

RC 11

January 9, 2013 11:32 AM

David Martin <dmartin@alaska.net>
To: sean.parnell@alaska.gov , Cc: pat.kemp@alaska.gov , cora.campbell@alaska.gov
DOT total right-of-way clear cutting on the Kenai Peninsula

Dear Governor Parnell,

Your immediate intervention to temporarily alter DOT's current 300 ft. right-of-way clear cutting activities is imperative for the present and future safety of the traveling public. There is a differing of opinions between DOT, ADF&G and the public as to the appropriate distance to clear cut from the center line and the frequency of recutting to provide the ultimate safety by reducing to a minimum moose/vehicle collisions. Data shows that cutting the brush along the entire road system 75 ft. from the center line and recutting annually to biennial will provide ultimate safety. Recutting annually to biennial is the key to success. History dictates that DOT will not have the funds nor the time to recut even 75 ft. of the entire highway system on an annual to biennial schedule. Therefor DOT's current practice of clear cutting the entire right-of-way is actually creating prime moose browse which will draw more moose to the roads there by increasing moose/vehicle collisions.

I appreciate the fact that ADF&G and DOT&PF are going to create an interagency wildlife-highways working group. However if you do not intervene now, to redirect the clear cutting to 75 ft. from the center line, until a scientifically based plan is worked out, then the damage will already be done and will be irreversible. There will be no need for a working group!

I think this would be a good time to step back and reevaluate the situation and address the valid information, science and concerns that have surfaced and been brought forward. To continue the current clear cutting program would not be prudent and could very well be extremely detrimental and irreversible for decades to come.

I would request that you direct DOT to take the remaining brush cutting funds and revised the program to only cutting out to 75 feet from the center line, then they could cut the brush along three times the miles as their current plan. This would increase the safety of the traveling public over a far greater section of the road system. The ten miles of road, north of Ninilchik, that has already been clear cut in the full 300 foot right-of-way could then be evaluated as the test area to see if the objectives of DOT are being met and if the Legislators are providing the future funds needed to allow for the planned annual or biannual recut that is critical for not attracting moose to the roads. This area would also serve as a test area to document the effects of solar exposure on the road surface so as to encourage melt and evaporation of snow and ice. The test area would determine if solar exposure is needed by clear cutting the whole right-of-way or just cutting the problem sections where needed. The test area would also be contained, to a ten mile section, to evaluate the increased fire hazard from the natural regrowth of tall grasses as described in the Kenai Peninsula Borough's Spruce Bark Beetle mitigation program.

If the objectives are not being achieved then there is only ten miles of road affected. If the objectives are being achieved then DOT's could continue clear cutting. This would give time for the various agencies to develop a workable scientific plan with the new information from the test area. Once the right-of-way is clear cut then there is no need for a multi agency workgroup to develop a plan. I can't find any negatives in not going this route but I can find a lot of negatives if we don't. I can't help but picture in my mind large numbers of moose eating all the new growth in the entire clear cut right-of-way just like I have seen the bison do in the clear cut right-of-ways of Canada.

Lets give it a try.

Thanks for you time and efforts,

David Martin
907-252-2752

(5)

Jan. 8, 2013

Dear Borough Assembly,

My name is David Martin. PO Box 468 Clam Gulch. I live five miles south of Clam Gulch.

I have prepared a packet on the and effects of DOT's clear cutting. To date they have cut 200 ft on the East side and 100 ft. on the West side. The plan is to clear cut all right-of ways in the State.

DOT developed this plan only within their department. There has been no environmental assessments, no input from ADF&G or other effected departments, local governments or public meetings or notification to the property owners.

DOT's stated objective is to 1. Reduce vegetation within the right-of-way that serves as attractive browse for moose. 2. Increase sight distance and the opportunity for driver response by maximizing viewing range and decreasing cover for moose. 3. Enhance driver safety by increasing the solar exposure to our road surface so as to encourage melt and evaporation of snow and ice. 4. Increase overall visibility by allowing drivers to better see the roadway and on-coming traffic.

