



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

June 25, 2003

Mr. Henri R. Bisson
State Director
Bureau of Land Management
222 West 7th Avenue, #13
Anchorage, AK 99513-7599

Re: Listed species and EFH in the NPR -A/Colville River Area

Dear Mr. Bisson:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed your recent letter concerning preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on proposed development of oil facilities in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) and the Colville River Delta. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency and State of Alaska are cooperating agencies for the EIS. The Alpine Satellites Development Program (ASDP) will be tiered under the programmatic Integrated Activity Plan/EIS prepared for the northeastern portion of NPR-A. You requested that NMFS identify federally listed threatened, endangered or candidate species under our jurisdiction that could be affected by the ASDP. You also requested that NMFS provide information regarding Essential Fish Habitat that could be affected by this action, and identify any other resources of concern.

There are no federally listed threatened, endangered or candidate species under the jurisdiction of NMFS that could be affected by operations associated with the ASDP.

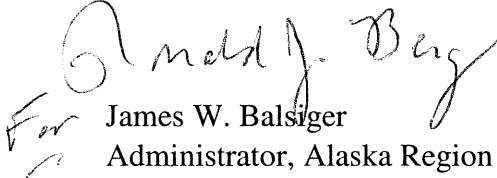
The North Pacific Fishery Management Council and NMFS manage certain fisheries in Alaska under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Section 303(a)(7) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Council and NMFS to describe and identify EFH for each federally managed species. There are no federally managed fisheries in the Beaufort Sea, although the Council and NMFS have identified EFH for salmon in the Beaufort Sea. Please refer to the enclosed report "Essential Fish Habitat Assessment Report for the Salmon Fisheries in the EEZ off the Coast of Alaska." Small populations of chinook, chum and pink salmon are found along the North Slope. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game Atlas of Anadromous Fish lists several salmon populations in the ASDP area. Populations of chum and pink salmon are found in the Colville River. Chum and pink salmon are also found in the Fish Creek drainage including 2 tributaries, Judy Creek and the Ublutuoch River. The Colville River and the Fish Creek drainage are EFH for chum and pink salmon.



NMFS has several potential concerns with oil facility development in NPR-A. The primary concern is the impact of development on the watersheds containing salmon EFH. Impacts associated with water withdrawal, alteration of flow patterns, release of contaminants, project induced erosion, and oil spills could all have negative impacts on salmon EFH. These potential impacts should be evaluated in the EIS.

NMFS looks forward to working with BLM in the development of the ASDP EIS. Please feel free to contact Larry Peltz in our Anchorage Office for further assistance.

Sincerely,


For James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

Enclosure

cc:

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