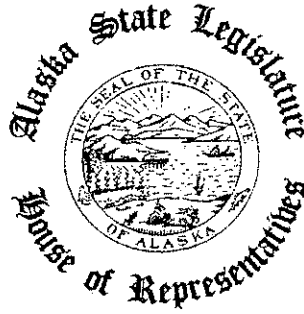


REPRESENTATIVE
CHARISSE MILLETT

Anchorage

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February 17, 2010

Kaja Brix
Assistant Regional Administrator, Protected Resources
Alaska Region
National Marine Fisheries Service
Attn: Records

RE: Proposed critical habitat designation for upper Cook Inlet [RIN 0648 AX50]

Mrs. Brix,

This letter is to state my opposition to declaring 3,000 square miles of upper Cook Inlet as critical habitat for beluga whales.

The designation is simply unnecessary and could erect numerous roadblocks to natural resource development, the commercial and sport fishing industries, shipping, military operations and recreational opportunities in and around Cook Inlet.

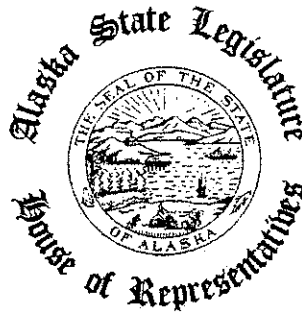
Here are just a few examples:

- An unsustainable beluga harvest was the reason for the population decline. The National Marine Fisheries Service has acknowledged that fact and the harvest plan was amended
- The Port of Anchorage serves 85 percent of the population of the state and received 90 percent of the goods coming into the state and it has already addressed the conservation needs of the Cook Inlet beluga whales
- The National Marine Fisheries Service states that the designation will only cost an additional \$600,000 over the next decade – that estimate does not consider the extra costs that existing and future operations may have to pay to meet unnecessary new regulatory burdens

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- Over the past five years the number of Cook Inlet belugas has increased four percent a year and to my knowledge there is no reason to think that trend will not continue in the years to come

There are many more examples that I have listed in House Joint Resolution 40, a resolution stating the Alaska Legislature's opposition to the critical habitat designation. The resolution was filed last month and is currently working its way through the legislature.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my opinion on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Rep. Charisse Millett