Unfortunately DOT's plan is the worse thing they could do to keep moose away from the roads and keep the public safer.

According to professional game biologist there ^{are} four steps DOT should do to reduce moose/vehicle collisions and maximize the safety to the traveling public. 1. Clear the road right-of way out to 75 feet from the center line which is adequate to spot moose and reduces cost of maintenance by at least half. 2. Using a dozer, grade right-of-ways to minimize mowing and reduce shadows that "hide" moose. 3. Mow right-of-ways annually in late June. Cutting plants in late June, at full leaf-out, will reduce the plant's vigor and production the following year. 4. Investigate the cost savings in maintenance between annual mowing and replanting with a low growing, perennial grass (e.g.-boreal fescue that moose will not eat. This grass only grows to ~~y~~ about a foot tall so mowing is not necessary.

DOT's response to this scientific data is that if 75 ft. is good then 200 would be better. This type of a response doesn't make it so.

I agree with DOT's mission that the safety of the traveling public is foremost. However as a member of the public, who travels these roads daily and mostly in the dark, I can honestly say the roads are far from being safe. Unfortunately DOT's current brush cutting plan, in combination with the reality of the lack of annual cutting, will make the roads more hazardous for moose/vehicle collisions. The bulk of the road system hasn't been cut for two to four years or more and the brush is right up to the edge of the road and hides moose easily. The increased amount of traffic going to and from work in the dark morning and evening hours, restricts the driving with headlights mainly on low beam. It doesn't take much brush to hide a moose under these conditions. If you combine this with a lack of sand on icy roads and even worse when snowing, there is little to no warnings or reaction time to avoid hitting a moose that steps onto the road from behind the brush even at low speeds. It is literally playing moose/vehicle roulette!

As I suggested, I think this would be a good time to step back and reevaluate the situation and address the valid information and concerns that have surfaced and been brought forward. To continue the current clear cutting program would not be prudent and could very well be extremely detrimental and irreversible for decades to come.

If DOT took the remaining brush cutting funds and revised the program to only cutting out to 75 feet from the center line, then they could cut the brush along three times the miles as their current plan. This would increase the safety of the traveling public over a far greater section of the road system. The ten miles of road, North of Ninilchik, that has already been clear cut in the full 300 foot right-of-way could then be evaluated as the test area to see if the objectives of DOT are being met and the Legislators are providing the future funds needed to allow for the planned annual or biannual recut that is critical for not attracting moose to the roads. This area would also serve as a test area to document the effects of solar exposure on the road surface so as to encourage melt and evaporation of snow and ice. It would determine if solar exposure is needed by clear cutting the whole right-of-way or just cutting the problem sections where needed. It would also contain, to a ten mile section, the increased fire hazard from the natural regrowth of tall grasses.

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This would give time for the various agencies to develop a workable plan with the new information from the test area. Once it is clear cut then there is no need for a multi agency workgroup to develop a plan. I can't find any negatives in not going this route but I can find a lot of negatives if we don't. I can't help but picture in my mind large numbers of moose eating all the new growth in the entire clear cut right-of-way just like I have seen the bison do in the clear cut right-of-ways of Canada.

Lets give it a try.

