UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

June 9, 2004

Anne Currie
Project Assessment Director
British Columbia Environmental Assessment Office
P.O. Box 9426 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B. C. V8W9V1

Re: Galore Creek Project

Dear Ms. Currie;

Thank you for taking the time and effort to meet with U.S. Federal and State agencies on the Galore Creek Project. The meeting in Juneau in May was helpful in understanding the project, the environmental processes and in meeting those involved.

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the *Galore Creek 2004 Baseline Studies Field Program Plan* prepared by Rescan Environmental Services Ltd and made available for our review in May. NMFS provided input into the interagency letter sent from Ed Fogels to you on May 28th. We are in agreement with the need for two additional sampling stations in the Stikine River, one near Shakes Slough and one downstream of the confluence of the Iskut and Stikine Rivers. In addition to the interagency comments NMFS has the following additional comments on the baseline field program.

NMFS suggests that the baseline aquatic studies be done in close cooperation with Department of Fish and Oceans Canada (DFO) and Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) biologists. ADF&G has several joint research projects on the Stikine River on anadromous king, coho and sockeye salmon. Information on this research can be received from DFO Canada or from ADF&G Sport Fish Division (SFD) and Commercial Fish Divisions (CFD). ADF&G SFD conducts the research on king salmon. ADF&G CFD conducts the research on coho and sockeye salmon. The Southeast Regional Supervisors for these divisions are: Rolland (Rocky) Holmes (ADF&G SFD, 907 465-4296, rocky_holmes@fishgame.state.ak..us) and Kyle Herbert (acting) (ADF&G CFD, 907 465-4228, kyle_herbert@fishgame.state.ak.us). Pre-development data collection are extremely important and a wide spectrum of expertise in stream, lake, and large river sampling should be consulted and involved with these initial studies.

In 2004, fish community and habitat surveys will be conducted in July and August. This time period would miss the major spring migration of eulachon into the Stikine River, and the fall migration of coho salmon to spawning tributaries. A spring and winter sample should be included in the 2004/2005 plan to adequately describe the seasonal importance of those habitats within the footprint area. ADF&G CFD in Wrangell could provide a seasonal time-table of fish migrations in the Stikine River. Scott Forbes is the ADF&G CFD Assistant Area Management

Biologist in Wrangell. He can be reached at: P.O. Box 200, Wrangell, AK 99929-0200; 907 874-3833; scott_forbes@fishgame.state.ak.us. William Bergmann is the CFD Regional Area Management Biologist in Petersburg. He can be reached at: P.O. Box 667, Petersburg, AK, 99833; 907 772-5239; william_bergmann@fishgame.state.ak.us.

NMFS has no research or data to provide for the Stikine River. However, we have conducted some research on the Taku River of which the methodology or findings may be of use as you conduct field studies and analyze possible environmental effects of the mine on Stikine River habitats. For habitat sampling on the Stikine River, the paper by Murphy et al. offers some strategies (attached). Also attached are two papers on spawning habitat and distribution of spawning by sockeye salmon in the Taku River (Lorenz and Eiler, 1989; and Eiler, Nelson and Bradshaw, 1992). The findings in these papers may be useful when you analyze the potential impacts of the project on sockeye salmon.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. We look forward to working with you on this project. Cindy Hartmann is the NMFS contact for this project, and can be reached at (907) 586-7585.

Sincerely,

For James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

Attachments (3)

cc: Clem Pelletier, Rescan Environmental Services Ltd., Sixth Floor, 1111 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6E2J3
Bruce Halstead and Deborah Rudis, USFWS, Juneau
Pamela Bergmann, USDOI, 1689 C. Street, Room 119, Anchorage, AK 99501-5126
Ed Fogels, Alaska DNR, OMPM, 550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 900D, Anchorage, AK 99501
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Jim Cariello, ADNR, OHMP, Petersburg
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William Bergmann, ADF&G, CFD, P.O. Box 667, Petersburg, AK 99833
Rocky Holmes, ADF&G, SFD, Juneau
Kyle Herbert, ADF&G, CFD, Juneau
Jack Helle, Jeep Rice and Scott Johnson, NMFS, ABL

References

Murphy et al. 1989. "Habitat Utilization by Juvenile Pacific Salmon (*Oncorhynchus*) in the Glacial Taku River, Southeast Alaska." *Can. J. Fish. Aquat. Sci.* 46:1677-1684.

Lorenz, J. M. and J. H. Eiler. 1989. "Spawning Habitat and Redd Characteristics of Sockeye Salmon in the Glacial Taku River, British Columbia and Alaska." *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society.* 118:495-502.

Eiler, J.H., B.D. Nelson and R.F. Bradshaw. 1992. "Riverine Spawning by Sockeye Salmon in the Taku River, Alaska and British Columbia." *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society.* 121:701-708

F:\Mining\2004 Mining\ Galore Creek comments on 2004 Baseline Studies Program 6-04.wpd

Attachment: F:\Mining\2004 Mining\ Attachment 1 to Galore creek comments on 2004 Baseline studies Program 6-04 Murphy Paper.pdf

Attachment: F:\Mining\2004 Mining\ Attachment 2 to Galore creek comments on 2004 Baseline studies Program 6-04 Eiler Paper.pdf

Attachment: F:\Mining\2004 Mining\ Attachment 3 to Galore creek comments on 2004 Baseline studies Program 6-04 Lorenz Paper.pdf

Cindy Hartmann and Scott Johnson (ABL)

June 8, 2004