

Appendix I: USFWS FWCA Response



United States Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office
101 12th Avenue, Room 110
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
March 11, 2019



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Attn: Colonel Phillip J. Borders
District Engineer, Alaska District
Post Office Box 6898
Elmendorf AFB, Alaska 99506-0898

Re: Port of Nome Modifications
Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report

Dear Colonel Borders:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Conservation Planning Assistance Branch has reviewed the proposed six construction alternatives for the Port of Nome Modifications project (Alternatives 3a, 3b, 3c, 4a, 8a, and 8b). All the alternatives focus primarily on modifying the causeway and breakwater configurations, and dredging within the confines of the causeways and the Nome harbor to accommodate deeper-draft boats.

The Service does not believe a Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report (CAR) is required at this time. The Service began preparing a CAR when previous alternatives included potentially using Port Clearance near Teller, Alaska, as part of the Alaska Deep-Draft Port System. We submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) a draft CAR (May 10, 2014) for this effort that focused on potentially affected environmental resources, but we did not provide recommendations since a preferred alternative was not selected. The Port of Nome Modifications project is much narrower in scope, and likely would have been our recommended alternative for the Alaska Deep-Draft Port System.

The proposed project, however, is within the range of five species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended: spectacled eider (*Somateria fischeri*), Alaska-breeding population of the Steller's eider (*Polysticta stelleri*), polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*), Southwest Alaska district population segment of the northern sea otter, (*Enhydra lutris kenyoni*), and short-tailed albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*). Although a CAR under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act is not required, because the project would occur within the range of ESA-listed species, it does not preclude the requirement for project-specific consultation under section 7 of the ESA. The Service's Endangered Species Branch is currently consulting with the USACE regarding potential impacts to these species by the proposed project.

On October 4, 2017, the Service determined the Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*) does not warrant listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (82 FR 46618). A small possibility exists Port Nome related vessel traffic in the Bering Sea would encounter walrus swimming offshore. We encourage the USACE to contact the Service's Marine

Mammals Management (MMM) Office to develop an appropriate mitigation plan to minimize potential effects on walrus.

In summary, after reviewing the Port of Nome Modifications, we have no further concerns when consultation under section 7 of the ESA, and coordination with the MMM Office is completed. The Service has no objections to the project as proposed; therefore, there is no need for a Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act investigation and subsequent report. However, should the proposed project undergo any significant changes in the design, siting, or management, please contact our office.

We appreciate the offer to prepare a CAR, and we would be happy to continue providing recommendations to avoid and minimize adverse impacts to fish, wildlife and their habitats as the project progresses. Please contact Amal Ajmi at 907-456-0324 or amal_ajmi@fws.gov, or me, should you have any questions concerning these comments.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Henszey
Conservation Planning Assistance Branch Chief

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