

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southwest Region
501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200
Long Beach, California 90802 – 4213

APR 15 2005

In Response Please Refer To:
151422SWR02PR6198:MRM

Gloria Brown
U.S. Forest Service
6755 Hollister, Suite 150
Goleta, California 93117

Dear Ms. Brown,

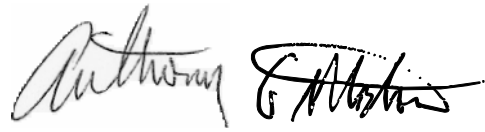
This letter is in response to Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) request to initiate informal section 7 consultation relative to endangered steelhead in the Southern California Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) with regard to an oil and gas leasing proposal within the boundaries of the Los Padres National Forest in southern California. NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) understands the proposed action (File Code 2670) is to designate additional lands under the jurisdiction of the LPNF that may potentially be made available in the future for leasing of oil and gas resources. NMFS understands that the proposed action will not result in any actual ground breaking activities or development. This action would set the stage for the potential leasing of up to 4,277 acres, of which 140 acres fall within potentially suitable steelhead habitat and 13 acres of occupied steelhead habitat. NMFS understands that LPNF proposes to minimize potential direct impacts of any future operations that are approved by not allowing any project activities within aquatic or riparian areas and will create buffers of up to 200 meters from sensitive habitat. In the event it is determined that a granted lease and actual development may affect listed species, LPNF would develop a separate and complete biological assessment for those specific actions and would fulfill any Endangered Species Act obligations for threatened and endangered species via a section 7 consultation at that time. In consideration of the above information, NMFS concurs with LPNF that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the Southern California ESU for Federally endangered steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*).

This concludes the informal section 7 consultation for this proposed action. Consultation must be reinitiated where discretionary Federal agency involvement or control over the action has been retained (or is authorized by law) and: (1) if new information becomes available revealing effects of the action on listed species in a manner or to an extent not previously considered, (2) if project plans change, (3) if the agency action is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect to listed species that was not considered, or (4) if a new species or critical habitat is designated that may be affected by this action. Matt McGoogan is NMFS representative



for this specific consultation. Please call him at (562) 980-4026 if you have any questions concerning this letter or if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony G. McInnis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "A" and a stylized "G".

(for) Rodney R. McInnis
Regional Administrator