



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

December 18, 2003

Jerry Ingersoll
District Ranger
Ketchikan/Misty Fjords Ranger District
Tongass National Forest
3031 Tongass Avenue
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

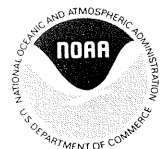
Re: Emerald Bay Timber Sale FEIS and ROD

Dear Mr. Ingersoll:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) assessment, Final Environmental Impact Statement, and Record of Decision for the Emerald Bay Timber Sale. The project area is located on the Cleveland Peninsula in the Emerald and Birch Creek watersheds approximately 40 air miles north of Ketchikan, Alaska. The selected alternative (Alternative D) would harvest approximately 625 acres of commercial forest land. The alternative includes construction of 3.8 miles of road, and construction of one land-to-barge log transfer facility (LTF) to be located in Emerald Bay.

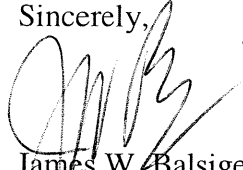
Section 305(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires Federal agencies to consult with NMFS on all actions that may adversely affect EFH. NMFS is required to make conservation recommendations which may include measures to avoid, minimize, mitigate or otherwise offset adverse effects. For the purposes of this project, EFH includes all segments of streams where salmon reside during any period of the year as well as the marine waters and substrates of Emerald Bay. The streams in the project area provide important habitat for pink, chum, and coho salmon. The marine waters and substrates of Emerald Bay provide habitat for a number of species including Pacific cod, arrowtooth flounder, dusky rockfish, shorttraker roughey rockfish, yellow rockfish, Pacific Ocean perch, and walleye pollock. Chinook salmon are present in the marine waters adjacent to the project but do not spawn in the streams.

NMFS concurs with the finding that this project may adversely affect EFH. Implementation of the proposed standards and guidelines for protection of fish habitat from the Tongass Forest Plan and applicable Best Management Practices (BMPs) will minimize this impact on anadromous streams. The use of a land-to-barge LTF, and inclusion of provisions in the LTF management contract to reduce bark accumulation, will minimize the potential impacts to marine EFH from log transfer activities. Todd Tisler, USFS fishery biologist, has further clarified that the proposed LTF will not require a breakwater.



Therefore, NMFS concurs with the conclusion that impacts to EFH will be minimal and we offer no further conservation recommendations. If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact Katharine Miller at 907-586-7643.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Balsiger', written over the printed name.

James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

cc: ADEC, ADF&G, AADGC, ADNR, USFWS, Juneau