



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

January 12, 2006

Colonel Timothy J. Gallagher
District Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 898
Anchorage, Alaska 99506-0898

Re: POA-2006-9-D
NWP #4, Sawmill Creek, Sitka

Attn: Serena Sweet

Dear Colonel Gallagher:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the above referenced proposal by the Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association to place eight to ten piles to hold in place a floating weir at Sawmill Creek to block fish passage from June to September, anchor five 40-foot long by 40-foot high nets for short-term salt water rearing, place a water intake structure in Sawmill Creek to provide a back-up water supply and place a low angle fish ladder.

Section 305(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires Federal agencies to consult with NMFS on all actions that may adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). NMFS is required to make conservation recommendations, which may include measures to avoid, minimize, mitigate or otherwise offset potential adverse effects. Several anadromous fish streams are located within five miles of the project site. Consequently, juvenile and adult salmon use the inshore areas of the project site for out-migration to sea and when returning to spawn.

We offer the following EFH Conservation Recommendations pursuant to Section 305(b)(4)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act:

For pile driving activities, the following are specifically recommended to reduce sound pressure levels that may harm fish.

1. Drive piles with a vibratory hammer. If an impact hammer is required because of substrate type or the need for seismic stability, piles should be driven as deep as possible with a vibratory hammer before the impact hammer is used. Vibratory hammers generally produce less intense sounds than impact hammers (NMFS, 2005). Further, fish have been observed to avoid sounds similar to those produced by vibratory hammers and to remain within the field of harmful sound associated with an impact hammer (Dolat, 1997).
2. Surround piles with an air bubble system. The use of both confined and unconfined air bubble systems may attenuate underwater sound pressure levels up to 28 dB re:1 μ Pa (NMFS 2005).



3. Reduce force used to drive the pile by using cushion blocks and a smaller hammer or a hydraulic hammer for which the force of the hammer blow can be controlled (NMFS 2005).

If you have any further questions, please contact Linda Shaw at 907-586-7643.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Mecum
Acting Administrator, Alaska Region

cc: Applicant
*EPA Juneau, Chris Meade
*ADF&G, Tom Schumacher
ADEC, ADNR, USFWS, Juneau
*email

Literature Cited

- Dolat, S.W. 1997. Acoustic measurements during the Baldwin Bridge Demolition (final, dated March 14, 1997). Prepared for White Oak Construction by Sonalysts, Inc., Waterford, CT/34 pp + appendices.
- National Marine Fisheries Service. 2005. Final Environmental Impact Statement, Essential Fish Habitat Identification and Conservation in Alaska, Vol. 2, Appendix G; National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce. April, 2005.