



U.S. ARMY GARRISONS FORT WAINWRIGHT AND FORT RICHARDSON QUARTERLY UPDATE FOR ALASKA NATIVE TRIBES

October 2008, Issue 14

This is a quarterly update on USAG Fort Wainwright and Fort Richardson activities and issues that might be of interest to federally recognized tribes in Alaska.

USAGAK is now USAG Fort Wainwright and USAG Fort Richardson

On 2 July 2008, the U.S. Army Garrison Alaska split into two discreet bodies, USAG Fort Wainwright and USAG Fort Richardson. The Department of Defense determined that Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base should become a joint activity through the congressionally mandated Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process.

In the case of Fort Richardson, the Air Force is the lead agency for the realignment of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBE-R), meaning that the Army personnel will be tenant customers on the joint base under the operational control of the Air Force.

Previously, the Fort Richardson garrison was a direct reporting unit to the Installation Management Command, Pacific Regional Director, for command and control. Fort Wainwright was a subordinate post, reporting to Fort Richardson. Due to the impending realignment of the Fort Richardson garrison to Elmendorf AFB, Fort Wainwright garrison became a direct reporting unit to the Installation Management Command, Pacific Regional Director.

Realigning and joining closely located military installations under a single umbrella is projected to provide significant cost savings for the federal government due to the elimination of duplicate functions.

As part of the realignment, USAG Fort Wainwright welcomes Colonel Timothy A. Jones as its new commander. Colonel David L. Shutt will remain commander of USAG Fort Richardson.

Meet Colonel Timothy A. Jones, USAG Fort Wainwright's New Commander

Colonel Jones graduated from the United States Military Academy, Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, and U.S. Army War College. He holds a masters degree in Administration from Central Michigan University.

Colonel Jones has spent his career serving in a wide variety of Army Aviation and Staff positions in CONUS, Korea, Iraq, and Afghanistan. He served in Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan. Prior to his assignment to Fort Wainwright, Colonel Jones served as Director, Special Operations Aviation with the U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

Colonel Jones' awards and decorations include the Bronze Star with V Device, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (with four Oak Leaf Clusters), Air Medal (four awards), the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (two awards), the Master Army Aviator



Ms Debra D. Zedalis, director, IMCOM-Pacific, presenting colors to new garrison commander, Colonel Jones.

Badge, Parachutist Badge, and Air Assault Badge.

Introducing the USAG Fort Wainwright and Fort Richardson Native Liaison

Elizabeth A. Cook joined the garrison staff in late August as the shared Native Liaison for both garrisons. Her office is located within the Department of Public Works at Fort Wainwright, but she will be traveling to Fort Richardson as needed.

Ms. Cook graduated from University of Alaska Fairbanks with a Masters degree in Cultural Anthropology and has spent time working with Native culture and land issues in various locations around the state since 1992. She comes to the Department of the Army from the Realty Services department of Tanana Chiefs Conference in Fairbanks, where she dealt with Native land concerns as an Allotment Specialist.

She can be contacted at:

Department of Public Works
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1060 Gaffney Rd #4500
Fort Wainwright, AK 99703-4500

She can also be reached by phone and email, 907-361-6323 and Elizabeth.Cook3@us.army.mil, respectively.



New USAG Fort Wainwright and Fort Richardson Native Liaison, Elizabeth Cook.



Grow the Army Environmental Assessment Released September 16

Grow the Army Force Structure Realignment Environmental Assessment (EA) and a Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) were released for public comment September 16, 2008. The public comment period ended October 10, 2008.

This EA evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed facility construction and/or training actions at Fort Richardson, Fort Wainwright and Donnelly Training Area. These actions would result from the stationing, and training of an additional 2,198 Soldiers and support personnel—425 to Fort Wainwright and 1,773 to Fort Richardson—between 2008 and 2013.

This document tiers from the Final Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (SPEIS) for Army Growth and Force Structure Realignment that addresses Army personnel realignment needs for the Pacific Theater, including Alaska. The Record of Decision (ROD) for this SPEIS was signed on August 24, 2008. The Grow the Army Force Structure Realignment Environmental Assessment (EA) is designed to provide tribes, decision-makers, regulatory agencies, and the public with information on the potential environmental and socio-economic effects of Army growth and realignment in Alaska.

This draft document may be viewed at the U.S. Army Alaska Conservation Web site (<http://www.usarak.army.mil/conservation/>) or the U.S. Army Directorate of Public Works/Native Liaison website (<http://www.usarak.army.mil/dpw/index.cfm?pageinfo=2003>).

Donnelly Training Area East

The Donnelly Training Area (DTA) East Mobility and Maneuver Enhancement Environmental Assessment (EA) was finalized and the Record of Decision (ROD) signed on June 17, 2008. The full, finalized text of the EA can be viewed at:

http://www.usarak.army.mil/conservation/files/DTA%20East%20EA_%206_19_08%20FINAL.pdf.

