



Sitka Conservation Society
Box 6533
Sitka, Alaska 99835
(907) 747-7509
info@sitkawild.org

*“Working to protect the
natural environment
of the Tongass,
and Sitka’s quality
of life – Since 1967”*

For Immediate Release

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Geoduck Farm Permit for Three Entrance Bay Area Denied

Contact: Corrie Bosman, Sitka Conservation Society 747-7509

Sitka, AK- A proposed geoduck farmsite at Mielkoi Cove just south of Three Entrance Bay in Sitka was dealt a serious blow yesterday when the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) determined that the farmsite is not compatible with wildlife resources in the area. The decision comes after many months of widespread opposition to the project in Sitka.

“We are really pleased with ADF&G’s findings,” explained Corrie Bosman, Conservation Director with the Sitka Conservation Society. “Since the start of this project Sitkans have been telling the State that a farmsite at this location is not compatible with current and existing uses at this location including recreational, cultural, subsistence and commercial uses and that wildlife in the area may be harmed by the proposal,” Bosman stated.

In their January 8, 2007 final determination decision the ADF&G raised concerns about how the 5.17 acre farmsite may impact marine mammals in the area citing specific concerns of unjustifiable loss of feeding and molting habitat and the risk of marine mammals becoming entrapped in predator netting proposed for the farm.

ADF&G’s findings are in line with the DNR Northern Southeast Area Plan which specifically set aside this area for protection during the planning process because of its exceptional value. Bosman explained, “The area was placed under special management in the Plan for the purpose of protecting sensitive resources such as fisheries and marine mammals. A farmsite at this location just does not make sense.”

The lease of the farmsite at Mielkoi Cove, proposed by Peter Metcalfe of DBA Rocky Pass Company in Juneau, was approved by the Department of Natural Resources in 2006; however the ADF&G had yet to make a final determination on a permit for the project. Metcalfe has 30 days to appeal the ADF&G decision.

In March 2006, the Sitka Conservation Society (SCS), The City and Borough of Sitka, the Sitka Tribe and several individual Sitkans filed administrative appeals with the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requesting reversal of the DNR decision to lease the Mielkoi Cove farmsite. The appeals raised a number of issues that ADF&G’s determination did not address including impacts to public use, navigation and safety risks, and threats to cultural and heritage resources. A decision on these appeals is still pending.

