

Appendix C

USFWS Threatened and Endangered Species Consultation

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|---|------|
| DOT&PF Evaluation of Potential Biological Impacts on ESA-Listed Species | C-1 |
| USFWS Concurrence with Unlikely to Result In Harm..... | C-8 |
| DOT&PF Updated ESA Consultation..... | C-10 |
| USFWS Non-concurrence with Updated ESA Consultation..... | C-20 |
| DOT&PF Revised Design and USFWS Concurrence with Unlikely to Result in Harm Determination..... | C-23 |



September 23, 2013

Project: Hooper Bay Airport Improvement
Project No.: 57419
Consultation No.: 2010-0191

Kimberly Klein
Endangered Species Biologist
USFWS
Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office
605 West 4th Avenue, Room G-61
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2249

RE: Evaluation of potential biological impacts on ESA-listed species

Dear Ms. Klein,

In response to your letter on January 11, 2013, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in cooperation with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), has conducted an evaluation of potential biological impacts from the proposed Hooper Bay Airport Improvements project on Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species. For this project, you identified two protected species, the Steller's eider and spectacled eider, as ESA-listed species that may be found within the project area.

The scope of work in your January 11, 2013, letter is still accurate (Figures 1 and 2) except now two different material sources are being considered. Both sources were included in the evaluation and are presented as two separate alternatives: Alternative A proposes a material source on the airport property and Alternative B proposes a material source at Dall Point (Figure 3).

Based on the attached analysis, DOT&PF finds that both alternatives are **not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed species or their critical habitat** because potential impacts from noise, light, and degradation of water quality are minor. For Alternative A, it has also been determined that ESA-listed species are unlikely to occur within the project area. The 2009 USFWS bird survey determined that development at Dall Point would result in greater impacts than anywhere else in the project area. However, the majority of ground-disturbing work for Alternative B at Dall Point would occur in the winter when eiders are not present. The loss of habitat at Dall Point and the associated impacts to eiders would be inconsequential because of the pristine and abundant habitat surrounding the proposed material source.

If you have any further questions or require additional information please contact me by phone at (907) 269-0534 or email at taralyn.stone@alaska.gov.

Sincerely,



TaraLyn Stone
Environmental Impact Analyst

Enclosures:

- Figure 1 Location and Vicinity Map
- Figure 2 Project Details
- Figure 3 Material Site Alternatives and Haul Routes
- Evaluation of Potential Impacts

cc: Brian Elliott, DOT&PF Central Region, Regional Environmental Manager
Bruce Greenwood, FAA Environmental Specialist
Luke Bowland, P.E., DOT&PF Central Region, Project Manager
Matt Dietrick, DOT&PF Central Region, Environmental Team Leader

Evaluation of Potential Biological Impacts on ESA-Listed Species

ESA- Listed species in the project area

The project area for both alternatives consists of the airport property boundary and includes all airport facilities, proposed material sites, barge landing, and haul routes. The barge landing and part of the haul route for both phases is on the Nuok spit, south of the airport property. The project area also includes the Airport Access Road which connects the airport property with the community.

Through prior consultation with you, DOT&PF identified the following species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that may be found within the project area for both alternatives: Steller's eider, spectacled eider, and short-tailed albatross. None of the species have designated Critical Habitat within five miles of the project area. You also indicated that the short-tailed albatross is not expected within the project area and is not likely to be impacted.

Based on the 2009 USFWS bird survey, the project area does not appear to support breeding populations of the eiders. The survey did find that Dall Point, the proposed material site for Alternative B, is an important bird resource area. Nests were present within and adjacent to the proposed material source at the time of the study. The inland part of the Nuok Spit was also identified in the report as having the highest density of nests.

Alternative A: Airport Property Material Site

Direct Construction Impacts

This alternative would excavate material from the material source on the south end of the airport during summer months and would place it within the new construction footprint. The material source and construction footprints would be cleared before the eiders begin to nest in May. Clearing the footprints would limit summer construction to the existing airport surfaces and previously disturbed ground.

Surface course material would then be barged into Hooper Bay which would require the use of heavy machinery on the beaches between Nuok Spit and the airport. All work on the Nuok spit would be limited to the sandy beaches and previously disturbed ground. Work on the Nuok spit and the beach between it and the airport is not expected to result in any effects on ESA listed species because barges cannot land until the landing area is free of ice, which is around the same time as the eiders are nesting on the adjacent tundra and are off the beaches.