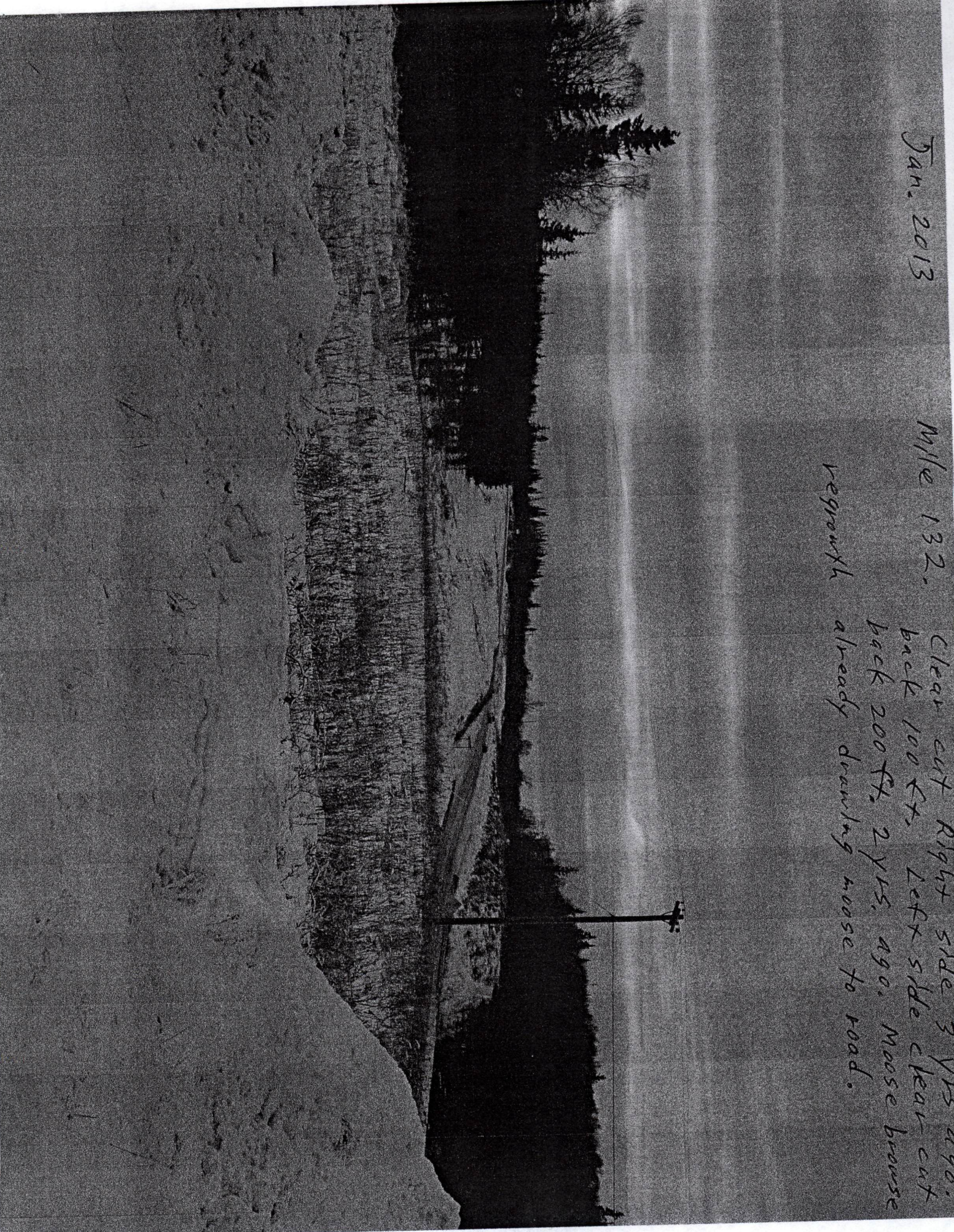
Thanks for you time and efforts,

David Martin

Jan. 2013

MIle 132.

Clear cut Right side 3 yrs ago.
back 100 ft, Left side clear cut
back 200 ft, 2 yrs. ago. Moose browse
already drawing moose to road.



