

## Newspaper Clipping

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# Seward Highway project must preserve beauty of Turnagain Arm

By JOAN DANIELS

If you've driven the Seward Highway for over 40 years, you've experienced all manner of heaven and hell. No matter, you will always see wonderful and memorable sights. Like a lover, it's seductive and complex, moving and pulling you in. It can be sublime or it can scare the pants off you. So we want a safe and graceful passage with our stunning view.

Thank you, Mr. Meacham (May 12 commentary, "Speak Up: Windy Corner project will permanently deface Chugach State Park"). Because you're so right. What happened at Bird Creek is a permanent insult to breathtaking beauty, and frankly I would vote to use real money to soft-

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en the hideously unnatural vertical cut that towers over the fishermen's parking lot. You can even see it from Hope. It's a blight; it's a quarry with pavement. The square footage you quoted got my hair on end.

I feel a personal affront when I see that cut, as it was I who steered the engineers from their incredible plan to blast the left bank of the mouth of Bird Creek to create a parking lot and harvest the rock — and make no mistake, harvesting the

rock was and is the goal. It was I who took them on the hike to show them the natural draw that could facilitate a cozy little parking lot with a pleasant walking trail to the fishing site. My naiveté became a cruel joke when my cabin leaped in the air from way-too-big blasts late at night. George Bush's famous "shock and awe" was going on in Iraq and the same was going on in Bird Creek. I actually had to call the project superintendent to let him know that a mile

up Bird Creek solid rock was more than quaking.

The point is we have two industrial-looking parking facilities at McHugh and Bird creeks that illustrate clearly that our engineers are missing the art gene.

We have a world-class scenic highway to honor and protect, and we need to weave in safety. That requires a careful, visually sensitive designer and that we ain't got. We need an exceptional landscape architect with proven experience to design changes and facilities on this scale.

If you've experienced the Columbia River Gorge or Big Sur, or Highway 1 on the California coast you know there are artistic engineers in

the world ... another big industrial design is making the highway into a quarry with a view. There are billions of tons of rock available at areas with a lower profile. I could name one down the road with a railroad siding already built on it.

I'm going to end quoting my Menonite grandfather here who was keenly appreciative of natural beauty (for 100 years). He often said, "The Lord did his finest work where the mountains meet the sea." No kidding. Think about it. Stop and really look.

What would John Muir say?

Joan Daniels says she's living the counterculture dream 30 miles from Anchorage in Bird Creek.