



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

*National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668*

February 10, 2004

Gary L. Lawton
Acting District Ranger
Craig Ranger District
Tongass National Forest
P.O. Box 500
Craig, Alaska 99921-3271

Re: Baker Island Recreation Trail EA

Dear Mr. Lawton,

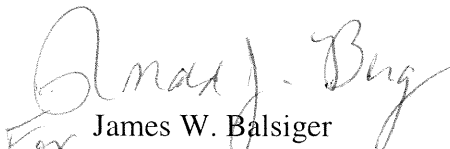
The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) assessment and draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Baker Island Recreational Trail. The U.S. Forest Service is proposing to enhance recreational opportunities on Baker Island by constructing a trail from Port San Antonio to Little Veta Bay. The proposed project would also include either a mooring buoy or a dock for use by recreational vessels.

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 EFH. NMFS is required to make conservation recommendations, which may include measures to avoid, minimize, mitigate or otherwise offset adverse effects.

Studies completed for the EA included a survey of Port San Antonio using an underwater camera and global positioning system to map the location of eelgrass beds. The EA states that the mooring buoy and/or dock would be placed to avoid direct or indirect impacts to eelgrass. The EA also indicates that an additional eelgrass survey will be conducted prior to final design and placement of the dock and/or buoy to assure that no direct or indirect impacts to the eelgrass will occur. In addition, the EA states that the proposed dock would be composed of a float anchored to steel piles. These surveys and management actions are appropriate. Based on the information in the EA, NMFS concurs that the proposed actions are unlikely to cause adverse impacts to EFH.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Katharine Miller at 907-586-7643.

Sincerely,


For James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

cc: EPA Juneau, Chris Meade
ADEC, ADF&G, AADGC, ADNR, USFWS, Juneau

