



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

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

February 28, 2006

Colonel Timothy J. Gallagher
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 898
Anchorage, Alaska 99506-0898

Attn: Keith Gordon

Dear Colonel Gallagher:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed additional information regarding the application by Conoco Phillips Alaska Inc. to construct a new satellite drill pad and associated structures in the Colville River delta and National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (POA-2005-1576). Specifically, we reviewed the applicant's recent response to public comments as well as correspondence from representatives of the Kuukpik Corporation relative to the proposed Nigliq Channel bridge, and our staff discussed the bridge design further with your staff. In a letter dated November 21, 2005, NMFS stated that our previous concerns with the project design had been addressed, and we had no further recommendations. However, the applicant's recent submittal and information from Kuukpik suggest that the proposed span of the Nigliq Channel bridge may not be sufficiently long to avoid affecting fish habitat.

The existing plans call for the Nigliq Channel bridge to span the two year floodplain. However, erosion on the west bank of the channel has averaged 2.2 feet per year over the last 51 years based on data supplied by ConocoPhillips. Continued erosion could place the west bridge abutment into the two year floodplain in 10 to 15 years, potentially changing the physical characteristics of the channel and prompting requests for bank stabilization work. NMFS recommends that you work with the applicant to ensure the bridge design incorporates projected erosion rates so that no bank stabilization activities would be expected for the anticipated life of the bridge. Designing the bridge to span the entire two year floodplain, and accommodating foreseeable channel movement over the design life of the bridge, would help maintain existing stream dynamics and associated habitat conditions for anadromous fish.

If you have any questions about this matter, please contact Larry Peltz at (907) 271-1332.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Mecum
Acting Administrator, Alaska Region

