



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

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

January 27, 2009

Tom Irwin, Commissioner
Department of Natural Resources
550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1400
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Commissioner Irwin:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) supports the Alaska Plant Materials Center's proposal to the Coastal Impact Assistance Program titled, "Perform risk analysis and develop/implement management and prevention plans for wetland invasive species of concern in Alaska coastal zones." This project would look in-depth at the occurrence of a number of invasive plants already present in Alaska (purple loosestrife, reed canarygrass, and three species of knotweeds), which threaten riparian and wetland habitats. Mapping existing infestations and determining the risk they pose to nearby sensitive habitats would enable managers to develop control and eradication strategies. NMFS supports this project because all of these invasive species pose a threat to the viable functioning of salmon streams in Alaska. Invasive wetland plant species can alter hydrology and nutrient cycling, crowd out native plants, and even impede salmon access to spawning sites. Given the importance of our native salmon runs to commercial, recreational, and subsistence fisheries, invasive wetland plants should be a priority for control and eradication. Land-based oil and gas development activities that are in proximity to anadromous streams could spread these species or enhance their ability to thrive through disturbance.

NMFS has been working closely with the Alaska Invasive Species Working Group and Alaska Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plants Management (CNIPM) to identify priorities in the State of Alaska, and all of these species are considered priorities for control and eradication. In addition, Mr. Gino Graziano, Alaska's Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Coordinator and Chair of CNIPM, is the ideal proponent for this project. He brings a wealth of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to this issue and has led many efforts to control these species, including experimental research for reed canarygrass control in the Kenai. Mr. Graziano is well known and respected by NMFS staff, who have been working with him on the invasive species issue for several years. We have the utmost confidence that he will see this project to success. NMFS will likewise be an enthusiastic and supportive partner for this project.



Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions regarding our support of this proposal, please contact Linda Shaw at 907-586-7643 or linda.shaw@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert D. Mecum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Robert D. Mecum
Acting Administrator, Alaska Region