

August 8, 2006

Environmental Protection Agency
Region 10
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98101

Re: Chuitna Coal Project

Attn: Hahn Shaw

Dear : Ms. Shaw

Thank you for your letter requesting information regarding threatened and endangered species concerns associated with the Chuitna Coal Project.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible for administration of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for cetaceans, sea turtles, anadromous fish, marine fish, seals, sea lions, marine plants and corals. All other species (including polar bears, walrus and sea otters) are administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Threatened or endangered species in Alaska under NMFS jurisdiction include:

- Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) - endangered
- Bowhead Whale (*Balaena mysticetus*) - endangered
- Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) - endangered
- Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) - endangered
- Northern Right Whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) - endangered
- Sei Whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*) - endangered
- Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) - endangered
- Steller (Northern) Sea Lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*) - endangered
(west of 144 degrees longitude)

Additional marine mammals found in Alaskan waters include the killer whale, minke whale, gray whale, Baird's beaked whale, Cuvier's beaked whale, Stejneger's beaked whale, beluga whale, Pacific white-sided dolphin, harbor porpoise, Dall's porpoise, harbor seal, northern fur seal, bearded seal, ribbon seal, spotted seal, ringed seal, California sea lion and northern elephant seal.

At this time, there are no known threatened or endangered species under NMFS jurisdiction that use the waters near your proposed project. Please be aware the Cook Inlet beluga whale occurs in these waters. This population of beluga whales is listed as

depleted under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and a Species of Concern within NMFS; indicating concern for its conservation. NMFS has recently released a draft Conservation Plan for these whales, and is currently reviewing the status of this stock to determine the need for ESA listing. We recommend you consider the effects of this project on the Cook Inlet beluga whale in your evaluations.

We hope this information is useful to you in fulfilling any requirements under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Please direct any questions to our Anchorage field office at (907) 271-5006.

Sincerely,

Jeanne L. Hanson
Field Office Supervisor for
Habitat Conservation Division