

**U. S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Region 7, Alaska**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**TERRA Southwest Broadband Telecommunications Project
Environmental Assessment**

Department of the Interior (DOI) agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and National Park Service (NPS) are considering applications from United Utilities, Incorporated (UUI) to install infrastructure as part of a project to provide broadband telecommunications services for the communities of Southwestern Alaska.

Three microwave repeater stations are proposed for installation on Federal lands; two on the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge (Togiak Refuge) and one on BLM managed lands. If approved by the Federal agencies, these facilities would require FWS and BLM to grant Federal rights-of-way (ROWs) and the NPS would need to issue a special use permit (SUP) for activities associated with the installation of the fiber optic cable on submerged lands in Lake Clark, within the boundaries of the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

The FWS, as lead agency for the DOI agencies, has completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) (herein incorporated by reference) describing three alternatives and associated effects on the human environment.

Alternatives Considered

Three alternatives were selected and carried forward for analysis which included: the No Action Alternative, the proposed action alternative as developed by UUI, and an alternative which would bypass the Refuge and BLM lands by using submarine cables from Dillingham (Kanakanak) to Quinhagak.

No Action – Alternative 1

Under the No Action Alternative, the Federal agencies would not grant ROWs and the existing telecommunications and satellite Internet service would continue.

Hybrid Fiber Optic/Microwave – Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)

Under the proposed action, a series of three microwave towers and associated facilities, would be constructed on Federally managed lands. The towers would be 60 ft tall, with eight foot microwave antennas and cellular phone service antennas attached. Power would be provided by two 9kW diesel generators. A lake-bed spur fiber-optic cable would connect Nondalton and Port Alsworth, with egress on private lands in Port Alsworth.

Hybrid Fiber Optic/Microwave with Submarine Cable – Alternative 3

Based on a feasibility study, FWS selected for analysis a submarine cable system from Dillingham to Quinhagak, using a festooned approach with duplicate cables connecting the four proposed sites. This would replace the proposed microwave towers and related facilities.

Analysis of Impacts

The EA analyzed direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the following resources:

Physical Environment

Meteorology and air quality
Geology and soils

Hydrology

Hazardous materials and
waste management

Biological Environment

Wetlands and vegetation
Fish and essential fish habitat

Terrestrial wildlife

Marine life and marine
mammals

Social Environment

Socioeconomics
Subsistence (ANILCA Section
810 Evaluation)
Land use
Lands with wilderness
characteristics (Cone
Mountain)
Transportation
Recreation
Noise
Visual resources
Cultural Resources
Environmental Justice

The EA identified no significant effects to resources including the opportunity for continued subsistence activities or threatened and endangered species.

Public Review

On February 9, 2011, the FWS announced the availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment with a letter and posting on the Togiak Refuge website. The Refuge sent this notice to the mailing list of persons who had expressed an interest in the project during the scoping period. Public meetings were held in Dillingham, Nondalton, Port Alsworth, Goodnews Bay, and Togiak. In addition to comments received during public meetings, 44 written submissions were received.

Revisions from the Draft Environmental Assessment

In response to public comments and agency review, a number of clarifications and corrections were made to the EA. Additional analysis was performed in the areas of greenhouse gas emissions, alternative power sources, recreation, noise and visual impacts. Additional mitigation measures were identified, notably a seasonal window for helicopter-supported refueling flights. All impact ratings were reviewed and adjustments were made, although summary ratings for each resource area remained the same with no significant impacts identified. NPS has prepared a

Determination of Impairment for effects in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. This determination, included as an appendix in the final EA, finds that anticipated impacts would not rise to levels that would constitute impairment.

Conclusions

Based on review and evaluation of the information contained in the EA, I have determined that there will be no significant individual or cumulative impacts to the human environment, within the meaning of section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and that the activities described in the EA are not major Federal actions. Accordingly, the FWS is not required to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.



Geoffrey L. Haskett
Regional Director

4/11/11

Date