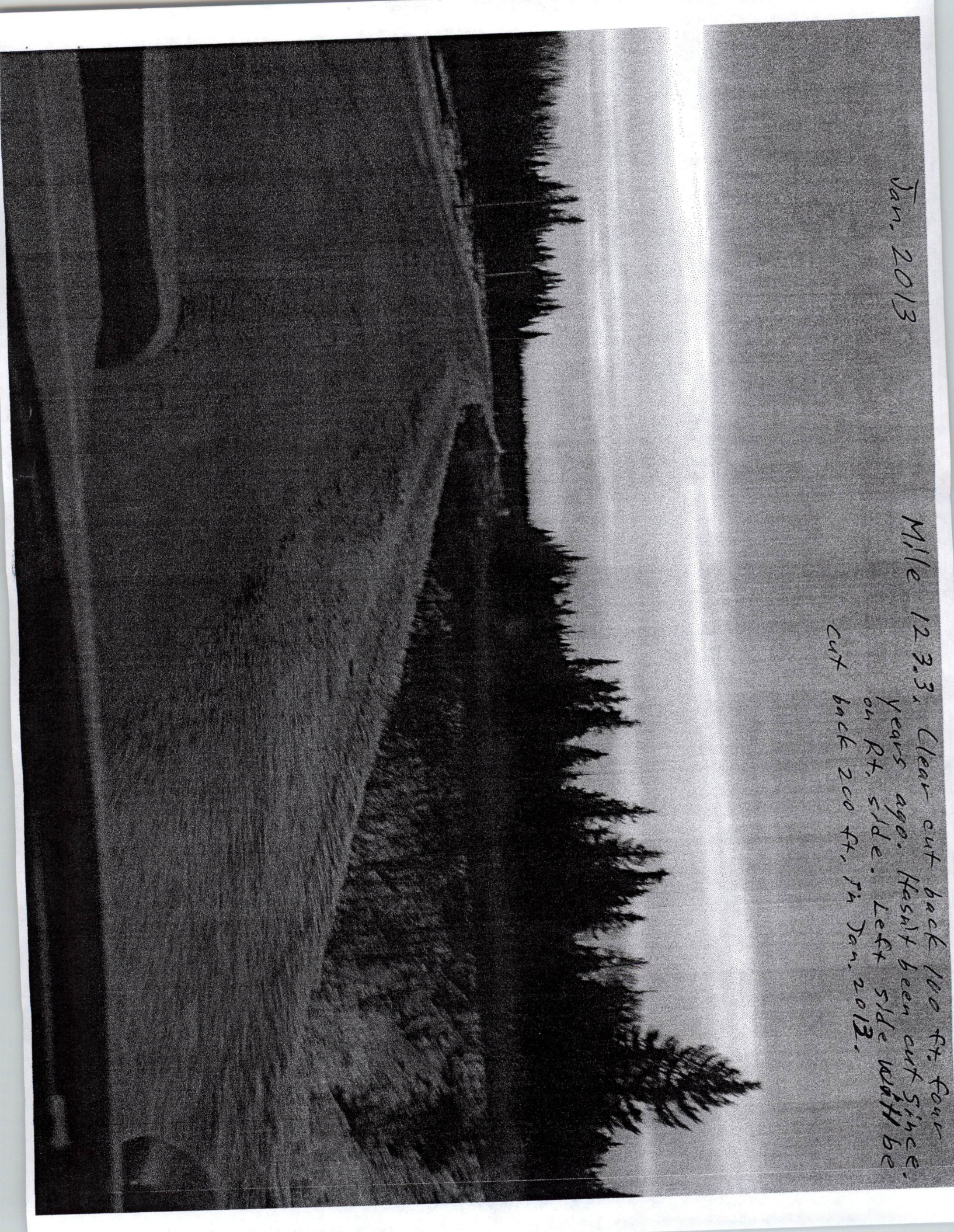
Jan. 2013

Looking North at Mile 126. Rt. side cut
back 200 ft Jan 2013. Left side hasn't been
cut for more than 10 yrs

