



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

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

August 25, 2008

Colonel Kevin J. Wilson
District Engineer, Alaska District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P. O. Box 898
Anchorage, Alaska 99506-6898

Re: POA- 2008-996
Sawmill Creek

Attn: John C. Leeds, III

Dear Col. Wilson:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the above referenced General Permit Agency Coordination (GPAC) regarding a proposal by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT & PF). ADOT & PF proposes to discharge fill into and relocate a segment of a catalogued anadromous waterway. The project site is located within Section 34, T. 30 S., R. 59 E., Copper River Meridian; Latitude 59.235° N., Longitude -135.461° W.; Skagway A-2 Quadrangle; City and Borough of Haines, Haines, Alaska.

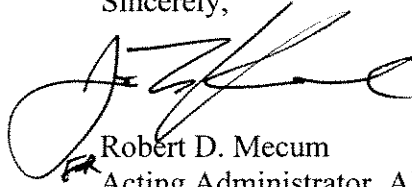
The Corps of Engineers has determined that the described activity may adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). NMFS agrees with this determination and has discussed the project with Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Habitat Biologist Kate Kanaouse, who has visited the site. The applicant proposes removing a buried culvert of unknown condition, origin or size, and installing a new 84" culvert designed to efficiently pass fish and water. The new culvert inlet will lie adjacent to the existing one but the outlet will be moved about 100' northeast of the existing outlet. The new culvert will receive water from Stream No. 115-32-10300-2002-3019, where coho, cutthroat and Dolly Varden are known to occur, however the new outlet will discharge to a tributary of this stream, Stream No. 115-32-10300-2002-3019-4005, where coho are known to occur. Realignment of the proposed new culvert will result in the dewatering and loss of about 50' of anadromous habitat in tributary No. 115-32-10300-2002-3019-4005.

The existing culvert does not allow for the passage of fish or water during high water events, resulting in damage to EFH. Rerouting the -3019 outlet to the -4005 tributary will increase stream flow and will likely enhance EFH by flushing iron, iron floc and organics downstream, and by depositing gravel from upstream sources. NMFS agrees with ADF&G that the expected improvements to EFH and enhanced fish passage resulting from the new culvert outweigh the loss of 50' of lower quality EFH in -3019. NMFS has no objections with this project as proposed.



If you have questions or comments please contact Chiska Derr at (907) 586-7345 or by e-mail at Chiska.derr@noaa.gov. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Mecum
Acting Administrator, Alaska Region

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