Archaeology at DTA Summer 2008

Aaron Robertson, Army Cultural Resources Specialist, and his crew of 12 archaeology technicians had a busy 2008 field season at Donnelly Training Area. They worked diligently to finish the evaluation of individual archaeological sites within the firing fans of the Battle Area Complex (BAX). For these sites, Determinations of Eligibility (DOEs) for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are being performed. This year more than 75 sites associated with the BAX project will be evaluated for NRHP eligibility. The Battle Area Complex (BAX) is a range designed for gunnery training of vehicle-mounted weapon systems and dismounted infantry platoons, either independent of or associated with supporting vehicles.

Scoping Comments Being Taken for Range and Training Lands PEA

The Directorate of Public Works' NEPA division is in the preliminary stages of developing a programmatic environmental assessment (PEA) for Army training lands in Alaska. The PEA will address the following proposed actions:

- Specific analysis of known or foreseeable construction projects within USAG training areas;
- Study of adaptable use zones—lands associated with the USAG Small Arms Complex Ranges, and;
- Development and implementation of accepted standard operating procedures (SOP) and best management practices (BMP) to guide future USAG range projects.

While this formal comment period ends October 15, 2008, input from tribes who feel that they will be affected are welcome on an on-going basis during this preliminary stage of assessment development. Comments should be submitted in writing to the USAG Fort Wainwright and Fort Richardson Native Liaison. (See back page for contact information.)



Archaeology Technicians Kate Yeske and Dave Cory.

Study of Gerstle River/Healy Lake area Wildlife Continued this Summer

Through a joint effort of the Department of the Army's Conservation Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), a study began last summer involving an investigation of potential contamination of subsistence resources in the Gerstle River and Healy Lake areas. In order to determine what contaminants might be tested for, Angela Matz, USFWS, performed background research on past military activity that could have influenced the area. Matz and Army Natural Resources Research Associate John Haddix spoke with local residents about their observations of wildlife anomalies and collected all available samples. Additionally, Matz and Haddix performed planning level surveys of the species that reside in the area and looked for anomalous animals on three occasions with Healy Lake tribal members Brian Erickson and Corey Polston.

Later this fall Matz and Haddix will meet with tribal members to present the research results thus far and discuss what testing should occur next.

Next summer Haddix will work cooperatively with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (AKF&G) on a moose telemetry project in the Healy Lake and Gerstle River areas. The purpose of that study will be to investigate movement patterns and a sampling of moose will be collared to track migration. Hair samples will also be taken and the USFWS will test those samples for the presence of contaminants.

Archaeological Surveys at Fort Wainwright and Fort Richardson, Summer 2008

Contributed by Edmund P. Gaines, FWA Archaeologist

The summer of 2008 proved to be an exciting field season with many significant discoveries. Archaeological survey projects were conducted at all three training areas of Fort Wainwright — Yukon Training Area (YTA), Donnelly Training Area (DTA), and Tanana Flats Training Area (TFTA). Several smaller projects occurred on Fort Richardson training lands. More than two dozen new prehistoric archaeological sites were found at the DTA. Our work at the TFTA this summer represents the first comprehensive archaeological investigation of the Tanana flats in nearly three decades. This resulted in the identification of six new sites at the flats and provided an opportunity to conduct in-depth investigations and assessments of the three archaeological districts found in this important region in the Tanana Valley.

Our survey work at Donnelly Training Area (DTA) was focused on the southern portions of the east range in the lowlands north of the Granite Mountains. Here we discovered twenty-five new prehistoric archaeological sites. The countryside in this area is composed of low, rolling hills overlooking small lakes. The crests of the hills provide ideal vantage points to look for game, and on nearly all of the hilltops we found evidence left by the ancestors of the Athabascan people.

The Tanana Flats Training Area (TFTA) is the location of three federally listed archaeological districts and is considered to be among the most archaeologically important areas in the Tanana Valley; however after a large survey in 1978-1980, work in the TFTA by professional archaeologists has been extremely limited. Our forays into the flats this past summer represent the most comprehensive archaeological survey conducted on the flats in nearly three decades.

As part of our work at the TFTA, we re-visited the Blair Lakes archaeological district. We found hundreds of stone artifacts at Blair Lake South, and determined that the archaeological district was much larger than previously identified in 1980. In addition to the stone artifacts, we found hundreds of fragments of burned and butchered bone. Due to soil conditions, bone is rarely preserved in archaeological sites in interior Alaska. The presence of bone at Blair Lakes highlights the site's importance, and provides valuable clues that enable us to determine that the site was used as a butchering location for hunters pursuing the caribou herds that once frequented the area.

We surveyed new areas of the TFTA adjacent to the Wood River, and found four new prehistoric sites. These sites were located east of Wood River in areas that were once used as hunting lookouts. Artifacts found at the sites include chips of stone tools, including chips made of obsidian, and fragments of burned bone. The obsidian was collected to determine its source. More work, including excavation, is necessary to fully understand the nature of these promising sites, and the activities of the people who were there.

