

NMFS Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) is starting the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation process with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for a proposed project to mine the Bonanza Channel and Tidal Lagoon, near Nome, using a suction dredge that is specifically designed for shallow water estuary dredging and gold recovery. HCD provided comments to USACE in 2018 and 2019 on exploration activities.



IPOP, the mining company, announced on May 15, 2020 that they hope to begin full-scale dredging on June 1, 2020, and propose to dredge and discharge 5 million cubic yards of spoils from 173 acres of estuarine and stream habitat over the next 5 years. We have not received an EFH Assessment on the proposed mining project, however, we are reviewing IPOP’s Narrative and working with the USACE and other resources agencies on understanding the potential impacts to fish and fish habitat. The project has the potential to impact the marine tidal estuary, including eelgrass beds and transition zones that are important for EFH for Council managed species. EFH in and adjacent to the action area includes all five species of Pacific salmon; however, EFH for red king crab, Tanner crab, and many groundfish species has been designated outside the lagoon in Norton Sound. We expect more discussion to follow and we will subsequently inform the Council.



