

APPENDIX D

AN OUTLINE OF THE SCENIC AND RECREATIONAL ATTRACTIONS AND OF THE WILDLIFE ALONG THE ALASKA HIGHWAY ^{1/}

Part 1 - SCENIC AND RECREATIONAL ATTRACTIONS

Great interest has been built up in the minds of the public of Canada and the United States in the Alaska Highway, through continental wide publicity given to this great war project. Many articles have been published in magazines and newspapers; the official opening in November of last year before the highway was even approaching any degree of completion and, indeed, a Hollywood production entitled "The Alaska Highway" based on participation of the United States Army engineers in its construction. Much of this publicity has been prepared by people who have only passed over the country by air in a few hours' flying time without having been over the highway on the ground or even portions of it. Naturally, these writers have dealt more with the glamorous and romantic sides of the project. Undoubtedly the result is that many people in Canada and the United States are planning to take a trip over this highway after the war, expecting to find all facilities available for car travel, a good highway, comfortable accommodation and worthwhile scenic and recreational attractions along the route.

While the construction of the Alaska Highway begins at Dawson Creek in British Columbia, for the purpose of discussing tourist motor traffic one has to consider Edmonton, Alberta, as the starting point. From Edmonton to Dawson Creek it is approximately 495 miles over Provincial Highway, only short sections of which are standard, gravel, all-weather highway capable of withstanding heavy traffic, and many miles are still in the pioneer stage, but during dry weather this stage of the trip can be negotiated. However, before any encouragement is given to full-scale tourist traffic this section of highway will have to be brought up to all-weather highway standard or a new and shorter route provided via Whitecourt to Grande Prairie.

Between the above points there is at present limited overnight accommodation for tourists, gasoline supply and car servicing facilities available. No doubt these facilities will be improved without any special planning once travel is possible under any weather conditions and the traffic warrants the undertaking of such improvements. Along the above section there are no outstanding scenic attractions but some of the lakes frequently encountered will have some appeal to vacationists for visits of short duration en route.

From Dawson Creek, where the Alaska Highway actually begins, to Fort St. John, is the best section of highway construction, a distance of 50 miles.

^{1/} Material covering Scenic and Recreational Attractions prepared by James Smart, Comptroller of the Canadian National Parks Bureau; Wildlife material prepared by Dr. C. H. D. Clarke, Mammalogist of the Lands, Park and Forest Branch of the Canadian Department of Mines and Resources and by Dr. A. L. Rand, Zoologist of the Canadian National Museum.

This section has no scenic attractions but the crossing of the Peace River would be of some interest to tourists.

Fort St. John is now a thriving town, and permanent settlement is established in this vicinity. The town can provide some service to the public but beyond Fort St. John and to Whitehorse, a distance of 800 miles, the problem of providing for civilian transient traffic begins.

With the withdrawal of services now installed for construction purposes when the war ceases depots or service stations for cars will have to be provided for as well as overnight accommodation for travellers. It will be necessary to have these points located every 100 miles at least for service stations and preferable to have accommodation also available at 100-mile intervals.

No doubt some of the civilian contracting companies will be willing to dispose of some of their camps, many of which could without much expense be rehabilitated for tourist use. Many of them are equipped with all modern conveniences.

For the most part the sites occupied by headquarters and construction camps are located on the most attractive sites along the highway. Negotiations for acquiring any of these buildings will have to be undertaken at an early date, otherwise the buildings will deteriorate very quickly if left unattended and subject to misuse.

From Fort St. John to approximately 50 miles west of Fort Nelson, a distance of 291 miles, the country is not scenic beyond some distant views of the Rocky Mountains and foothills to the west.

From Mile 50 beyond Fort Nelson the country becomes scenic with views of the higher mountains in the distance and continues to improve through the valley of the Racing and Toad Rivers until Muncho Lake is reached at Mile 175. The country in this locality is suitable for the establishment and development of a National or Provincial Park with Muncho Lake as the centre. The surrounding mountains rise to elevations of at least 7,000 feet with some spectacular peaks in evidence. Muncho Lake is about seven miles long and about one mile wide in its greatest expanse, and it is said there is excellent lake trout fishing in the lake. The country in this locality appears to be a promising big game country. Stone sheep were seen from the highway. Hot springs are reported some miles off the highway in the Toad Valley and with further exploration additional springs might be located.

Muncho Lake at least would be an attractive point for the establishment of tourist accommodation and as a resting-up place for a few days relief from driving.

Thirty-eight miles farther on at the north end of the Liard River bridge crossing is the so-called tropical valley with two hot sulphur springs. These springs are within easy reach of the highway and could be developed

with moderate expense. The upper spring has a temperature of 102°F and the water rushes out of the hillside at the lower spring at a temperature of 126°F. The vegetation surrounding these springs is a very luxurious growth and would be of interest to the public. A reservation should be placed on this location so that the springs will remain in public ownership. The boundaries of a Park area could be placed so as to embrace these springs as well as Muncho Lake.

From the crossing of the Liard River to Lower Post in Watson Lake the scenery is not spectacular but glimpses of the Liard River are interesting.

From Watson Lake to Whitehorse there is nothing spectacular from a scenic point of view but a tourist will become conscious of a change in the character of the mountains as the Yukon terrain is reached and the realization that he is now in the Far North and the legendary sourdough country.