Noise impacts from construction machinery during nesting season would be temporary and consistent with existing noise levels from airplanes landing and taking off from the airport. Heavy machinery off the airport property, e.g. on haul routes and at the barge landing, would cause a minor increase in the noise levels. The locations of work off the airport property are mostly along the beaches and in previously disturbed areas which are not preferred nesting habitat of the eiders.

Airport construction could impact listed species and their habitat by degrading water quality through the release of contaminants and or sediments. Potential off-site impacts to water quality during construction would be mitigated by implementing an approved Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). The SWPPP would include Best Management Practices for the prevention of spills and the containment of sediment.

Long Term Impacts

The proposed project would not cause long term impacts to potential nesting habitat surrounding the project area for Alternative A. According to the 2009 USFWS bird survey, it is unlikely that eiders occur within and in the immediate surroundings of the airport property and Alternative A would not result in a loss of important eider habitat. Long-term impacts to water quality are unlikely. The increase in surface area would not change the discharge from the airport because the surfaces would be constructed out of permeable material. The permeable material would allow storm water to infiltrate into the airport surfaces without resulting in additional or contaminated surface flow. Impacts from lighting and visual changes are anticipated to be minor. Though the existing lighting system is being replaced by a larger system, the new lights would be the same intensity and in the same general location as the existing lights.

Alternative B: Dall Point Material Site

Direct Construction Impacts

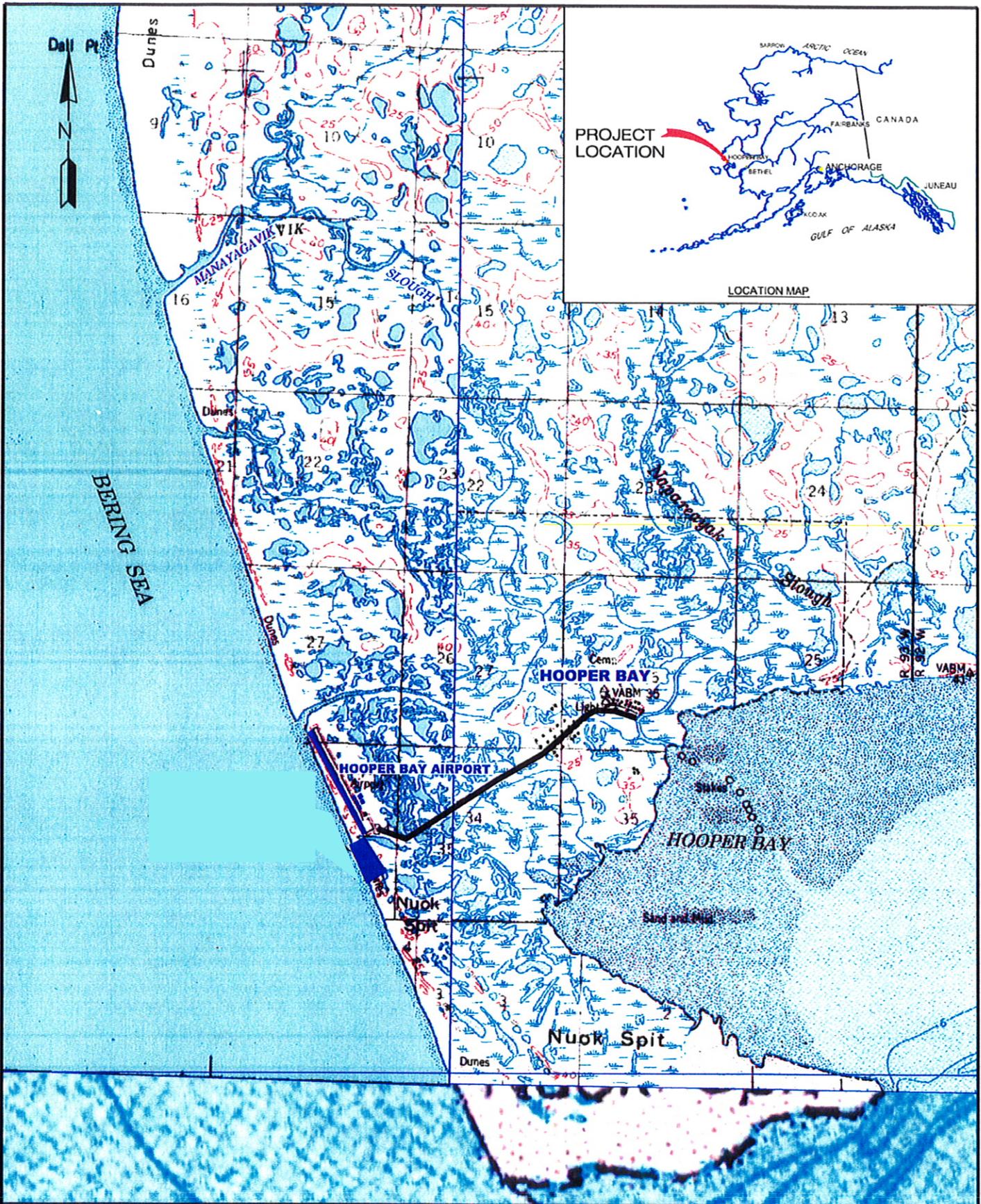
This alternative would excavate material from Dall Point, located about six miles north of the airport on the coast. Material would be excavated and hauled in the winter months. The haul route for this alternative would be along the coast to minimize impacts to wetlands and listed species habitat. Material would then be stockpiled within the construction footprint of the proposed apron or on previously disturbed areas. Most of the construction would occur during the summer and limitations on clearing and water quality impacts would be implemented as described above for Alternative A.

