



# U.S. ARMY GARRISON FORT WAINWRIGHT QUARTERLY UPDATE FOR ALASKA NATIVE TRIBES

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This is a quarterly update on United States Army Garrison Fort Wainwright activities and issues of interest to federally recognized tribes in Alaska.

## At Summer's End, Cultural Resources Management Continues into the Winter

Archaeologists working with the U.S. Army Garrison Fort Wainwright (USAG FWA) Cultural Resources Manager spend their summers surveying Army training lands to identify archaeological sites in areas of potential or imminent development. In a single summer, multiple crews will cover thousands of acres to ensure that they have identified and protected the cultural resources within the Army's scope of responsibility as stewards of the land. During the 2011 field season, 29 sites were found in the survey of 12,436 acres. Narrowing the area of search involves defining where Range Control planners propose to develop projects. Project areas are traveled (transected) to locate where historic and prehistoric cultural resources might be hidden. Unfortunately, project funding defines where field crews work each summer. While there are many areas of Army training lands that might have been attractive to prehistoric hunters, field crews travel to only those areas undergoing military development.

Once summer ends, the archaeologists' work is not complete. Work moves into the office and continues throughout the winter months. The artifacts, notes, photographs, maps, and other materials coming out of the field must be processed and analyzed.

Field notebooks kept by each crew member are scanned for reference by others. Some seasons yield upward of 2,000 pages of handwritten notes, documenting all aspects of survey locations, found sites, and tested areas. These notes enable the permanent staff to write reports and direct Range Control and construction crews on how to avoid sites during training and construction activities. Additionally, photographs taken during fieldwork are copied to hard drives and catalogued. These images provide future data for site condition assessments.

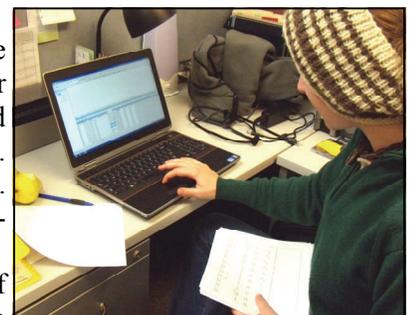


Artifacts are processed for curation and permanent storage. USAG FWA has an agreement with the University of Alaska (UAF) Museum to store artifacts from archaeological digs on Army-managed lands. The Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) state that repositories for artifacts found on Federal lands or during federally-funded projects must be housed in an approved curatorial facility. Prior to sending the artifacts to UAF, artifacts are cleaned, organized, and marked with accession numbers received from the museum.

Administrative tasks in the management of cultural resources must also be completed. NHPA Section 106 letters are prepared for the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and Tribes. These letters report information about the kind and quantity of historic properties found, as well as the number of acres and locations of surveys performed. They also fulfill the Army's legal obligation to inventory and monitor cultural resources on Federal lands. The SHPO has a computer database that tracks all archaeological sites found in the state of Alaska called the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS). Unique AHRS numbers for each new site on Army lands are acquired from the SHPO.

Survey maps are digitized and recreated in Geographic Information System (GIS). The mapping data is built into 'layers' that can be utilized in future mapping of Army lands for land management and project planning purposes. Mapping points that are collected by field crews are put together to accurately record where sites are and what ground was travelled. The ultimate goal of surveying is to, cumulatively, review 100% of the Army training land. As maps are compiled year after year, an increasingly complete picture is made of known cultural resources present on Army lands.

Finally, the stored resources are 'written up' by the researchers to flesh out a narrative of the season's work that can be understandable to future researchers. The notes are used to create annual reports of field work and other reports sent to Tribes and agencies requiring the data. Within these notes, some analysis of the finds are made. Every season's archaeological finds contribute to knowledge of the bigger picture of Army training land history. Although the work is being done to fulfill the stewardship obligations of the federal agency, the by-product is increased knowledge of how Alaska's Interior was used and by whom.



## 2011 Duck Box Project at Fort Wainwright

contributed by Amal Ajmi, USAG FWA Biologist



Typical duck box

In 2000, a duck box project was initiated on Fort Wainwright (FWA) with the purpose of encouraging cavity nesting waterfowl to take residence on lake and river systems, and providing educational and aesthetic value to boaters and outdoor enthusiasts on military lands. The waterfowl species targeted by this project are the bufflehead, Barrow's goldeneye, and common goldeneye. The FWA program began with 11 boxes placed along the Chena River flowing through the Fort Wainwright Main Post (4) and at the Yukon Training Area's Horseshoe (4) and Manchu (3) Lakes. As of September 2011, the program has expanded to 19 boxes currently placed on FWA. This project has provided nesting habitat for waterfowl, as well as other avian species and small mammals, including American kestrels, boreal owls, and red squirrels.