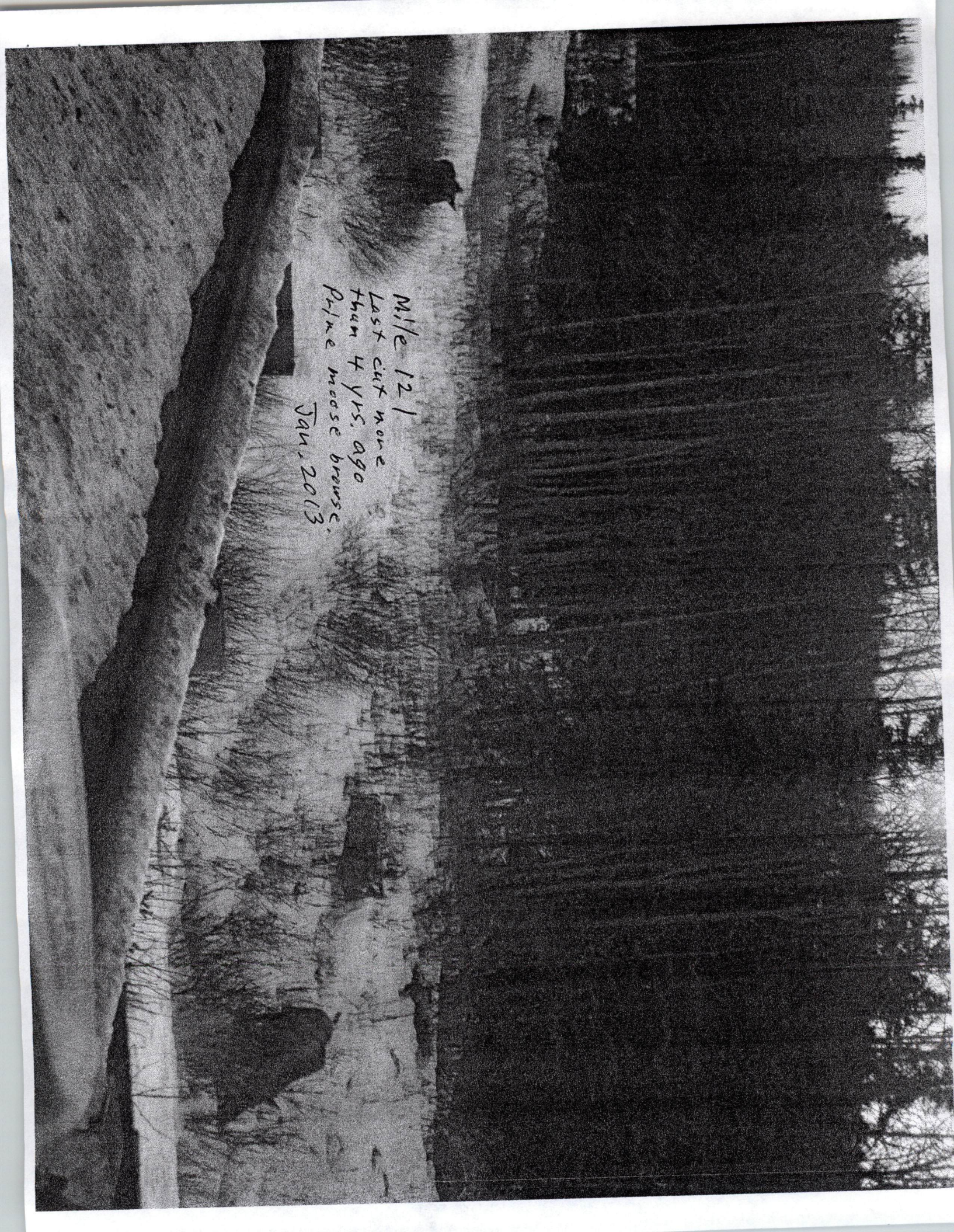


Jan. 2013

Mile 123.3, Clear cut back 100 ft. four
years ago. Hasn't been cut since.
on Rt. side. Left side will be
cut back 200 ft. In Jan. 2013.

