



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

October 3, 2008

Patricia Sullivan
Sitka EIS Project Manager
Federal Aviation Administration, AK Region
222 West 7th Avenue, #14
Anchorage, Alaska 99513

RE: Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport – Agency Review of Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Dear Ms. Sullivan:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) has reviewed the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) DEIS and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Assessment for the Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport. Our staff also participated by teleconference in the October 2 interagency briefing on the DEIS. A number of changes were incorporated into the DEIS based on our comments on the DEIS and we appreciate these improvements being made. Our following comments are suggestions for further improving the EFH Assessment.

- 1) Clarify the impacts to eelgrass from the seaplane pullout project in terms of acreage affected, steps to avoid impacts and suggested compensatory mitigation.
- 2) Give specific in-water work windows to demonstrate how spawning herring and migrating juvenile salmonids will be protected.
- 3) Include design and monitoring of runway safety area hard fill for optimal re-colonization of existing flora and fauna as an EFH conservation measure.
- 4) Include discussion of stormwater impacts from increased impervious surfaces in Section 4.2, Long Term Impacts, and include minimization and mitigation measures for those impacts in the suggested EFH conservation measures.

NMFS looks forward to working with you to develop a compensatory mitigation plan for the project. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions please contact Linda Shaw at 907-586-7510.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Mecum

RM Acting Administrator, Alaska Region



cc: USFWS, Juneau, Richard Enriquez
EPA, Juneau, Chris Meade
Sitka Tribe, Heather Woody
ADF&G, Juneau, Tom Schumacher
ADOT&PF, Ben White and Jim Heumann
NMFS, PR, Kaja Brix