



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

*National Marine Fisheries Service*

*P.O. Box 21668*

*Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668*

April 8, 2005

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

Re: Resurrection Bay 26  
Y-650034

Attn: S. Vandi Leheny

Dear Colonel Gallager:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the above referenced public notice. The applicant, Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC), requests to use a clamshell bucket and barge-mounted crane to dredge the basin east of the ARRC Seward Passenger Dock. Based on information provided NMFS offers the following information under the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

Section 305(b)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires interagency consultation for any federal action that may adversely affect EFH. Dredging activities can contribute sediment to the marine environment, potentially decreasing fish feeding efficiency, damaging gills, and smothering benthic organisms. The Corps has determined that the proposed project may adversely affect EFH. NMFS concurs with that determination and offers the following conservation recommendations:

(1) All dredging activities should be completed by May 15. In this area in-water work is normally restricted to October 1 through March 31 to avoid adverse effects to fish and EFH. Outmigrating salmonids (pink salmon) and juvenile marine fish begin moving into the project area in April with large pulses of coho, Chinook, and sockeye by mid-May. Due to extenuating circumstances in planning the proposed work the applicant is unable to meet the usual timing restriction. Juvenile fish will likely be present and dredging will likely cause adverse effects to EFH. These effects can be minimized by completing all dredging no later than May 15. Any future dredging activities should be completed between October 1 and March 31.

(2) During dredging activities, a silt curtain should be installed and maintained. The curtain should completely enclose the dredge area, extending to the bottom, and remain in place until construction is completed and the side slopes have been stabilized. Dredging activities can contribute sediment to the marine environment, potentially decreasing fish feeding efficiency and



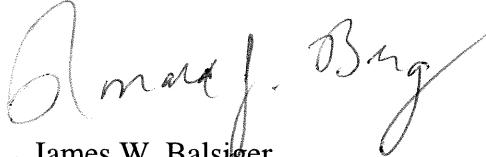
smothering benthic organisms. A silt curtain is particularly important for this project since the applicant will be working outside the normal timing window and numerous juvenile fish will be in the project area.

(3) All dredge material must be free of contaminants as per the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's dredge material testing plan. Dredging activities have the potential to resuspend contaminants trapped in the substrate into the water column, where they may become biologically available to living marine resources.

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

Please note that under section 305(b)(4) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Corps is required to respond in writing within 30 days to NMFS recommendations. If the Corps does not make a decision within 30 days of receiving NMFS Conservation Recommendations, the Corps should provide NMFS with a letter to that effect, and indicate when a full response will be provided. Brian Lance is the NMFS contact for this project, and can be reached at (907) 271-1301.

Sincerely,

  
For James W. Balsiger  
Alaska Regional Administrator

cc: USFWS, EPA, OPMP, OHMP, ADEC - Anchorage  
Alaska Railroad Corporation, Attn: Barbara Hotchkin  
327 W. Ship Creek Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7500  
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