



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

March 23, 2011

Tamara McGuire, Ph.D.
Cook Inlet Beluga Whale Recovery Team Leader
2000 W. International Airport Rd, Ste C1
Anchorage, AK 99502

Dear Dr. McGuire,

NMFS has received and considered your letter dated January 13, 2011, on behalf of the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale Recovery Team (CIBRT) Science Panel, requesting that NMFS "ensures all the members of the team by CIBRT Terms of Reference (TOR)" and remove team members from the science panel who are unable to operate as independent scientists. NMFS recognizes there are concerns by some members of the CIBRT regarding the adherence to the TOR. While NMFS stands by the TOR, we also value the contributions of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game biologists on the science panel. NMFS believes the scientific integrity of the draft recovery plan will not be compromised by including the participation of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game biologists on the Science Panel and wishes to retain their expertise.

Sincerely,

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

cc: Cora Campbell, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Tim Ragen, Ph.D., Executive Director, Marine Mammal Commission
Nils Warnock, Ph.D., Executive Director, Audubon Alaska
Bob Shavelson, Executive Director, Cook Inletkeeper
Karla Dutton, Alaska Program Director, Defenders of Wildlife

