



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

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

April 12, 2004

Patty Wightman
Environmental Coordinator
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
2301 Peger Road
Fairbanks, AK 99709

RE: Unalakleet Airport Paving
Project Number 61438

Dear Ms. Wightman:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed your letter requesting comments on the proposed upgrades and improvements to the Unalakleet Airport. The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) propose to replace the lighting system, lengthen Runway 14-32 safety area, and construct a General Aviation apron and connecting taxiway. In addition, FAA proposes to pave all operational surfaces, including both runways, apron and taxiway. Borrow material would likely be mined from an existing source located northeast of the airport, accessed by existing roads or by a contractor supplied source. The project would require crushed aggregate base course and asphalt aggregate material. We offer the following comments specific to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

Endangered Species Act

Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA directs interagency cooperation “to insure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out by such agency is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species” or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat. NMFS Alaska Region is responsible for the administration of the ESA as it applies to certain cetaceans, pinnipeds, and marine fish. These include several species of whales, Pacific salmon, and Steller sea lions.

The information you provided indicates that work would occur inland. Due to the inland location of your project, threatened and endangered species under our jurisdiction will not occur in the vicinity of the project site, and critical habitat for those listed species would not be affected.

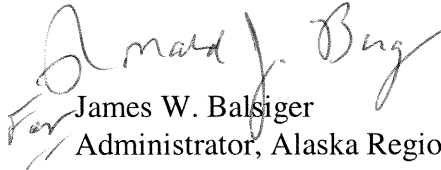


Essential Fish Habitat

Section 305(b)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires interagency consultation for any federal action that may adversely affect EFH. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council has not identified EFH in the vicinity of the proposed project.

We hope this information is useful in fulfilling your requirements under the ESA and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Please direct any questions regarding ESA to Mr. Brad Smith at (907) 271-3023 and questions regarding EFH to Mr. John Olson at 271-1508.

Sincerely,


James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

cc. Kristen Hansen
DOWL Engineers
4040 B Street
Anchorage, AK 99503