

Fort Wainwright Observes American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month



Mr. Samuel Demientieff talked about growing up along the Yukon River and serving in the U.S. Army. He emphasized themes common to all Soldiers—service to country, sacrifice by family, and protection of freedom. Alaska Native Soldiers serving at Fort Wainwright, SGT Bryant C. Bearfield (Tlingit) and SSG Bernard F. Madros (Koyukon), participated in the event, reading proclamations from President Obama and Governor Parnell.

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OFFICIAL BUSINESS

This newsletter is sent to tribal leaders and second contacts of tribal government choice (tribal administrators, environmental directors, etc.) quarterly. Please contact us with updated information as your tribal government has elections, changes personnel, or changes address information. Send changes to elizabeth.a.cook80.ctr@mail.mil.

Fort Wainwright’s annual observance of American Indian / Alaska Native Heritage Month was held November 26 at the post Physical Fitness Center.

The event had a full agenda and was well attended by Soldiers and civilians. Several dance numbers were performed by UAF’s Inu-Yupiaq dance group and a short film about Medal of Honor recipient Woodrow W. Keeble was shown. Displays from the UAF Museum allowed attendees to see and handle art items from Native communities throughout the state. USAG FWA Cultural Resources Management personnel staffed a table with prehistoric artifacts and information about Alaska Native history on Fort Wainwright lands.



Archaeologist Julie Esdale discusses artifacts with a Soldier.



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

January 2014, Vol. 11/No. 1

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

USAG FWA Welcomes New Commander: Colonel Sidney C. Zemp

An Assumption of Command ceremony on Friday, December 6 installed Colonel Sidney C. “Cape” Zemp as the next commander of U.S. Army Garrison Fort Wainwright.

Colonel Zemp is a native of Hampton Roads, Virginia. Colonel and Mrs. (Eva Montañez) Zemp have three children. They are looking forward to their first assignment in Alaska.

Colonel Zemp's most recent operational assignment was the Assistant Chief of Staff, G1, U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command, Fort Belvoir, Virginia. He served as the Division G1 of the 1st Armored Division, Baghdad and Wiesbaden, Germany in OPERATIONS IRAQI FREEDOM and NEW DAWN; Battalion Executive Officer and Battalion S-3 of the 82nd Soldier Support Battalion (Airborne), 82nd Airborne Division; Corps Strength Manager, XVIII Airborne Corps in OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM; Company Commander, C Det, 82nd Soldier Support Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division; Chief, G1 Plans and Operations, 82nd Airborne Division; Officer Strength Manager, 1st Corps Support Command (Airborne); Tank Platoon Leader and then Battalion S1 of 2nd Battalion, 67th Armor, 1st Armored Division, Friedberg, Germany; and Tank Platoon Leader, A Company, 4th Battalion, 32nd Armor, 3rd Armored Division in OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD and STORM.

His other staff assignments include: Chief, Officer Selection Board Policy, DCS G1, the Pentagon; Professor of Military Science, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Deputy, U.S. National Military Representative to SHAPE, Mons, Belgium; J1 Plans Officer, USEUCOM, Stuttgart, Germany; Chief, DA Secretariat and Board Recorder of the U.S. Army Senior Enlisted Selection Boards, U.S. Army Enlisted Records and Evaluation Center, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Colonel Zemp holds a BA in History and Political Science from Christopher Newport University. He is a graduate of the Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy with a MS in National Resource Strategy. He also holds a MA in International Relations from the University of Oklahoma. His military education includes the Armor Officer Basic Course, the Adjutant General Advanced Course, and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal (with two OLC), the Defense Meritorious Service Medal (with one OLC), the Meritorious Service Medal (with three OLC), the Army Commendation Medal (with "V" Device and three OLC), the Army Achievement Medal (with one OLC), the Joint Staff Identification Badge, the Army Staff Identification Badge, the Master Parachutist Badge, the Air Assault Badge, and the British Army Parachutist Badge.



USAG FWA Meets with Upper Tanana Tribes in Northway



Thanks to Northway Village for hosting the regular meeting of Upper Tanana tribes and USAG FWA.

Members of the USAG FWA command group and environmental division staff met with representatives from Dot Lake, Tanacross, Tetlin, and Northway tribes on September 4.

Angela Matz, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), presented a summary of the final data from the hair, blood, and tissue sampling conducted as part of the 2007-2012 cooperative study of traditional foods and contaminants. Final reports from the study, are being prepared for delivery to tribes.

Additionally, an update on recent Army natural and cultural resources management projects was given and there was discussion of recent tribal projects and accomplishments.

Prior to the meeting, USAG FWA representatives were taken on a driving tour of the extensive debris clean up project being implemented around the village of Northway.

Archaeology at Blair Lakes Yields Information About the Ancient Landscape and Change

NOTE: In the summer of 2013, natural and cultural resources management crews spent weeks investigating areas around Blair Lakes in Tanana Flats Training Area. They were able to achieve a more complete image of what life was like in the Interior up to 14,000 years ago—what the landscape looked like, what fauna were present, and, thus, what subsisting off that land might have been like for the Interior’s ancestors. The following is information adapted from a presentation created by USAG FWA Archaeologists Kate Yeske and Julie Esdale for the 2013 Paleoamerican Odyssey Conference. Illustrative figures are located on the newsletter insert.

Investigations of ancient geography, vegetation, and animals can paint a portrait of the landscape encountered by prehistoric people who lived in the Tanana Flats in central Alaska 14,000 years ago. During the terminal Pleistocene and early Holocene (14,000 to 10,000 years ago) the Tanana Flats included terraces, vegetated sand dunes, lakeshores, and bedrock hills and ridgelines. This terrain evolved over time; rivers migrated and lakes fluctuated; and prominent uplands were established. Early hunter-gatherers left evidence of short-term camps and hunting lookouts. The ancient geography of this region was mapped by comparing stratigraphic evidence from many test pits, bore holes, and auger samples collected by Army archaeologists and soil scientists for various projects.

