



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

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

November 13, 2003

Jerry O. Ruehle
Environmental Coordinator
Alaska Department of Transportation
and Public Facilities
4111 Aviation Drive
P. O. Box 196900
Anchorage, Alaska 99519-0473

Re: Nash Road MP 0.0 to 5.3 Rehabilitation
State Project No. 54985

Attn: Rick Raymond

Dear Mr. Ruehle:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the essential fish habitat (EFH) assessment, prepared by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) for the above referenced project. ADOT&PF in cooperation with the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) is proposing to rehabilitate Nash Road. Nash Road is a paved two-lane rural road that extends 5.3 miles from its intersection with Seward Highway, continuing southeast, and ends at Betto Cato Avenue on the shores of northern Resurrection Bay in Seward, Alaska. The proposed project involves resurfacing the highway, improving drainage, signing and striping in order to preserve and extend the service life of the road while improving conditions for motorist safety. The proposed improvements will occur entirely within the existing ADOT&PF right-of-way.

Under Section 305(b)(2) Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) Federal agencies are required to consult with the Secretary of Commerce for any action that may adversely affect EFH. The trigger for an EFH consultation is a Federal agency's determination that the action may adversely affect EFH. A Federal action that may adversely affect EFH must include an EFH Assessment in either a separate document or clearly referenced in a support document, such as an environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the project. An EFH Assessment is outlined in 50 CFR Part 600.920 (e) and includes the mandatory contents: (i) a description of the proposed action, (ii) an analysis of the effects on EFH, (iii) the agencies views regarding the effects of the action on EFH, and (iv) proposed mitigation if applicable.


ADOT&PF has determined that the work associated with the proposed project may adversely affect EFH and has provided proposed conservation recommendations. We assume, from the information provided, that the proposed project would be classified as a Categorical Exclusion by the FHWA. Unfortunately, because of this classification, the description of the work to be done on this project is not well defined at this time and we are unable to provide comments on



the adequacy of the proposed conservation recommendations.

We are willing to assist you throughout the project with living marine resource issues identified during your public interest review. Brian Lance is the NOAA Fisheries contact for this project, and can be reached by telephone at (907) 271-1301.

Sincerely,


James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

cc :EPA, USFWS, DEC, DNR/OHMP in Anchorage