



ALASKA COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Tulsequah Barging Proposal **Important Habitat Designation Q & A**

Why did DCOM designate the Taku River as “important habitat”?

The Division of Coastal and Ocean Management’s (DCOM) role is to evaluate important habitat designation requests to ensure they comply with a two-part regulatory requirement. DCOM initially approved this request for the entire river, but after additional regulatory review determined that the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) had not met the two-part test for the portion of the river that is *not* tidally influenced. DCOM rescinded the designation for this portion of the river and advised ADF&G to provide more information explaining how the Redfern Resources (Redfern) barging project will proximately contribute to a material change or alteration of the coastal waters. ADF&G has decided not to pursue this broader designation.

What does this designation mean?

Redfern, the project proponent, will be asked to address the special productivity of the tidally-influenced portion of the Taku River (the mouth of the river to the Taku Lodge area during winter travel). The request for this designation is based on ADF&G’s recognition of the Taku River as a productive habitat for both fish and wildlife species and allows for DCOM and ADF&G to consider the special productivity of the Taku River both during the consistency review process and the permitting process. Even without this designation, ADF&G will address the special productivity of the Taku River through their permitting process.

What is the definition of special productivity?

Special productivity is not defined in State of Alaska regulation or statute and is not defined in the applicable Coastal Zone Management Program Code of Federal Regulations. In ADF&G’s important habitat request they provided scientific evidence explaining how the Taku River is biologically and significantly productive for fish and wildlife species. DCOM recognizes ADF&G’s expertise in this area and will ask Redfern to address how they will avoid, minimize, or mitigate significant adverse impacts to the special productivity of the fish and wildlife habitat identified by ADF&G.

Has the State determined that the proposed hoverbarge will have significant adverse effects on the Taku River?

No. The important habitat designation means that DCOM and permitting agencies can now evaluate, during the consistency review, whether the proposed project will have significant adverse impacts to the special productivity of the important habitat.

Does this designation change the scope of the State’s review?

No. This designation only applies to the tidally-influenced portion of the river, as previously described in the existing scope of this consistency review. The scope of the project and this designation include the mouth of the river to Taku Lodge area, during winter operations.

Does this designation affect any testing that the applicant will have to complete?

No. This designation does not affect any testing that has already been requested by consistency review participants, but participants may ask for additional test results to address the special productivity of fish and wildlife species, if needed.

Does this designation apply to other projects on the Taku including additional proposals from Redfern?

No. This designation does not apply to any other consistency reviews. For an important habitat designation to apply to another consistency review, the designation process would need to take place again.

Does this designation affect ADF&G's ability to evaluate the project under AS 16.05.871 (Fish Habitat Permit)?

No. ADF&G retains their authority under the above statute. This designation allows for DCOM and permitting agencies to address the special productivity of the Taku River during the ACMP consistency review process, and for ADF&G to address this during the fish habitat permitting process.