



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

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

January 15, 2009

Lindarae Shearer
Grants Manager
Annette Island Packing Co.
P.O. Box 10
Metlakatla, Alaska 99506-0898

Re: Cold storage facility repairs
Port Chester

Dear Ms. Shearer:

This letter is in response to your recent request for comments from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on proposed repairs to the Annette Island Packing Company (AIPC) cold storage facility in Metlakatla, Alaska. NMFS understands that AIPC received a Department of Commerce (DOC) grant in 2005 to purchase heavy equipment for the facility. However, structural engineers subsequently determined that many of the pilings supporting the facility were in need of replacement to support the additional weight of the equipment. The grant has been amended to include funds for replacement or repair of up to 109 pilings. Prior to disbursement of grant funds, DOC requires that NMFS review and comment on the potential impacts of this project on threatened and endangered species.

The project is within the range of the endangered humpback whale and the threatened Steller sea lion, as well as harbor and Dall's porpoises, harbor seals, and minke and killer whales, which are protected under the MMPA. All of these species may occur in the marine waters near Port Chester at any time of year on an opportunistic basis.

NMFS offers the following comments specific to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The MMPA and the ESA prohibit the injury, harm or harassment of marine mammals. Pile driving introduces high levels of impulsive noise into the water column, with the potential to harass or injure marine mammals. Should this project proceed, NMFS will provide recommendations to avoid, reduce, or mitigate the adverse impacts of pile driving activities on marine mammals.

If you have any questions regarding our recommendations for this project, please contact John Hudson (907-586-7643) or Kate Savage (907-586-7312).

Sincerely,

Robert D. Mecum
Acting Administrator, Alaska Region

