



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

*National Marine Fisheries Service*  
P.O. Box 21668  
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

October 27, 2003

Kris Benson  
Project Environmental Coordinator  
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities  
6860 Glacier Highway  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-7999

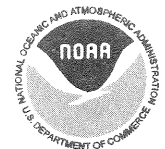
RE: Sunny Point Intersection Improvements

Dear Ms. Benson:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT) Reconnaissance Investigation, request for scoping comments, and drainage review regarding the proposal to improve Juneau's Egan Drive at the Sunny Point/Glacier Highway Intersections. The purpose of the project is to improve access between Egan Drive and the West Lemon Valley and a secondary purpose is to improve the safety of motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians traveling to and from the Sunny Point area. We have reviewed your preliminary information and offer the following comments specific to the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA).

Each of the six alternatives involves construction and fill within intertidal estuarine wetlands and other project actions with effects on anadromous fish streams, and each alternative would adversely affect EFH. Of the proposed alternatives that fully meet the project purpose and need, the proposed alternative, Alternative 4 - Diamond with K-Mart Link and Sunny Point Underpass, maximizes the use of existing uplands or filled areas and minimizes placement of fill on wetlands. This alternative would require placing fill on approximately three acres of wetlands and would affect three anadromous fish streams, East Creek, West Creek and Switzer Creek. Effects on these streams include extending the culvert on Switzer Creek to accommodate off and on ramps, reconstruction or realignment of the East Creek culvert crossing of Egan Drive, and improving the West Creek culvert through Glacier Highway to accommodate fish passage.

The MSFCMA EFH regulations require Federal agencies to evaluate the effects of proposed actions on EFH and associated species of fish. This information is necessary for NMFS to fulfill its statutory responsibility to provide EFH Conservation Recommendations to minimize the adverse effects of the proposed action. A Federal agency must prepare an EFH assessment for any Federal action that may adversely affect EFH. The EFH regulations, 50 CFR 600.920 (e)(3), describe mandatory contents that must be provided in all EFH assessments:



1. Description of the action

*What is the action? What is the purpose of the action? How, when, and where will it be undertaken? What will be the result of the action (e.g., 200 ft seawall, 27 new pier pilings, 500 ft).*

2. Analysis of the potential adverse effects of the action on EFH and the managed species

*What EFH will be affected by the action? What are the adverse effects to EFH that could occur as a result of this action (e.g., loss of 0.5 acres of seagrass, turbidity)? How would they impact managed species (e.g., loss of foraging habitat, removal of cover)? What would be the magnitude of effects? What would be the duration of effects?*

3. Federal agency's conclusion regarding the effects of the action on EFH

*Would the adverse effects be minimal, more than minimal but less than substantial, or substantial based on the information discussed above? Why?*

4. Proposed mitigation, if applicable.

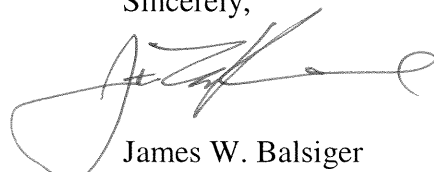
*What, if any, measures is the Federal agency proposing as part of the action to avoid, minimize or otherwise mitigate for the anticipated adverse effects to EFH?*

Upon review of the completed EFH assessment, NMFS will provide conservation recommendations to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) through the DOT to avoid or reduce adverse effects to EFH and species for which EFH has been designated. Upon receipt of NMFS' EFH Conservation Recommendations, the MSFCMA requires the FHWA to respond within 30 days informing us of the agency's decision regarding the recommendations.

The EFH Assessment should discuss impacts to EFH for the following species that are likely to be affected by the proposed project: migrating and/or rearing coho salmon, pink salmon, and chum salmon; yellowfin sole; starry flounder; butter sole; English sole; sand sole; and walleye pollock. These are the species for which EFH has been designated that would most likely utilize the estuarine area and anadromous streams of the project site. EFH is also present for the following species: sculpins and forage species including Pacific herring, sand lance, and eulachon. The EFH Assessment should also discuss mitigation actions that avoid, minimize or compensate for the loss of intertidal estuarine wetlands and impacts to East, West and Switzer Creeks.

If you have any questions regarding our comments and information requests for this project, please contact Sue Walker (586-7646, [susan.walker@noaa.gov](mailto:susan.walker@noaa.gov)).

Sincerely,



James W. Balsiger  
Administrator, Alaska Region