



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

May 15, 2015

Chris Oliver
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 West 4th Ave, Ste. 306
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Mr. Oliver:

The draft Recovery Plan for endangered Cook Inlet beluga whales is now available for public review. Section 4(f)(1) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to develop and implement recovery plans for listed species. In October 2008, NMFS listed the Cook Inlet beluga whale as an endangered species. In March 2010, NMFS convened a Recovery Team to help draft a Recovery Plan. The Recovery Team was comprised of over 30 members organized in two advisory groups: a Science Panel and a Stakeholder Panel. In March 2013, the Recovery Team provided NMFS with the first draft of the Recovery Plan. This marked the completion of the team's work; therefore it disbanded and NMFS took responsibility for finalizing the draft Recovery Plan.

Today NMFS published a notice in the Federal Register (80 FR 27925) announcing the availability of the draft Recovery Plan for the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale for public review and comment. NMFS will consider all information received during the 60-day public comment period as we develop the final Recovery Plan. Procedures for commenting are detailed in the Federal Register notice.

Both the draft Recovery Plan for the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale and the Federal Register notice soliciting public comments are available on our website at:
<http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/protectedresources/whales/beluga/recovery/ci.htm>.

We encourage you to review this draft plan and submit comments during the public comment period. If you have any questions about the recovery planning process for Cook Inlet beluga whales, please contact Mandy Migura at 907-271-1332 or mandy.migura@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

James W. Balsiger, Ph.D.
Administrator, Alaska Region

