

# KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH

## Office of the Borough Clerk

144 North Binkley Street  
Soldotna, AK 99669  
Phone 907-714-2160  
Fax 907-714-2388

Johni Blankenship, MMC  
Borough Clerk

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### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Gary Knopp, Assembly President  
Members, Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

**From:** Assembly Member Bill Smith



**Date:** February 14, 2012

**RE:** Proposed amendment to the Kenai Peninsula Borough 2012 Federal Priority and Federal Transportation Priority Book

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Amend page 12, paragraph 1 of the Kenai Peninsula Borough 2012 Federal Priority and Federal Transportation Priority Book as follows:

[• **COOK INLET BELUGA WHALE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT LISTING DEFERMENT & RESEARCH**

THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH REQUESTS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDE SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED FUNDING TO MORE ADEQUATELY SUPPORT RESEARCH STUDIES OF THE COOK INLET BELUGA WHALE POPULATION. THE LISTING OF THE COOK INLET BELUGA WHALES TO THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT HAS ELICITED MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS. UNTIL RESEARCH AND APPROPRIATE STUDIES OF THE COOK INLET BELUGA WHALES CAN BE CONDUCTED, THERE ARE NO IDENTIFIED PARAMETERS TO FOLLOW FOR REGENERATION OF THIS SPECIES. IN THE 1990'S, THE COOK INLET BELUGA WHALE POPULATION MOST LIKELY DECLINED DUE TO UNREGULATED SUBSISTENCE HARVESTS. SINCE CURTAILING UNREGULATED SUBSISTENCE HARVESTS IN 1999, NO SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH HAS BEEN FUNDED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OR PERFORMED BY THE NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICES REGARDING DEFINITIVE POPULATION OR SCIENTIFIC STUDIES OF THE COOK INLET BELUGA WHALE POPULATION. IN 2006, AN ESTIMATED 9 PERCENT INCREASE WAS RECORDED OF THE COOK INLET BELUGA WHALE, AND IN 2007 AN INCREASE OF 19 PERCENT WAS RECORDED; HOWEVER, IN 2008 THE DATA SHOWED NO GROWTH, AS REPORTED BY NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE. RESEARCH STUDIES REMAIN LACKING DUE TO LACK OF FUNDING FOR SAME. IT IS IMPERATIVE TO HAVE GOOD SCIENCE TO DETERMINE THE TRUE HEALTH OF THE COOK INLET BELUGA WHALE. THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH IS COMMITTED TO BOTH THE SURVIVAL OF THE COOK INLET BELUGA WHALE AND THE AVOIDANCE OF ACTIONS THAT COULD BRING ABOUT ECONOMIC DISASTER TO THOSE WHO DEPEND ON THE COOK INLET FOR THEIR LIVELIHOODS.]

- **Cook Inlet Beluga Whale Endangered Species Act Listing and Research**

The Kenai Peninsula Borough requests the Federal Government provide significantly increased funding to more adequately support research studies of the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale population. The Endangered Species Act listing of the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale has elicited many unanswered questions. Until research and appropriate studies of the Cook Inlet Beluga Whales are conducted, there are no identified parameters to follow for the regeneration of this species.

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Some research has been funded, but more research is needed to meet the challenge of Cook Inlet Beluga Whale population decline and the subsequent Endangered Species Act listing. It is imperative to have good science to determine the appropriate actions to aid the recovery of the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale and the avoidance of actions that could bring about economic distress to those who depend upon the Cook Inlet for their livelihoods.

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