An increase in noise levels, in addition to those described above would result from this alternative. The distance from Dall Point to the airport means the existing noise levels at Dall Point resulting from airport traffic and adjacent land use are low. The temporary increase in noise levels during construction at Dall Point and along the haul route would only occur in the winter months, when eiders are not present in the vicinity of the material site.

Long Term Impacts

In addition to the long-term impacts described for Alternative A, Alternative B would result in a permanent loss of higher value eider habitat and a change in land use at the Dall Point material site. The total area of lost habitat would be about the same as Alternative A but, according to the 2009 USFWS bird survey, development at Dall Point would likely result in a greater level of impact to local breeding birds than other sites. Currently, there is no development at Dall Point and the use of the area as a material source would open the area to future development. However, the community identified the area as a potential material site and is seeking ways to open it for future use. The area surrounding the material source would remain undisturbed and pristine eider habitat.

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| <p>STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES</p> <p>PRELIMINARY DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP</p> | <p>SCALE: NTS</p> <p>DATE: 6/19/2013</p> <p>BY: T. STONE</p> | <p>HOOPER BAY AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT NO. 57419 LOCATION & VICINITY MAP HOOPER BAY, ALASKA</p> | <p>FIGURE 1</p> |
|---|--|--|-----------------|



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STATE OF ALASKA
 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
 AND PUBLIC FACILITIES
 PRELIMINARY DESIGN AND
 ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

SCALE: SEE GRAPHIC
 DATE: 2/5/2013
 BY: T STONE

HOOPER BAY AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS
 PROJECT NO. 57419
MATERIAL SITES & HAUL ROUTES
 HOOPER BAY, ALASKA

FIGURE 3



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Anchorage Fish & Wildlife Field Office
605 West 4th Avenue, Room G-61
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2249



In reply refer to: AFWFO

October 29, 2013

Emailed to:

TaraLyn Stone
DOT&PF
P.O. Box 196900
Anchorage, Alaska 99519- 6900

Re: Hooper Bay Airport Improvement (*Consultation Number 2010-0191-R001*)

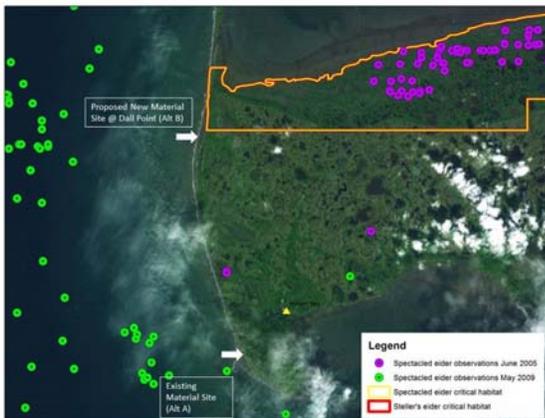
Dear Ms. Stone,

Thank you for your September 23, 2013, letter requesting concurrence with the determination that improving the airport in Hooper Bay, Alaska, is not likely to adversely affect species protected by the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq., as amended; ESA). The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) proposes to improve the airport at Hooper Bay, Alaska.

