



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

*National Marine Fisheries Service*

*P.O. Box 21668*

*Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668*

January 27, 2003

Jim Childers  
Project Manager  
State of Alaska  
Department of Transportation  
and Public Facilities  
4111 Aviation Avenue  
PO Box 196900  
Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6900

Re: New Seward Highway  
Rabbit Creek to 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Dear Mr. Childers:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) was pleased to be involved with the Agency Scoping Meeting on January 23, 2003, regarding a proposal by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) to improve the New Seward Highway between Rabbit Creek Road and 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The project is in the early scoping and planning stage and presently consists of four alternatives, including three build alternatives and a no build alternative. Depending on the alternative, the project proposes a variety of improvements including adding lanes, access roads, major construction at two interchanges, and capacity improvements at all interchanges.

The proposed project involves eight stream crossings, four of which are anadromous (Campbell Creek, North Fork Little Campbell Creek, South Fork Little Campbell Creek, and Fish Creek). The aforementioned streams are listed as anadromous (ADF&G anadromous catalog) and have been designated as Essential Fish Habitat (EFH).

NMFS believes that the project, as proposed, may adversely affect EFH and anadromous fish resources. However, there are measures that can be incorporated into the project which may lessen or eliminate potential adverse effects to EFH, such as careful alternatives analysis, design stipulations, and "best management practices".

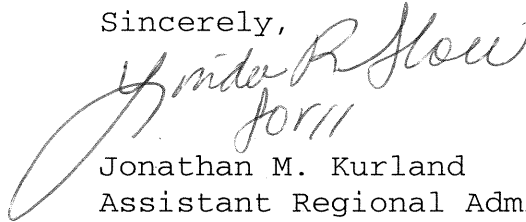
NMFS believes this project is still in the early scoping phase and this letter does not fulfill the coordination and consultation requirements of the EFH provisions as per 50 CFR 600.905-930. We encourage the applicant to include all



resource agencies during the early design phase of all stream crossings, as suggested at the meeting on January 23, 2003, and incorporate resource agency conservation recommendations into your working plan for review. The goal of early resource agency involvement in the design of all stream crossings is to improve hydrologic capacity, allowing streams to reconnect with the flood plain (i.e. adequate bridge spans), with a resultant improvement in anadromous fish habitat. NMFS believes that early involvement in the design phase will increase the likelihood of success for the project and improve resource protection.

We are willing to assist you throughout the project with living marine resource issues identified during your public interest review. The NMFS contact person for this project is Brian Lance (907) 271-1301, [brian.lance@noaa.gov](mailto:brian.lance@noaa.gov). Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jonathan M. Kurland".

Jonathan M. Kurland  
Assistant Regional Administrator  
for Habitat Conservation

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