



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

*National Marine Fisheries Service*

*P.O. Box 21668*

*Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668*

March 18, 2003

Colonel Steven T. Perrenot  
District Engineer  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Alaska District  
P.O. Box 898  
Anchorage, Alaska 99506-0898

Re: D-2002-0642  
Resurrection Bay

Attn: Daniel Smith

Dear Colonel Perrenot:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provided informal comments on March 10, 2003, on the above referenced proposal by Alaska United Fiber Partnership. NMFS review was based on information provided by the Corps on impacts to essential fish habitat (EFH) at the landing location in Resurrection Bay, Seward, Alaska. For that portion of the project NMFS found that "the described action will have no more than a minimal impact and will not result in any substantive adverse effect to EFH." This letter addresses the oceanic portion of the project and provides conservation recommendations to minimize adverse effects to living marine resources, including EFH.

The proposed project involves laying a submarine fiber optic telecommunications cable between Seward, Alaska and the north coast area of Oregon. The project will include a single fiber optic cable with a diameter of 2 inches for the nearshore areas and 1 inch for deep waters. The estimated burial depth for conduit in the nearshore area is approximately 1 meter. Offshore, cable burial to an approximate depth of 1 meter will be conducted where feasible from the end of the transition conduits to water depth of 1500 meters. Construction for the entire project would start in spring 2003 and be completed by January 2004.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires NMFS to make conservation recommendations regarding any federal action that would adversely affect EFH.



## EFH Conservation Recommendations

1. Avoid laying cable over high relief bottom habitat and across "live" bottom habitats such as coral and sponge. If coral or sponge habitats are encountered NMFS would be interested in position and description information.

*Rationale - "Live" bottom habitats such as coral and sponge are relatively rare, exhibit high biological diversity, and are Habitats Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC). HAPC are identified on the basis of ecological importance, sensitivity, exposure, and rarity of the habitat.*

2. Consult and coordinate with the fishing industry through the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

*Rationale - Avoid conflicts with fishing gear by sharing information on issues such as project location and timing.*

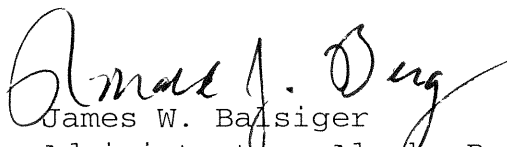
3. Once the project reaches the slope, bury or anchor the cable to the bottom.

*Rationale - Avoidance of fouling with fishing gear.*

Please note that under section 305(b)(4) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Corps is required to respond in writing within 30 days to NMFS recommendations. If the Corps does not make a decision within 30 days of receiving NMFS EFH Conservation Recommendations, the Corps should provide NMFS with a letter to that effect, and indicate when a full response will be provided.

Brian Lance is the NMFS contact for this project, and can be reached at (907) 271-1301.

Sincerely,

*Fer*  
  
James W. Balsiger  
Administrator, Alaska Region

cc: USFWS, EPA, ADGC, ADFG, ADEC - Anchorage

North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
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NOAA, Coast Survey  
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