

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

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

Proposed Removal of Invasive *Elodea spp.* from Three Anchorage Lakes, Anchorage, Alaska

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) proposes the removal of invasive *Elodea spp.* (*Elodea*) populations using the herbicide fluridone in Anchorage, Alaska. Planned activities include the complete eradication of *Elodea* from three Anchorage lakes (Sand, Delong, and Little Campbell) over three years. The populations of *Elodea* in the Anchorage area are a high priority concern for ADNR in Alaska. *Elodea* in the Anchorage area has impacted native habitats, and serves as a source population for *Elodea* to spread to other vulnerable habitats statewide. It is anticipated the removal of *Elodea* from the three Anchorage lakes will lessen the risk that populations will expand via flowing water, boats, gear, and float plane traffic into adjacent water bodies. The proposed actions will also protect and restore quality angling opportunities for the public in the area. The proposed project will be implemented using Federal funds administered through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

**Alternatives Considered**

Five alternatives were evaluated in the Environmental Assessment (EA) including: 1) no action; 2) mechanical removal; 3) benthic barriers; 4) drawdown or draining; and 5) treatment with fluridone. The “no action” alternative was rejected because there would be continued risk that *Elodea* could be transported from the Anchorage lakes to water bodies throughout the state. The mechanical removal alternative was rejected because it would not eradicate *Elodea* in the lakes, could increase the density of *Elodea* in the lakes, and would not remove the threat of transporting *Elodea* to other water bodies. The benthic barrier alternative was also rejected because it would be expensive and ineffective at eradicating *Elodea* due to the size of the infestations. The drawdown or draining alternative was rejected because of the size and complexity of the lakes, cost, and associated impacts to wetlands. The preferred alternative involves using fluridone to eradicate all invasive *Elodea* from the three Anchorage lakes. The treatment design would eradicate *Elodea* with minimal or no impacts to fish and wildlife in the area and would allow native plant species to recolonize the lakes and help to restore native habitats following treatment.

**Public Review**

A public scoping meeting was held June 17, 2015, at Sand Lake Elementary in Anchorage, a location easily accessible to Anchorage lake property owners and interested citizens and organizations. Scoping meeting outreach and advertisements included phone contact, email, or both, to individuals and organizations, a press release, posting on the ADNR web site, and the posting of fliers in key locations. There were 45 individuals who attended the meeting which included an explanation of the scoping process, informative presentations by the ADNR, the Service, SePRO Corporation (SePRO), and a facilitated expert panel discussion where participants could ask direct questions of the ADNR, the Service, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, SePRO staff and the facilitator. Three individuals provided written responses during the public

comment period (May 15 through June 15, 2015), one of which was the only response in opposition to the proposed action.

Input gathered during the public scoping process and comments received on the Draft EA represented a spectrum of public views and concerns. The majority of comments received were in support of the preferred alternative, which would use fluridone to remove invasive Elodea and restore native habitats to the three Anchorage lakes. The single response received in opposition to the preferred alternative cited various reasons including concerns about the potential of fluridone to affect non-target organisms and human health, potential of fluridone to impact wetlands, potential effects to fish, birds and other wildlife, and potential long-term effects because of fluridone's persistence in cold water. All of these concerns have been addressed in the EA.

### **Decision and Rationale**

The EA provides a compelling case for the purpose and need of this action, including the restoration of native habitats that were heavily affected by the introduction of Elodea. This project will remove a primary source population of invasive Elodea in Anchorage that threatens fish and wildlife populations and their habitats in Anchorage and adjacent areas, and will reduce the potential for spread to important regional and statewide fisheries and habitats elsewhere in the state. Since the release of the Draft EA for public review, Elodea has also been found in nearby Lake Hood, the busiest floatplane base in the world, which further highlights the need for this project.

The analysis in the EA indicates that there will not be a significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment as a result of the proposed action.

I find that all reasonable alternatives were considered in the evaluation of this project. I also find that this project complies with the meaning of Executive Order 11990 and 11988. Therefore, based on a review and evaluation of the enclosed EA, I have determined the proposed removal of invasive Elodea as described in the project entitled, "Anchorage Lakes Elodea Eradication Project" is not a major federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed action is not required.

The Environmental Assessment, prepared by the ADNR, has been adopted by the Service according to rules contained in 40 CFR 1506.3.

Copies of the EA are available upon request from the Service, Regional Office, 1011 East Tudor, Mail Stop 361, Anchorage, Alaska 99503, or at the ADNR project website at: <http://www.adnr.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adnr=fluridone.currentprojects>.

*Acting*   
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Regional Director  
U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 7

*7/8/15*  
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Date