Project Description

The proposed upgrades at the Hooper Bay airport, located on the coast of the Bering Sea, include repairing runway surface deterioration, increasing runway length, and improving accessibility. The runway would be extended approximately 1,200 feet and the apron relocated and expanded. The runway would be armored and a wall at the north end sheet piled. Lighting would be improved, but power transmission, which is currently underground, will not change. Access improvements would include: relocating the beach access road, raising the airport access road, and constructing a new maintenance and operations lot and snow removal equipment building. Two material sources are proposed: the existing material source just south of the airport and a new material source at Dall Point approximately 6 miles north along the beach. All clearing would occur before eiders initiate nesting in May. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan would be developed and implement to protect water quality.

ESA-Listed Species



Our records indicate the following species may be found in the action area: the Alaska breeding population of Steller's eider (*Polysticta stelleri*, listed as threatened in 1997), and the spectacled eider (*Somateria fischeri*, listed as threatened in 1993). Federally designated critical habitat for nesting spectacled and Steller's eiders is in the immediate vicinity of the proposed activities (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Spectacled eider observations and federally designated critical habitat for both Steller's and spectacled eiders in the action area for the proposed airport upgrades in Hooper Bay, Alaska.

TaraLyn Stone

Effects Analysis

The terrestrial habitat in the immediate vicinity of Hooper Bay is not believed to be a high density nesting area. Spectacled eiders stage off the shoreline in May and shortly thereafter fly to the inland nesting grounds. Important nesting habitat, designated as critical habitat for both spectacled and Steller's eiders is just to the south of Kokechik Bay. While the proposed material site at Dall Point is adjacent to the critical habitat boundaries for Steller's and spectacled eiders, it is about 10 miles away from the high density nesting area observed in 2005. Nesting Steller's eiders are extremely rare on the Yukon Delta in general and have not been observed in the action area in recent times.

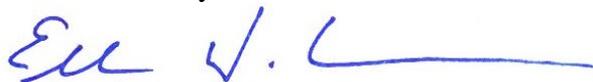
Because land clearing will occur outside of the nesting period, noise disturbance will be short term, and not in close proximity to important nesting habitat, and water quality will be protected, improvements to the airport using the material source south of the airport is unlikely to adversely affect listed species or their critical habitat. Steller's and spectacled eiders are both known to collide with above ground power lines, but since power lines associated with this airport are buried and that will not change with this proposed activity, collisions are unlikely. Although the material site at Dall Point is adjacent to critical habitat, material for this project will be hauled out on the beach during winter and therefore will not disturb eiders staging offshore and moving in to the nesting grounds. Because airport improvement activities, including excavation of material from either site A or B, is unlikely to result in harm to listed species or destruction of critical habitat, the Service concurs with your determination.

Requirements of section 7 of the ESA have been satisfied. However, if new information reveals project impacts that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner not previously considered, if this action is subsequently modified in a manner which was not considered in this assessment, or if a new species is listed or critical habitat is designated, reinitiation of section 7 consultation should be considered.

This letter relates only to federally listed or candidate species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat under jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It does not address species under the jurisdiction of National Marine Fisheries Service, or other legislation or responsibilities under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Clean Water Act, National Environmental Policy Act, or Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

Thank you for your cooperation in meeting our joint responsibilities under the ESA. If you have any questions, please contact me at (907) 271-1467 and refer to consultation number 2010-0191-R001.

Sincerely,



Ellen W. Lance
Endangered Species Branch Chief



March 3, 2014

Project: Hooper Bay Airport Improvement
Project No.: 57419
Consultation No.: 2010-0191

Kimberly Klein
Endangered Species Biologist
USFWS
Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office
605 West 4th Avenue, Room G-61
Anchorage, AK 99501-2249

RE: Update to ESA Consultation and Determination of “Not Likely to Adversely Affect”

Dear Ms. Klein,

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in cooperation with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), received concurrence from your office on a determination that the proposed project to improve the Hooper Bay Airport (Figure 1) is not likely to adversely affect Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species or their critical habitat. Since we received your concurrence on October 29, 2013, the project scope has changed and a new material site alternative has been developed. Due to these changes, DOT&PF is requesting your concurrence that the proposed project changes are **not likely to adversely affect ESA-Listed Species**.

Changes to Proposed Project

The proposed project consists of two phases to improve the existing facilities and extend the runway (see enclosed Detailed Project Description and Figures 2 and 3). There are three notable changes since the last consultation. The changes are highlighted on the enclosed project description and are further discussed below.

