



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

*National Marine Fisheries Service*

*P.O. Box 21668*

*Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668*

August 15, 2003

Kris Benson  
Project Environmental Coordinator  
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities  
6860 Glacier Highway  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-7999

RE: Juneau-Glacier Highway and Trailheads, Project No.  
68096

Dear Ms. Benson:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT) request for scoping comments regarding the proposal to improve Juneau's Glacier Highway from Tee Harbor to Bessie Creek. The purpose of the project is to replace the pavement, improve the safety of the roads, improve drainage, widen the paved portion to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians, and improve trailheads. We have reviewed your preliminary information and offer the following comments specific to the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), and the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA).

### Essential Fish Habitat

The MSFCMA requires NMFS to make conservation recommendations to DOT regarding any project that would adversely affect EFH. Construction of the sea kayak launch site at north Eagle Beach, involving an undetermined amount of fill in the intertidal zone, and possibly other project actions with effects on anadromous fish streams, will adversely affect EFH. NMFS staff provided information on completing an EFH assessment for this project and examples of EFH assessments to DOT staff on July 29, 2003 at the project scoping meeting. Upon review of the completed EFH assessment, NMFS will provide conservation recommendations to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) through the DOT to avoid or reduce adverse effects to EFH and species for which EFH has been designated. Upon receipt of NMFS' EFH Conservation Recommendations, the MSFCMA requires the FHWA to respond within 30 days informing us of the agency's decision to implement the recommendations.

The EFH Assessment should discuss impacts to EFH for the following species that are likely to be affected by the proposed project: migrating and/or rearing coho salmon, pink salmon, sockeye salmon and chum salmon, yellowfin sole, starry flounder, butter sole, English sole, sand sole, and walleye pollock. These are the species for which EFH has been designated that would most



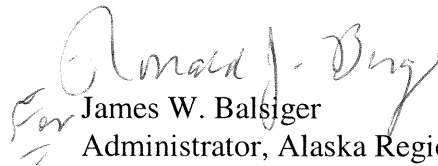
likely utilize the nearshore area and anadromous streams of the project site. EFH is also present for the following species: sculpins, Pacific cod, and forage species including Pacific herring.

Threatened and Endangered Species/ Marine Mammal Protection Act

The project is within the range of humpback whales and Steller sea lions, which are respectively listed under the Endangered Species Act as endangered and threatened species respectively. Also present within the project area are harbor porpoises, harbor seals and killer whales, which are protected under the MMPA. Noise impacts from rock blasting near Eagle Beach may have detrimental impacts on these marine mammals and mitigation for such noise may be appropriate. NMFS requests more information on the proposed blasting activities in order to determine if this project is likely to adversely affect these species. If blasting is likely to adversely affect Stellar sea lions and/or humpback whales, consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act will be necessary.

If you have any questions regarding our comments and information requests for this project, please contact Sue Walker (586-7646, [susan.walker@noaa.gov](mailto:susan.walker@noaa.gov)).

Sincerely,

  
For James W. Balsiger  
Administrator, Alaska Region