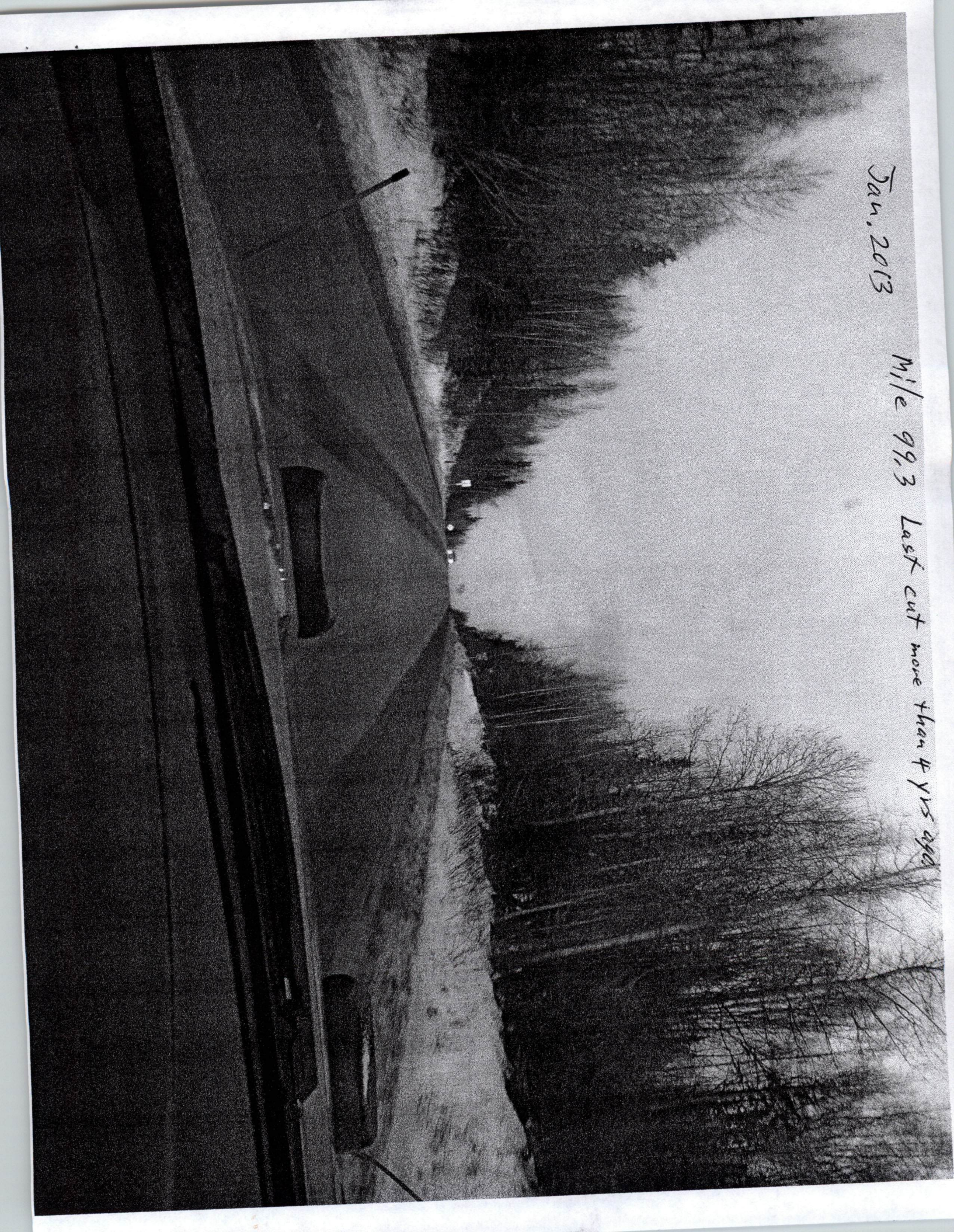


Mile 12 |
Last cut more
than 4 yrs. ago
Pine moose browse.
Jan, 2013



Jan, 2013

Mile 99.3 Last cut more than 4 yrs ago



June 2011,
Yukon, Canada;
Bison attracted to food
created along roadway.

