



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

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

September 19, 2006

Ben White
Environmental Analyst
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF)
Southeast Region
P.O. Box 112506
Juneau, AK 99811-2506

Re: Timing Window Extension for Mitkof Highway Phase I and Ohmer Creek

Dear Mr. White:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reviewed your September 5, 2006 letter requesting an extension of the timing window for the Ohmer Creek bridge replacement work until November 1, 2006, and requesting approval to repair or replace the Mitkof Highway culvert installations from October 31, 2006 through March 1, 2007. Conditions in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit specified a timing window of June 1 through September 15 for in-stream work below ordinary high water of the fish streams within the project area and a timing window of June 1 through August 1 for in-water work associated with the bridge over Ohmer Creek. The permit requires the permittee contact NMFS and other agencies to get written concurrence prior to submitting a request for timing window modifications.

Ohmer Creek is a catalogued anadromous fish stream (# 108-40-10500) with coho, pink, chum, and sockeye salmon, steelhead, and Dolly Varden char. In August 2006 the timing window was extended to October 1, 2006. ADOT&PF requests an additional extension due to material shipping delays. The instream work that remains to be done is the removal of temporary bridge footings and the placement of riprap around the abutments. A sediment barrier is currently in place isolating the work area from the remainder of the stream. The contractor will keep the sediment barrier in place until the work is completed. The water in the working area will be actively pumped and allowed to pass through the road drainage ditch and swales prior to entering Ohmer Creek. Upon completion of the work the water in the containment area would be pumped to a vegetated area with silt fences along the road a minimum of 50-feet from the stream. The sediment barrier will be removed after the work is complete and the area dewatered.

Four small coho rearing streams (not currently catalogued) along Mitkof Highway require replacement or repair work. ADOT&PF proposes to conduct this work this winter from October 31 through March 1. Potential impacts to fish in the streams will be minimized by using appropriate best management practices (BMPs) and by trapping work areas to move fish into other areas of the stream that are not affected by the project.



The work area will be isolated from the remaining portions of the stream. Upstream water will be diverted or pumped around the work site to maintain ordinary high water downstream of the work site. Waste water and water with sediment from the work site will be pumped out of the stream. An Alaska Department of Natural Resources biologist will be on site to trap coho and ensure all precautionary measures are taken and working.

NMFS concurs with ADOT&PF's request for a modification of the timing window as long as BMPS are followed and all the precautionary measures identified above are taken. If you have questions regarding our comments for this project, please contact Cindy Hartmann at 907-586-7585.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert D. Mecum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robert D. Mecum
Acting Administrator, Alaska Region

cc: Cindy, NMFS HCD, Juneau
Bill Hanson and Richard Enriquez, USFWS, Juneau
Serena Sweet, USACE, Anchorage
Jim Cariello, ADNR, Petersburg