



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

January 9, 2007

Environmental Protection Agency
Region 10
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98101

Re: Chuitna Coal Project

Attn: Hahn Shaw

Dear Ms. Shaw:

Thank you for your letter requesting information regarding threatened and endangered species associated with the Chuitna Coal Project.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible for administration of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for cetaceans, sea turtles, anadromous fish, marine fish, seals, sea lions, marine plants and corals. All other species (including polar bears, walrus and sea otters) are administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Threatened or endangered species in Alaska under NMFS jurisdiction include:

- Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) - endangered
- Bowhead Whale (*Balaena mysticetus*) - endangered
- Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) - endangered
- Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) - endangered
- Northern Right Whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) - endangered
- Sei Whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*) - endangered
- Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) - endangered
- Steller (Northern) Sea Lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*) - endangered west of 144 degrees longitude and threatened east of this boundary.

Several ESA-listed stocks of Pacific salmon may occur within Alaskan waters. These include the following Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESU): Snake River fall chinook, Snake River spring/summer chinook, Puget Sound chinook, Upper Columbia River spring chinook, Lower Columbia River spring chinook, Upper Columbia River steelhead, Upper Willamette River steelhead, Middle Columbia River steelhead, Lower Columbia River steelhead, and Snake River basin steelhead. We have no information on the specific occurrence of listed salmonids within the project area, however tag recoveries from the Gulf of Alaska indicate these species/ESU's may occur within Cook Inlet.

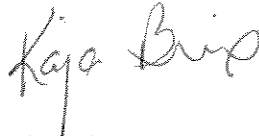


Additional marine mammals found in Alaskan waters include the killer whale, minke whale, gray whale, Baird's beaked whale, Cuvier's beaked whale, Stejneger's beaked whale, beluga whale, Pacific white-sided dolphin, harbor porpoise, Dall's porpoise, harbor seal, northern fur seal, bearded seal, ribbon seal, spotted seal, ringed seal, California sea lion and northern elephant seal.

At this time, there are no known threatened or endangered species under NMFS jurisdiction that use the waters near the proposed project. Please be aware the Cook Inlet beluga whale occurs in these waters. This population of beluga whales is listed as depleted under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and a Species of Concern within NMFS; indicating concern for its conservation. NMFS has recently released a draft Conservation Plan for these whales, and is currently reviewing the status of this stock to determine the need for ESA listing. We recommend you consider the effects of this project on the Cook Inlet beluga whale in your evaluations.

We hope this information is useful to you in fulfilling any requirements under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Please direct any questions to our Anchorage field office at (907) 271-5006.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kaja Brix".

Kaja Brix
Assistant Regional Administrator
For Protected Resources