



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ALASKA DISTRICT, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 6898
JBER, AK 99506-0898

FEB 05 2020

Gail R. Schubert, President, CEO
Bering Straits Native Corporation
3301 C Street, Suite 400
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Melanie Bahnke, President
Kawerak Inc.
3301 C Street, Suite 400
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear President Schubert and President Bahnke:

Thank you for your joint letter dated January 29, 2020 requesting an expansion of the public comment period of at least 90 days for the Port of Nome Modifications Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Supplemental Environmental Assessment (IFRSEA). The United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Alaska District, values your comments on this project and carefully considered your request for an extension.

The Corps has decided to maintain the current comment period deadline. Although we are not extending the formal comment period as requested in your letter, we will accept any additional comments as we proceed in developing the final report and will incorporate them as possible.

The Corps values collaboration with Alaska Native Tribal entities. Your input is vital to the scoping, development, and review of our projects. For the Port of Nome Modifications, in particular, your participation in the April 2018 charette provided a strong foundation for developing the scope and important considerations the study should assess. For example, maintaining access to subsistence and ensuring cultural resources are persevered were key considerations raised and addressed through our study process. This coordination resulted in the development of a MOA for tracking and handling of any cultural resources discovered as part of project construction. This MOA was discussed in a meeting between the Corps, Nome Eskimo Community and Kawerak on March 27, 2019. The first draft IFRSEA was released in May 2019, and the public hearing held on June 18, 2019 in Nome. The Corps used comments received and input from technical reviews to make revisions to the report leading up to the release of an updated report and supplemental EA on December 31, 2019.

The supplemental EA released on December 31st was initiated due to two significant changes from the June 18th release. First, the Corps' technical review of additional project information led to a change in the project justification, shifting from National Economic Development to community viability. Second, design of the project docks shifted from caissons to sheet pile due to the depth limitations of caissons. Sheet pile construction is known to produce noise that is harassing to marine mammals. Thus, a supplemental EA was necessary to disclose potential impacts to those marine mammals that were not contemplated by the previous caisson construction method and therefore not in the June 18th release. We hope these clarifications aid in evaluating the new release.

We have also received your comments dated February 3, 2020, and will take these under consideration.

If you have any further questions, please feel to contact Mr. Bruce Sexauer our Chief of Civil Works Branch at (907) 753-5619.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Borders', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Phillip J. Borders
Colonel, U.S. Army
Commanding

cc:

Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Senator, United States Senate
Honorable Dan Sullivan, Senator, United States Senate
Honorable Don Young, Representative, United States House of Representatives
Ms. Kendall Campbell, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District, Tribal Liaison
Mr. Bruce Sexauer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District, Chief of Civil Works