We spent several days at the TFTA surveying, evaluating and assessing the Clear Creek Buttes archaeological district. Clear Creek Buttes is an outstanding observation point that provides a commanding view of the middle Tanana Valley, as well as the Nenana Valley to the southwest. The butte is also a prominent landmark that is easily viewed and readily identifiable from a distance. Its unique geographic location makes the butte an attractive location and people have been intensively using it for camping and hunting for thousands of years.

The Clear Creek Buttes sites were investigated by retired Bureau of Land Management Archaeologist John Cook in 1995. Dr. Cook recently gave us his artifact collection from the sites, which consists of hundreds of specimens of stone chips, spear and arrow points, scrapers, knives, microblades and microblade cores.

Analysis of this remarkable collection will be conducted over the winter of 2008/2009. This summer we determined that the known sites at Clear Creek Buttes were still in good condition. Hundreds of additional artifacts were found during 2008, including stone knives, scrapers, arrowheads, microblades and microblade cores.

While at Clear Creek Buttes, we had the opportunity to visit Salmon Loaf Butte. This low hill lies on the west bank of Clear Creek. The historic Bonnifield Trail runs along its base and one previously identified prehistoric site is located there. This summer, we found two additional archaeological sites on the butte. While our investigations of the landform are in their preliminary stages, we strongly suspect that future excavations will reveal more sites.

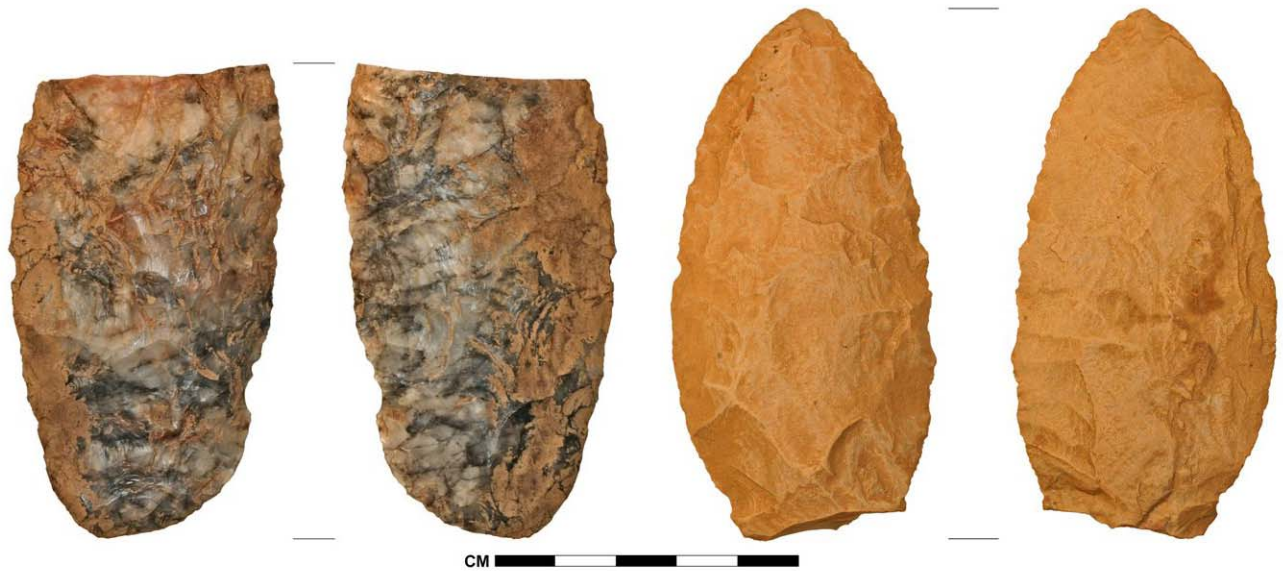
Several smaller survey projects were conducted in the highlands of the Yukon Training Area (YTA), including an 11 acre survey in preparation for bivouac construction, and a 10 km survey for upgrades to Beaver Creek road. Known cultural resources from the YTA are rare, and the upland terrain, far from sources of freshwater would have been unsuitable for long-term human habitation or intensive use. None of our surveys during the summer identified any cultural resources. Military development of the area continues without affecting any known cultural resources.

In addition to our work at Fort Wainwright training lands, we conducted several survey projects at Fort Richardson. The range at Fort Richardson contains traditional land use locations important to the Eklutna people, as well as numerous historical sites; however known prehistoric sites are rare. This summer we surveyed 1,449 acres at Fort Richardson training lands. We found no archaeological sites during our survey work, and the Army continues to use the range without affecting any known cultural resources.

In sum, the summer of 2008 yielded several significant discoveries on both the DTA and TFTA. The recently discovered sites at the DTA represent a significant addition to the number of prehistoric sites on the training area, and will give us valuable clues as to the activities of the people who lived there. The work at the TFTA is in its early stages, but the new discoveries are already helping us to better understand ancient use of the area. We are optimistic about returning to this important region next summer.



Projectile point found by CEMML archaeologist Dave Cory at the Donnelly Training Area during summer 2008.



Small, sub-triangular projectile points from Donnelly Training Area.

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