



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

*National Marine Fisheries Service*

*P.O. Box 21668*

*Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668*

February 24, 2006

Carol Goularte  
District Ranger  
Sitka Ranger District  
204 Siginaka Way  
Sitka, AK 99835

RE: Sitka Ranger District Access and Travel Management Assessment (TMA)  
Environmental Assessment (EA) Comments

Dear Ms. Goularte:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the referenced EA, dated January, 2006, and offers the following comments.

NMFS concurs with your Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) assessment conclusion that both proposed action alternatives would have minimal effect on EFH. In addition, we agree that the proposed action alternatives would likely improve EFH by closing 44 to 48 miles of road to vehicular access and removing 22 crossing structures on Class I streams.

The statement in the EFH assessment that coho, pink, chum, and sockeye salmon, steelhead, sea-run cutthroat, and Dolly Varden "spawn, incubate, and rear primarily in the lower stream reaches" is not accurate for all of these species and should not be used in future EFH assessments. For example, coho salmon rear in upper reaches of streams, while sockeye salmon often rear in lakes.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the EA. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Shaw at 907-586-7510.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Mecum  
Acting Administrator, Alaska Region

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