Whitehorse is mainly of interest as the point for embarking on the river steamers for a trip down north to Dawson City and points on the Yukon River in Alaska. There is no more delightful river trip than down the Lewes and Yukon Rivers. The scenery is interesting and the navigation of these streams by steamer something worth witnessing. This side-trip should always be taken by any tourist on a vacation in the Yukon or Alaska.

Beyond Whitehorse towards Alaska for about one hundred miles there is a blank spot as far as scenery is concerned. This piece of country has been reported on as of agricultural value and no doubt will in time provide some interest to the traveller. However, one is repaid after 100 miles by a view of the outer mountain of the St. Elias Range to the southwest of the Yukon territory, which includes the highest peaks on the continent, with Mount Logan only 450 feet lower in elevation than the highest in North America, Mt. McKinley, situated in Mt. McKinley National Park in Alaska.

In my opinion this is the most outstanding scenery on the entire Alaska Highway, including the Alaskan section to Fairbanks.

Skirting the southwest end of Kluane Lake one gets a fine view into the St. Elias Range and this is the closest point to the great glacier country. A few miles north along the west shore of Kluane Lake the scenery becomes less impressive but one has frequent views up wide river flats of the white and glaciated peaks of the main range.

The country from the Alsek River south and west of the highway to the White River and the Yukon-Alaska boundary, has been placed in reservation as a game sanctuary and possible National Park. We have examined this area as thoroughly as time permitted this Summer and it is in my opinion of sufficient interest and importance to finally establish as a National Park. The area of the reservation as it stands contains over 10,000 square miles, but at least two-thirds of it is perpetual snow and glacier; the remainder is timber and tundra country and with some modifications for the exclusion of mineralized areas should be considered as a sanctuary for the preservation of the flora and fauna of that part of the Yukon Territory.

The future value of the Alaska Highway to the northwest is unpredictable and no one can say what benefit it will have on that part of Canada. However, if there is to be any economic progress in this part of the Pacific Northwest, a direct overland line of communication with the outside world is necessary. In the absence of railway communication the highway will serve this purpose.

Development of recreational facilities for tourist travel over this road can be undertaken on a small scale and increased as the traffic demands. It is reasonable to expect that tourist travel in private cars will be light, due to the tremendous distances involved over this highway, in addition to the great distances tourists would have to travel from various parts of the United States and Canada before they enter the Alaska Highway. Many tourists might be attracted to trips over this highway, if they could do so by bus transportation.

Part 2 - WILDLIFE

During the summer season, Dr. C. H. D. Clarke, Mammologist, of the Lands, Parks and Forests Branch, and Dr. A. L. Rand, Zoologist, of the National Museum, made surveys of the wildlife along the Alaska Highway, and in Southern Yukon. Dr. Rand covering that part of the Highway in British Columbia, and Dr. Clarke covering the entire length of the Highway, but spending most of the time in the Yukon.

In preliminary statements these officers reported that game animals are well represented except in the vicinity of old settlements in the Yukon. Moose, caribou, sheep, goat, grizzly and black bear are found all along the territory bordering the Highway. Wolves are very common.

A large band of wapiti (elk) are reported to be isolated in Tchodi Lake region about 50 miles south of Summit Lake on the Highway west of Fort Nelson. While Dr. Rand did not see this band he heard reliable reports of its existence.

Fur is the main product of the region and it is reported that some trappers make as much as \$5,000 a year. The costly skins of martin, beaver and lynx are the staple of the catches, and little effort is made by some trappers to harvest the less prized furs. While the stock of fine fur is depleted in the Yukon, it is comparatively undepleted in British Columbia due to the system of registered trap lines inaugurated some 25 years ago.

Game fish occur everywhere but are not abundant. Grayling, lake and Dolly Vardon trout and pike are the species available.

The production of waterfowl is light, but as all parts of the region contribute; the total contribution is fairly large. Grouse and ptarmigan are common.

Recommendations include:

1. That game preserves be set up in the Yukon where stocks of game and fur may be built up.
2. That the system of registered trap lines be adopted in the Yukon.
3. Fur is the staple wildlife resource of the region and it should be carefully guarded against over exploitation.

Native Game Preserves - A number of Native Game Preserves have been established in the Northwest Territories to assist in maintaining the basic industry of the native population. Trapping within these preserves is confined to Indians and Eskimos and to half-breeds living the life of natives, with the exception of such white trappers as were already operating in the areas at the time they were set aside as preserves.

Practically all of that part of the Northwest Territories west of the Mackenzie river and part of the Yukon Territory is within the Mackenzie Mountain Preserve and the Peel River Preserve,

In addition to these game preserves areas are delimited from time to time in which additional protection is provided for one or more species of game animals or fur-bearers, a recent case being the closing to beaver trapping until further notice of an area of approximately 14,000 square miles in the delta of the Mackenzie River; a measure which will ensure the propagation of beaver in the region. Similarly, in order to increase the muskrat population, the Government in 1938 initiated a conservation project in Wood Buffalo Park by which the water level in a number of water-sheds is being stabilized through the construction of dams and earth fills. Approximately 25,000 acres have been brought under control and consideration is being given to similar conservation measures in other areas.

-----oOo-----