



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

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

July 14, 2003

Nancy Swanton
EIS Project Manager
National Park Service
Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve
2525 Gambell Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

RE: Draft Environmental Assessment and EFH Assessment for Glacier Bay National Park Vessel Quotas and Operating Requirements

Dear Ms. Swanton:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Assessment for the Glacier Bay National Park Vessel Quotas and Operating Requirements Draft Environmental Assessment (DEIS).

In the EFH Assessment the National Park Service (NPS) determined that the preferred alternative in the DEIS and the slightly different preferred alternative that is likely to become the preferred alternative in the FEIS, would have minor direct, indirect, and cumulative effects on EFH. The primary effects on marine and anadromous fish resources would be temporary dispersal from areas of high vessel usage due to increased noise levels. The EFH Assessment and the DEIS state that maximum noise level, rather than the frequency of noise events is the most important consideration and that fish populations likely would temporarily avoid the areas where the loudest vessel-related sounds are generated (e.g., cruise ship passages). The NPS has not suggested mitigation for adverse effects on EFH.

We concur that the adverse effects of increased vessel traffic on species for which EFH has been designated would be minor and that mitigation is not practicable.

EFH for Pacific Salmon

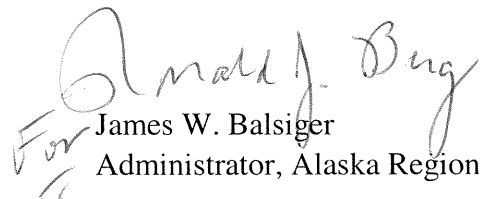
Table 3-6 states that "Salmon species do not have essential fish habitat because they are managed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, not the NOAA Fisheries [NMFS]; they do have important habitat in Glacier Bay." This statement is incorrect. A fishery management plan (FMP) regulates fisheries in the waters off the entire coast of Alaska. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council



(NPFMC) and State of Alaska have effectively implemented this FMP under a joint agreement whereby State fishery regulations also apply within the EEZ. This management deferral by the NPFMC to the State of Alaska, however, does not exempt the NPFMC from mandatory requirements to implement EFH provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Based on the information provided by the NPS in the EFH Assessment, NMFS concurs with your determination. Therefore, the EFH consultation requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act have been satisfied. NMFS remains available to assist the NPS if any additional EFH issues are identified. Please contact Sue Walker at (907) 586-7646 if you require further assistance.

Sincerely,


For James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region