



TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY CHAMBER
P O W E R T H R O U G H
C O N N E C T I O N S

March 2, 2010

Kaja Brix, Assistant Regional Administrator
Protected Resources Division, Alaska Region NMFS
ATTN: Ellen Sebastian

Via: www.Regulations.gov

RE: "RIN 0648-XT72"

Dear Ms. Brix:

Thank you for the opportunity to express our perspectives and preferences regarding the critical habitat listing of Cook Inlet for beluga whales.

The Puget Sound and Alaska communities have a unique and extensive economic partnership documented by the most recent "[TIES THAT BIND](#) The Enduring Economic Impact of Alaska on the Puget Sound Region." The Port of Tacoma's most important trading partner is the Port of Anchorage with over \$3.5 billion of two-way trade in 2008.

This two-way trade, primarily marine, serves to sustain Alaska's citizens with the basic staples of everyday life and its economy with the means to develop and market the boons of the state. The only conceivable alternative would be a Berlin-style Airlift.

But the Port of Anchorage and the Port of Tacoma have an even greater shared relationship. Both the Ports of Tacoma and Anchorage are among the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Strategic Ports and, as such, are [critical to the nation's security](#) and require an unimpeded marine transportation corridor between them. Further, the Port of Tacoma hosts two [MARAD vessels](#), a ready source of ships in fulfilling a role as the nation's fourth arm of defense in logistically supporting the military and national emergencies for Alaska and the Pacific Northwest.

The sustainment of an economically viable marine corridor is mandatory for support of the lives of Alaska's citizens, its economy and the common national defense.

Sincerely,

Gary D. Brackett, CCR

Manager, Business and Trade

cc: Wayne Stevens, [Alaska State Chamber of Commerce](#)

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