



25 August 2015

Ms. Robyn E. McGhee, Senior Environmental Scientist  
ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.  
P.O. Box 100360  
Anchorage, AK 99503

Subject: **Nest Search at the Alpine Shooting Range, 2015**

Dear Ms. McGhee:

This data report summarizes the nest search ABR conducted at the Alpine shooting range located between the CD-4 road and Nanuk Lake. The nest search was conducted to maintain compliance with the Endangered Species Act, which prohibits disturbance to nesting Spectacled Eiders.

Please contact Rick Johnson for further information.

Thank you,

Rick Johnson  
Senior Scientist

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## INTRODUCTION

The shooting range at Alpine is used for target practice and training for bear hazing by Alpine security staff. The shooting range is located off the gravel CD-4 road, accessible from a short turnout where vehicles park. Staff must cross on foot and shoot over tundra toward targets mounted on bullet traps. Because these activities are off pad, they have the potential to disturb Spectacled Eiders, a federally listed threatened species, during the nesting season. Disturbing nesting Spectacled Eiders is prohibited under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA). Another threatened species, the Steller's Eider, could occur in the area, but the probability of its occurrence is very low, as no evidence of breeding by this species has been

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observed on the Colville River delta in over 2 decades. Under the terms and conditions of the Alpine Satellites Biological Opinion (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2004), off-pad activities are prohibited within 200 m of active Spectacled Eider nests from 1 June to 1 August unless nest searches are conducted to demonstrate the absence of nests. This report is a brief summary of a nest search at the Alpine shooting range to ensure compliance with the ESA.

### **STUDY SITE AND METHODS**

The shooting range was adjacent to the CD-4 road in patterned wet meadow and moist sedge-shrub habitat and near the shoreline of a large tapped lake (Nanuk Lake). One biologist searched an area within 200 m of the shooting range, covering all the shorelines of waterbodies and ponds as well as wet habitats that could support nesting eiders on 8 June 2015. Nest locations were recorded on a handheld GPS.

### **RESULTS**

No nests of threatened Spectacled or Steller's eiders were found in the shooting range area. No nests of any waterfowl or large nesting waterbirds were discovered, although waterfowl were observed on Nanuk Lake. Most of the area lies in moist habitats with willows, which are not preferred by nesting Spectacled Eiders. Based on the habitat available in the area, the shooting range has a low probability of attracting nesting Spectacled Eiders.