



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

February 21, 2003

Mr. Guy McConnell
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Alaska District
EN-CW-ER
P.O. Box 898
Anchorage, Alaska 99506-0898

Re: Tatitlek, Alaska

Attn: Larry Bartlett

Dear Mr. McConnell:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Alaska Region (AKR), has reviewed your preliminary information regarding the Tatitlek small boat harbor project. We offer the following comment specific to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

Endangered Marine Species

Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA directs interagency cooperation "to insure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out by such agency is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species" or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat.

NMFS AKR is responsible for the administration of the ESA as it applies to certain cetaceans, pinnipeds, and marine fish. These include several species of whales, Pacific salmon¹, and Steller sea lions.

Endangered marine mammal species that occur in Prince William Sound during summer months include the humpback and fin whale. Steller sea lions may forage and transit Tatitlek Narrows during peak salmon returns. However, no listed Steller sea lion rookeries or major haulout sites are located near Tatitlek. We do not expect any endangered marine mammals to occur in the

¹ Several Northwest Pacific salmon stocks grow to maturity in offshore areas of Alaska. Several of these stocks are listed as endangered species. Please see the Summary of Salmon & Steelhead Listings at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/> for further information. Any consultation requirements will need to be coordinated with the NMFS Northwest Region, Habitat Division, Portland, Oregon at (503) 231-6880.



vicinity of the project site, and no critical habitat for the above listed species has been identified.

Marine Mammal Species

Marine mammals protected under the MMPA (not endangered or threatened) range throughout Alaskan waters. Marine mammals that may occur near Tatitlek include California sea lions, harbor seals, Dall's porpoises, harbor porpoises, minke whales, and killer whales. We do not expect any marine mammals to be within the vicinity of the project.

Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)

EFH has been designated in waters of Prince William Sound for anadromous salmon and certain life stages of marine fish, such as Pacific cod. A NMFS study dated August 26, 1999 (*Fish and Habitat Assessment in the Area of Proposed Harbor Construction at Tatitlek, Alaska. Murphy and Johnson.*) is still valid for marine resources, including EFH, in or near the project area. Additionally, this field investigation listed several sites containing eelgrass and kelp (*Laminaria*) areas. These areas are identified as a Habitat Area of Particular Concern within EFH.

The information provided in your letter does not address whether the project has been changed since it was originally reviewed in 1999. NMFS awaits your draft environmental document and will provide comment to protect EFH resources during review, if necessary. Therefore, NMFS does not offer EFH Conservation Recommendations at this time.

We hope this information is useful to you in conducting your environmental review for this project. Please direct any questions to Matthew P. Eagleton at (907) 271-5006.

Sincerely,



James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

Enclosure

cc: EPA, ADGC, ADEC, USFWS, ADFG - Anchorage

Table 1: The following species² and critical habitat occur in Alaska waters and have been provided protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*):

<i>Listed species</i>	<i>Stock</i>	<i>Latin Name</i>	<i>Status</i>
Blue whale		<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>	Endangered
Bowhead whale		<i>Balaena mysticetus</i>	Endangered
Fin whale		<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>	Endangered
Humpback whale		<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	Endangered
Right whale		<i>Balaena (=Eubalaena) glacialis</i>	Endangered
Sei whale		<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>	Endangered
Sperm whale		<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>	Endangered
Steller sea lion	Western population	<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>	Endangered
Steller sea lion	Eastern population	<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>	Threatened
Chinook salmon	Puget Sound	<i>Oncorhynchus tshawytscha</i>	Threatened
	Lower Columbia River		Threatened
	Upper Columbia River Spring		Endangered
	Upper Willamette River		Threatened
	Snake River spring/summer		Threatened
	Snake River fall		Threatened
Sockeye salmon	Snake River	<i>Oncorhynchus nerka</i>	Endangered
Steelhead	Upper Columbia River	<i>Onchorynchus mykiss</i>	Endangered

²In its definition of species, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, includes the traditional biological species concept of the biological sciences and "any subspecies of fish or wildlife or plants, and any distinct population segment of any species of vertebrate fish or wildlife which interbreeds when mature" (16 USC 1532). NMFS uses the term *evolutionarily significant unit* as synonymous with *distinct population segment* and lists Pacific salmon accordingly. For the purposes of section 7 consultations, these are all "species."

	Middle Columbia River		Threatened
	Lower Columbia River		Threatened
	Upper Willamette River		Threatened
	Snake River Basin		Threatened
Leatherback sea turtle		<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	Endangered

Designated critical habitat

Species Group	General Reference Area
Whales	No critical habitat has been designated for the above referenced whales in Alaskan waters.
Steller sea lion	Shelikof Strait Area, Bogoslof Area, and Seguam Pass Area (50 CFR Part 226.12)
Pacific Salmon	No critical habitat has been designated for salmon species in Alaskan waters.

The short-tailed albatross, spectacled eider, and Steller's eider are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

All salmon species are under the jurisdiction of NMFS, Northwest Regional Office, Seattle, Washington.