DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Address reply to:
COMMANDER
Seventeenth Coast Guard District
P.O. Box 3—5000
Juneau, Alaska 99802

U. S. COAST GUARD

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

FOR

ESTABLISHMENT OF VESSEL TRAFFIC FAIRWAYS

IN

UNIMAK PASS AND APPROACHES TO PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

This action has been thoroughly reviewed by the Coast Guard and it has been determined, by the undersigned, that this project will have no significant effect on the human environment.

This finding of no significant impact is based on the attached U.S. Coast Guard prepared environmental assessment which has been determined to adequately and accurately discuss the environmental issues and impacts of the proposed action and provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an environmental impact statement is not required.

3 JUL 1980
Date

R. D. MEINERS
LTJG, U. S. Coast Guard
Environmental Assessment Officer
Seventeenth Coast Guard District

14 July 1980
Date

R. J. KNAPP
Rear Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Commander, Seventeenth Coast Guard District

Encl: (1) Environmental Assessment

U.S. COAST GUARD

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

FOR

ESTABLISHMENT OF VESSEL TRAFFIC FAIRWAYS

IN

UNIMAK PASS AND APPROACHES TO PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

This Coast Guard environmental assessment was prepared in accordance with Commandant Instruction M16475.1A and is in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (P.L. 91-190) and the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations dated 29 November 1978 (40 CFR 1500-1508).

This environmental assessment serves as a concise public document to briefly provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining the need to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact.

This environmental assessment concisely describes the proposed action, the need for the proposal, the alternatives, the environmental impacts of the proposal and alternatives, comparative analysis of the action and alternatives, a statement of environmental significance, and lists the agencies and persons consulted during its preparation.

EAS Officer: 3 JUL 1980 (Date) — R. D. MEINERS, LTJG, USCG

Legal Officer: 9 JUL 1980 (Date) — P. M. FISHER, LT, USCG

Project Officer: 11 JUL 1980 (Date) — F. N. HARRELL, CDR, USCG

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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With the signing of the Port and Tanker Safety Act of 1978 in October 1978, certain authority and responsibility previously assumed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) has been specifically changed to the Secretary of Transportation. Among the responsibilities that the Coast Guard has been charged with is that of providing safe access routes for the movement of vessel traffic proceeding to and from ports or places subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. As an initial step, the Act required that a study be initiated to determine the potential traffic density and the need for safe access routes for vessels in any area where such routes might be necessary.

Areas to be studied fell into one of three priorities. Priority one areas were those areas where OCS exploration or development was imminent or occuring. Priority two areas were the approaches to major ports through which over 1,000,000 tons of cargo are shipped per year. Priority three are all coastal areas not covered by priorities one and two.

The study done on Alaskan ports identified three critical transportation corridors: approaches to Prince William Sound, Cook Inlet/-Shelikof Strait, and Unimak Pass. Other areas of Alaska simply do not have the volume or type of traffic that would warrant the establishment of vessel routing measures.

We are proposing that two vessel traffic fairways be established in Alaskan waters. One to provide safe maritime routing to and from Prince William Sound through the outer continental shelf areas of the Northern Gulf of Alaska. The other will be through Unimak Pass which is a major route for vessels rounding the Alaska Peninsula as well as a Great Circle route from western U.S. ports to the Far East.

Consideration was given to establishing fairways in Cook Inlet, Shelikof Strait, and Kennedy Entrance. After discussing the local navigation conditions with the S.W. Alaskan Pilots, a decision was made to not designate fairways at this time.

Wind, current, and ice conditions during the different seasons of the year require the use of many varied routes across Cook Inlet.

Oil and gas exploration, to date, has yet to result in a significant find. Development in these offshore waters is expected to be minimal. The existing oil wells pose no problem to safe navigation, and to designate meaningful fairways would eliminate the major portion of Cook Inlet from further offshore activity.

Alternatives to the proposed action are almost limitless in number and range from no action to establishment of Traffic Separation Schemes and Vessel Traffic Services. The proposed action is not intended to be far reaching in nature and was not designed to meet the myriad of development scenarios that are possible in Alaska.

In view of the Department of Interior's vigorous offshore leasing program, the impending resolution of the d-2 lands issue, and the expansion of the domestic bottomfish industry, it is very likely that there will be a substantial increase in the level of vessel traffic in Alaska; however, we do not feel that now is the time to try and establish vessel traffic routing measures for areas where development may or may not occur.

Development in Alaska will be closely monitored and, if necessary, fairways or other vessel traffic routing measures will be established at a later date.

The proposed action, since it is only formalizing traditional vessel traffic routes, should not result in an appreciable increase in vessel traffic through the designated fairways. Therefore, we feel there should not be a net increase in the level of either marine or airborne pollutants found in these areas as a result of the proposed action.

Implementation of these proposals should not adversely affect any coastal zone natural resources but they will limit the range of uses of coastal zone natural resources in that the Corps of Engineers will not grant permits for the erection of structures in the areas designated as fairways since structures located therein would constitute obstructions to navigation.

It has been determined that the proposed actions are in accord with the goals, guidelines, and objectives of the Alaska Coastal Management Program and to the maximum extent practicable, will be undertaken in a manner consistent with the program.

Designation of these fairways will not affect an engandered species or their critical habitat designated as endangered or threatened pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Formal consultation pursuant to Section 7 of the Act with the Department of Interior is not required for this proposed activity.

The designation of these fairways will not affect any parks, wildlife refuges, recreational, or historical areas. This proposal, therefore, has no Section 4(f) and Section 106 involvement,

The social impacts of these actions will be minimal since the proposed fairways will only be formalizing traditional vessel traffic routes and will not direct vessel traffic through areas previously unused.

The implementation of the proposed actions will have no significant impact on the quality of the human environment.

Agencies consulted during the preparation of this environmental assessment:

Federal

National Marine Fisheries Service (Juneau)

Bureau of Land Management, OCS Office (Anchorage)

Corps of Engineers, Alaska District (Anchorage)

State of Alaska

Governors Office:

Division of Policy Development and Planning

Office of Coastal Management

Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Local Governments

Haines Borough	City of Wrangell
City of Yakutat	City of Valdez
City of Unalaska	City of Kotzebue
City of Nome	City of Dillingham
City of Skagway	City and Borough of Juneau
City and Borough of Sitka	City of Bethel
Port of Anchorage	Bristol Bay Borough
Harbor Master, Whittier	Harbor Master, Homer
Harbor Master, Seldovia	Harbor Master, Seward
Port of Kodiak	

Note: In addition to the above mentioned Federal agencies, State agencies, and local governments, over ninety other private organizations were contacted in the initial development of these proposals.