The duck boxes are checked early in the spring to assess the previous year's usage. During the check, contents are documented, boxes are cleaned out, wood chips are replaced, and box quality is evaluated and repairs made if necessary. Box contents may include down, egg shell fragments, shell casings, whole eggs, carcasses or parts thereof, grass, or current occupation. Eggs and egg shell fragments help delineate species use.

Prior to 2007, the purpose of the project was to determine usage. Nesting success was secondary information and not considered quantifiable. In 2007, three visits were made to the nest boxes to determine usage and success. Overall, very few nesting ducks were observed, however the timing of the visits may have been too late in the summer and broods may have already left the boxes. In 2008, a bufflehead was observed using Manchu Lake Box 1 and a box check later in

the summer revealed evidence of a nest; however, the bufflehead and her brood were never seen during brood observations. A late summer box check revealed Horseshoe Lake Box 3 had been utilized by goldeneyes as evidenced by egg shell fragments, casings and down; again the adult and her brood were never seen during brood observations. The lack of detection of broods during observation periods does not denote absence, or low productivity, as broods may move between water bodies soon after leaving boxes in search for more suitable rearing habitat<sup>1</sup> and broods are very adept at using tall vegetation as protection, escaping detection.

Cavity-nesting ducks make efficient use of hard to find tree-cavity nest sites. In contrast to inconspicuous natural cavities, nest boxes contrast with the surrounding environment, resulting from their uniform and unnatural appearance and open, nonrandom placement. These structures are typically placed in much higher densities as compared to natural tree cavities. Cavity nesting ducks identify and locate nest boxes quickly. As a result, nesting activity of a hen is easily viewed by other breeders. Active use of a box can be a determination of a "safe" nest, and it may trigger "dump nesting"—when one or more species deposit their eggs in another's nest, leaving the host to incubate, hatch and rear the young—by birds that have either lost their nest or cannot find suitable nesting habitat. Inter-specific nest dumping (an interaction between individuals of different species) has been observed at Donnelly Training Area (DTA), and female goldeneyes may potentially end up raising young of several species.

Nest success is best determined in the fall after the nest has been vacated. Egg shell fragments and membranes can be looked at while the nest is still fresh rather than in the spring after many months of cold, deteriorating weather. Unfortunately, prior to 2008, time has not allowed for fall checks. Therefore, a guarded determination of nest success has been based on the shell fragments found during the spring check. Late summer box checks were initiated in 2008, and again, a guarded determination of nest success was based on shell fragments, membranes, and down.

During the 2011 summer, a game camera was placed near Chena River Box 4 with the intent of recording box use and emergence date. A goldeneye hen was documented using the box, and chicks were witnessed emerging. A fall box check confirmed successful brooding in the nest structure, by evidence of shell casings. Emergence dates will be used to help biologists better monitor goldeneye and bufflehead broods; synchronizing brood surveys with emergence dates will increase chances of obtaining quantifiable productivity counts.

This project has become successful in its initial purpose of encouraging duck use and presence on lakes and the Chena River on FWA. The project is now contributing information on cavity nesting duck emergence dates and productivity.



Goldeneye chick emerging from a duck box. This camera frame was captured June 15, 2011.

<sup>1</sup> Pöysä, H. and A. Paasivaara. 2006. Movements and mortality of common goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* broods in a patchy environment. *OIKOS* 115: 33–42.

## Environmental Impact Statement Process Begins for Fort Wainwright Hangars 2 and 3

contributed by Carrie McEnteer, USAG FWA NEPA Branch Chief, and Lisa Graham, USAG FWA Cultural Resources Manager

Fort Wainwright is home to the Ladd Field World War II National Historic Landmark. Two of the buildings integral to the history of World War II operations at Fort Wainwright are Hangars 2 and 3. Constructed in 1943 and designed to house airplanes, these twin Birchwood hangars served as passenger terminals and maintenance facilities. Throughout their lifetime, these hangars have experienced constant use by the military. Until recently, they were used by members of the 16th Combat Aviation Brigade to store and maintain helicopters.

