



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

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

September 24, 2003

Jerry Ruehle
Environmental Coordinator
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
4111 Aviation Ave.
P.O. Box 196900
Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6900

RE: Manokotak Airport Runway
Project Number 55313

Dear Mr. Ruehle:

Thank you for your letter requesting comments on resources of our concern regarding the proposed upgrades and improvements to the Manokotak Airport. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the preliminary information you submitted in your request. The existing airport facilities do not meet the standards required for several types of aircraft currently operating in Manokotak. The proposed project would provide Manokotak with an improved airport facility. 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 and 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, endangered marine mammals will not occur in the vicinity of the project site, and critical habitat for the above listed species would not be affected.

Essential Fish Habitat

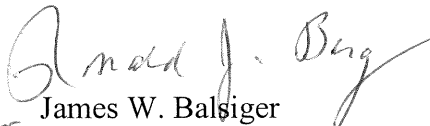

The trigger for EFH consultation is a federal action agency's determination that an action may adversely affect EFH. If a Federal action agency determines that an action will not adversely affect EFH, no consultation is required, and the federal action agency is not required to contact NMFS about its determination. A "no effect on EFH" letter is not required or addressed by either the Magnuson-Stevens Act or the EFH regulations.



In your preliminary information, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) has determined that the Manokotak Airport runway Resurfacing and Extension project will not adversely affect EFH. Based on the information in your letter. NMFS concurs with your determination. Therefore, additional EFH consultation is not necessary.

We hope this information is useful in fulfilling your requirements under section 7 of the ESA and EFH requirements under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. For this project, please direct any questions regarding ESA to Mr. Brad Smith at (907) 271-3023 and questions regarding EFH to Mr. John Olson at (907)271-1508.

Sincerely,


For  James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region