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

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

May 12, 2004

Teresa J. Dunham
Senior Environmental Analyst
Bristol Environmental & Engineering Services
2000 West International Airport Road, #C-1
Anchorage, AK 99513

RE: Gravel Sale on Native Allotment
A-54031

Dear Ms. Dunham:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed your letter requesting input for the proposed development of a silty sand borrow source on a Native Allotment near New Stuyahok, Alaska. The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities is planning to construct a new airport at New Stuyahok this summer. This material would be used for the airport embankment. 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 federal 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 is responsible for the administration of the ESA as it applies to listed cetaceans and pinnipeds in Alaska. These include seven species of endangered whales (fin, right, humpback, blue, sperm, sei and bowhead whales), the threatened eastern population of Steller sea lions, and the endangered western population of Steller sea lions.

Due to the inland location of the proposed project, threatened or endangered marine mammals will not occur in the vicinity, and critical habitat for the above listed species would not be affected. Additional information regarding the ESA is available on our website at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/default.htm>.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

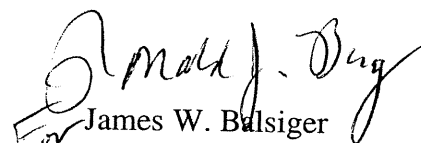
Section 305(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires interagency consultation for any federal action that may adversely affect EFH for species managed under a federal fishery management plan. From the information you have provided, we do not expect the proposed project to adversely affect EFH. NMFS does not offer any EFH conservation recommendations at this time. Further EFH consultation is not necessary, and we have no objection to the proposed



project. Additional information regarding EFH is available on our website at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/habitat/efh.htm>.

If you have questions concerning endangered species issues please contact Mr. Brad Smith at (907) 271-3023. Questions regarding EFH should be addressed to Ms. Jeanne Hanson at (907) 271-3029.

Sincerely,


For James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

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jhanson/jh 5/11/04
jdr

DOT: New Stuyahok gravel alot. JH. 3-12-04