Unfortunately, Hangars 2 and 3 no longer meet the minimum standards necessary to operate as maintenance hangars for aircraft. Their ceiling heights cannot support winches necessary to lift helicopter engines, their roofs do not meet building code for snow load, and, as indicated by an electrical fire in Hangar 2 in early 2011, their infrastructure no longer meets the standards of a safe and functional workplace. As the needs of Army aviation assets have changed over the past 70 years, other newer structures have been built on Ladd Army Airfield that better serve the purpose of aviation maintenance and storage facilities. As Hangars 2 and 3 no longer meet the functional need of maintenance facilities, an alternate use of these facilities must be considered by the Army.



Alternative functions and dispositions for the hangars are being developed and analyzed as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Department of the Army is preparing to publish a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will analyze the potential impacts associated with these alternatives. Publication of the NOI will mark the beginning of the “scoping” period, when input from the public, interested Tribes, agencies, and other stakeholders will be sought. Scoping is estimated to begin in November 2011.

A range of reasonable disposition alternatives, including a “No Action” alternative, will be developed in the EIS. Alternatives to be analyzed include converting both hangars to another use, demolishing both hangars, demolishing one hangar and retaining one hangar, indefinitely “mothballing” the buildings, and transferring facilities and management responsibility to another Federal agency. Other reasonable alternatives raised during the scoping process that are capable of meeting the project’s purpose and need will be considered for evaluation in the EIS.

The EIS will ultimately assist Army decision-makers by investigating the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts associated with the various proposed options for future facility management. This decision must meet safety, funding, facilities management, land use, and cultural resources management objectives.

In addition, as Hangars 2 and 3 contribute to the Ladd Field World War II National Historic Landmark, future disposition options will also be addressed under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Tribal governments in the vicinity of Fort Wainwright should expect a letter offering an opportunity for government-to-government consultation in mid-November 2011, concurrent with the EIS scoping process.

If you are interested in participating in the NEPA or NHPA process and desire additional information, contact the USAG FWA Native Liaison Elizabeth Cook at (907) 361-6323 / [Elizabeth.cook3@us.army.mil](mailto:Elizabeth.cook3@us.army.mil) or visit the USAG FWA Environmental Division website, <http://www.wainwright.army.mil/env/>.

### USAG FWA archaeology by the numbers ~ during the 2011 summer field season:

12,436	acres of land were surveyed for archaeological sites
5	areas of Army land north of the Alaska Range have now been partially surveyed, including the Fort Wainwright cantonment and Yukon, Donnelly, Tanana Flats, and Gerstle River Training Areas
160,000	acres of Army land has been surveyed since 2002... that translates to
12%	of Army land
28	new prehistoric sites were found this season
1	new historic site was discovered
600	sites are now recorded on Army lands north of the Alaska Range
70%	of known sites are at Donnelly Training Area near Delta Junction

## Veterans Administration Offers Alaska Native Veterans Outreach Service

contributed by Al Grunin, VA Outreach Specialist



The Veterans Administration (VA) has created an outreach program to help facilitate veteran access and use of the benefits earned from service in the military. Although the program benefits all veterans, emphasis is focused on Alaska Native veterans, especially those returning from recent conflicts known as Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn. The outreach program is currently based in Fairbanks and focuses on the northern part of the state, but will expand throughout Alaska in coming years.

Alaska Native veterans are of specific interest to the VA. The VA recognizes that Alaska's veterans are spread throughout the state, some living in isolated and rural areas inaccessible by regular transportation. After serving in the military, these veterans return to rural villages and often find it difficult to work with various outside agencies, including the VA. As a result, these veterans are not reaping the benefits afforded them by their military service.

Making and keeping appointments with the VA and other agencies located in urban areas can be difficult. In some rural areas, air transportation—daily or intermittent—is the only way in and out of a village. This, coupled with weather that can make it impossible for planes to get in or out of a village, plays a significant factor in missed appointments. In other cases, veterans who are subsistence hunters can be out on the land for days, sometimes encountering unforeseen delays. All these factors lead to challenges for both the VA and the veteran needing assistance.

The outreach service was developed to assist and encourage rural veterans to work with Alaska's four Vet Centers and develop strategies to use their benefits. The Outreach Specialist is the advocate that can bridge the cultural divide and provide support to those veterans who may not have had positive experiences working with the VA in the past.

Outreach Specialist Al Grunin is currently building the program. He is a 22-year veteran of the Air Force, including five years with the Alaska Air National Guard. All veterans, especially Alaska Native veterans, are encouraged to contact Mr. Grunin at (907) 388-7589 if they feel they need assistance accessing VA services. He plans to visit Alaska's villages to promote the program and welcomes contact from veterans and village councils with assistance in planning these community visits.

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\*OFFICIAL BUSINESS\*