immediate vicinity of the river crossing.

10. Estimated Cost & Proposed Schedule:

Table 1. Proposed Schedule

Milestone	**Date**
Site Visit	June 2017
Receive Funds	March 2018
FCSA Execution	July 2018
Complete Feasibility	August 2019
PPA Execution	February 2020
Contract Award	June 2020

The project construction cost will be dependent on numerous factors; however our assumption is that the project will cost less than $10 million.