Overhead Utility Poles and Lines

The project is now proposing to construct overhead utility poles and lines running from the community to the airport. The existing underground utility lines are in poor condition from the frost in the soil. The poles would be approximately 30 feet tall and spaced 150 feet apart, running a distance of approximately 4,500 feet from the airport to the city of Hooper Bay (see enclosed standard pole designs).

Barging Material from Dall Point (Alternative B)

The previous consultation only addressed trucking material from Dall Point six miles down the coastline to the airport. The new scope also includes the potential for the contractor to barge the material from the beach at Dall Point to either the barge landing at Nuok Spit or on the airport property.

Addition of Alternative C: Barging in Material

The third option is to barge all material, borrow and surface course, from an established material site outside the Hooper Bay area. The material site would be selected by the contractor and would be required to have all the proper permits, clearances and FAA environmental requirements as necessary. Material would be barged in with the equipment and supplies to the primary or secondary barge landing, hauled by truck on the designated haul routes, and stockpiled within the project area.

Effect Analysis

Overhead Utility Poles and Lines

According to the Avian Protection Plan Guidelines (2005) which was prepared by the Edison Electric Institute's Avian Power Line Interaction Committee and the USFWS, power lines and overhead utility poles pose a threat to raptors and other birds through electrocutions or collisions. The ESA-listed species with a potential to be within the proposed project area are not large raptors, which are most susceptible to electrocution. The poles and lines would still be consistent with the recommended "Avian-Safe" construction dimensions for raptors and large birds in rural areas. To minimize the potential for collisions, utility poles would be equipped with "visibility enhancement devices". The purpose of the devices will be to increase the contrast of the power lines and utility poles, for the reasonable life of the power line, in poor visibility conditions.

Alternative C: Barging Material

The barge landings are in the same location as described for Alternatives A and B in the 2013 consultation, however more trips would be required to move borrow material in addition to surface course, equipment, and supplies. Approximately 150,000 cubic yards of material would be required for each of the two phases. The barges would run between May and October, depending on weather, and it would take approximately 100 trips to import the material and supplies for each phase.

The primary barge landing area, Nuok Spit, and secondary landing area, adjacent to the airport, were included in the 2009 USFWS bird survey. The inland portion of the Nuok Spit was found to have a high concentration of nests (multiple species) but not the beach and sandy dunes. As with Alternatives A and B, all work on the Nuok Spit and at the airport barge landing for Alternative C would be limited to the sandy beaches and previously disturbed ground and would occur after eiders have moved inland from the coast to nest.

Noise impacts would be temporary and would result from hauling material from the barge landing to the airport property and project area along the coast. The level of noise in the surrounding areas would be consistent with airplanes taking off and leaving the airport but would be more constant during construction. Again, as with Alternatives A and B, no work would take place in preferred inland nesting habitat or where impacts from increased noise levels is a concern.

Barging material could impact listed species and their habitat by degrading water quality through the potential release of contaminants or spills. Previous consultation with you indicated that over the last 18 years, there have been 2,008 spills from barge incidents, 14 percent of which were in western Alaska. The spills occurred while barges were refueling and the maximum spill was 100 gallons. The low probability of the spills and the small amount of fuel resulting from a spill indicate that the probability to impact eiders from a spill is very low. All

barges would be required to carry a spill response kit and other measures would be implemented, including a Hazardous Material Control Plan, to mitigate any potential spills. Impacts from the proposed project on water quality would be mitigated through the preparation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan.

Potential light and other impacts discussed in the previous consultation documents would not change as a result of Alternative C. No long-term impacts would result from the proposed project except those discussed in the previous consultation for the proposed airport improvements.

Determination of Effect

The overhead utility poles, barging of material from Dall Point, and Alternative C are not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed species. The utility poles would be constructed in accordance with USFWS guidance to minimize potential electrocution of or collisions with eiders. Barging material from Dall Point and Alternative C would result in only minor additional noise and water quality impacts than those already proposed and any potential impacts would be mitigated by implementation of a Hazardous Material Control Plan.

If you have any further questions or require additional information please contact me by phone at (907) 269-0534 or email at taralyn.stone@alaska.gov.

Sincerely,



TaraLyn Stone
Environmental Team Leader

Enclosures:

- Detailed Project Description
- Figure 1: Location and Vicinity Map
- Figure 2: Project Overview
- Figure 3: Airport Improvement Details
- Standard Pole Designs

cc: Brian Elliott, DOT&PF Central Region, Regional Environmental Manager
Leslie Grey, FAA, Environmental Specialist
Luke Bowland, P.E., DOT&PF Central Region, Project Manager