

## **6.0 COOPERATION AND CONSULTATION**

NEPA requires federal agencies to reduce delay in the NEPA process by cooperating with other affected agencies before an EA or EIS is prepared. Cooperative planning is encouraged when more than one agency (Federal, state, tribal, or local) is involved in the project or program. The USFWS was consulted, and concurred with NMFS's conclusion that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect ESA listed species under USFWS's jurisdiction (USFWS, 2002b). The AEWC was consulted during the scoping process and the development of alternatives. Additionally, although NMFS is the lead agency in this process and the agency with expertise on the biological aspects of bowhead whales, the AEWC was consulted about the social, economic, and cultural impacts of various alternatives. The AEWC also had an opportunity to comment on the preliminary draft EIS.

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