



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

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

July 1, 2005

Patricia A. Grantham, District Ranger
Tongass National Forest
Petersburg Ranger District
P.O. Box 1328
Petersburg, AK 99833

RE: Port Houghton/Cape Fanshaw Peninsula
Landscape Assessment

Dear Ms. Grantham:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the information provided on the Port Houghton/Cape Fanshaw Peninsula Landscape Assessment. The project background information stated that the purpose of the assessment is to document current conditions and ecosystem dynamics, and look at how various resource opportunities interact with one another across the study area. NMFS offers these comments for your consideration.

Federally Managed Fish and Shellfish Species

For information on federally managed fish and shellfish species and essential fish habitat (EFH), NMFS directs you to the following web sites:

<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/habitat/efh.htm> , <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/maps/default.htm> , and <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/efh/download/efhshp.htm> .

A tech memo titled "An Atlas on the Distribution and Habitat of Common Fishes in Shallow Nearshore Waters of Southeastern Alaska" by Scott W. Johnson, A. Darcie Neff, and John F. Thedinga, should be available in August on the Alaska Fisheries Science Center web site. The document will have information on fish species captured with a beach seine at 41 locations in Southeastern Alaska including three locations near the project area (The Brothers Islands, Hobart Bay, and Farragut Bay).

Anadromous Fish

Approximately 16 streams on the peninsula are catalogued as anadromous in the State of Alaska Anadromous Waters Catalogue located electronically at:

http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/SARR/FishDistrib/FDD_catalogs.cfm. The anadromous portions of these streams are considered essential fish habitat for salmon.

Marine Mammals

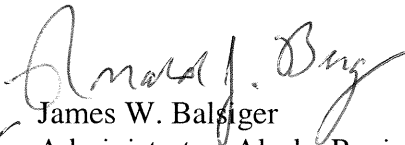
Pacific herring are known to spawn along the shoreline of Cape Fanshaw and within Port Houghton. These herring support an important state fishery and provide a critical source of nutrition to several species of marine mammals throughout the year. Herring spawning success depends on the availability of undisturbed beds of kelp or eelgrass, high water quality and adequate tidal flushing for egg and larval survival.



Several marine mammal species are present in Port Houghton and the marine waters along the Cape Fanshaw peninsula. Among them are two Endangered Species Act (ESA)-protected species: the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) and the Steller sea lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*). Humpback whales have been observed feeding in Port Houghton and Stephens Passage, particularly in the spring and summer months. Three Steller sea lion haulouts are located in the vicinity of the Port Houghton/Cape Fanshaw peninsula: Sail Island, Sunset Island, and The Brothers. Sunset Island is designated critical habitat for the threatened eastern population of Steller sea lions. All three haulouts provide important resting habitats for hundreds of sea lions that forage in Port Houghton, Southern Stephens Passage, Hobart Bay and Windham Bay. High concentrations of rafting and foraging Steller sea lions are common in Port Houghton during the spring, when the Hobart Bay herring run provides a valuable food resource for sea lions, humpback whales, harbor seals and other marine mammals. Three harbor seal haulouts have also been documented on islands in Port Houghton, just offshore from the Cape Fanshaw peninsula.

If you have questions regarding marine mammals please contact Erika Phillips at (907) 586-7312 or at Erika.Phillips@noaa.gov. Contact Cindy Hartmann at (907) 586-7585 or at cindy.hartmann@noaa.gov with any other questions.

Sincerely,


For James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

cc: Pete Griffin, District Ranger, Juneau Ranger District, Tongass National Forest, 8465 Old Dairy Road, Juneau, AK 99801-8041
*Chris Meade, EPA Juneau
*Tom Schumacher, ADF&G, Juneau
*Edward Grossman, USFWS, Juneau
*Jim Cariello, ADNR-OHMP, Petersburg
*Tiffany Benna, Petersburg Ranger District, Tongass National Forest, tbenna@fs.fed.us
*Kaja Brix, NMFS, AKR, PR
*Erika Phillips, NMFS, AKR, PR
*Scott Johnson, NMFS, AFSC, ABL

*email