The climate became warmer and moister after glaciers receded in the Alaska Range. Flora and fauna transformed as the climate changes. Vegetation increased in the form of birch shrub tundra, favoring browsing animals. Although the largest big game animals like mammoth were disappearing, bison, wapiti, and moose may have been prevalent when many archaeological sites were established. Evidence from these sites shows that people hunted a broad spectrum of large and small game and fowl. Radiocarbon samples gathered from archaeological sites in the Tanana Flats date to approximately 13,500 years ago. These samples were extracted from ancient campfire charcoal and organic matter from core samples of ancient pollen. Archaeological sites are located on high terraces carved by glacial melt waters overlooking the nearby Tanana River and exposed floodplain. Winds picked up sediment from the active floodplain and carried it up onto the high ridges, covering the artifacts left behind. These sites were short-term campsites where people sat and sharpened bifacial projectile points and watched for animals 14,000 years ago.

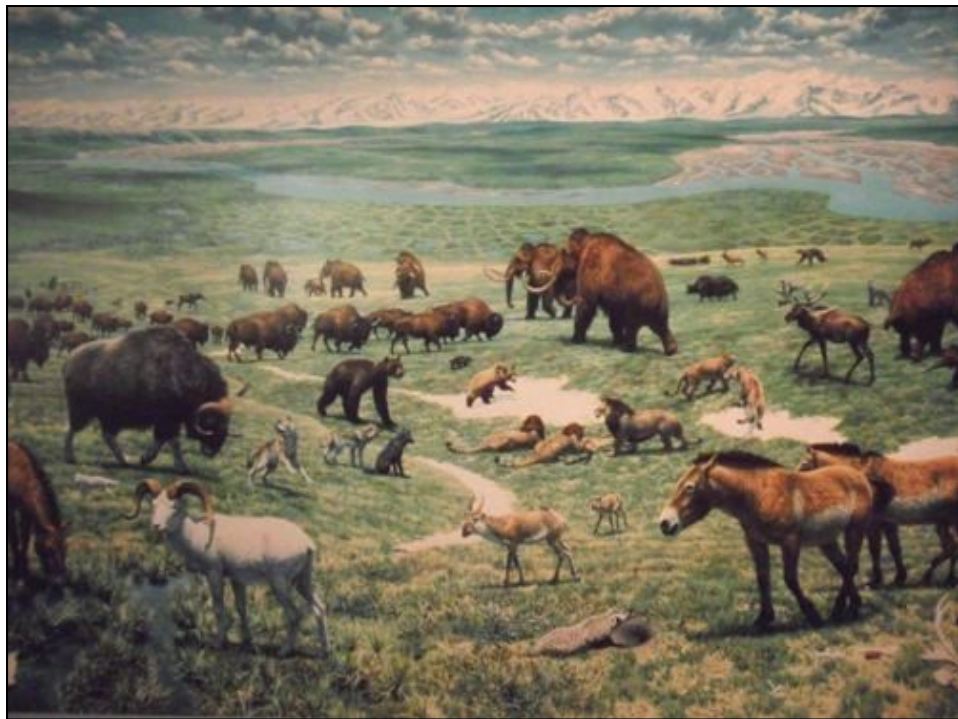


Today— Looking across Tanana Flats toward the Alaska Range

Ancient Ecology (Figure 4)

People would have been living in a landscape dominated by birch shrub tundra. The area that is forested today would have had clear lines of sight in all directions. There is a well-known vegetation history for interior Alaska during this period. Several lakes within the watershed of the Blair Lakes archaeological sites have been analyzed for pollen, including Windmill Lake to the southwest, Harding Lake to the east, and Birch Lake to the southeast. Although the exact timing of vegetation changes varies slightly from site to site, there is a general regional trend:

- From 16,000 to 14,000 years ago during full glacial times there was a dominance of herbaceous tundra vegetation; lake levels were low; and the climate was cool and arid.
- From 14,000 to 11,500 years ago (earlier in lowland locations) shrub tundra vegetation (prominently shrub birch) began to increase in percentage of groundcover over the landscape at the expense of herbaceous vegetation; lake levels were moderate; and the climate was warmer and moister.
- From 11,500 to 9,500 years ago poplar forests began to dominate the vegetation in the Interior; birch and willow were prolific; and the climate continued to be warmer and moister.
- From 9,500 to 7,500 years ago spruce and alder percentages increase; spruce forests covered the Interior by the early part of this period; and the climate was warmer and moister and approximated modern conditions by 7,000 years ago.



Artist’s rendering of mammals that would have lived in the glacial period in Interior Alaska . (mural by Jay Matternes)

Fauna (Figure 4)

The transition for fauna during this period was marked by extinctions and changes in species distribution. Mammoth and horse faced regional extinction around 14,500 years ago as the climate changed from cool and arid to warm and moist. Bison, wapiti, and moose thrived as conditions changed to favor browsers over grazers. People in the Tanana Flats would have relied mainly on bison for big game hunting. Archaeological evidence suggests that they subsisted on a broad range of large and small game, birds, and fish. Recovered bison, hare, waterfowl, and unidentifiable large mammal bone fragments date to 13,500 years ago.

Ancient Geography (Figures 1, 2, 3)

During the *last glacial maximum*—the time when area glaciers had maximum coverage—glaciers were limited to alpine areas of the Alaska Range. The glacial ice in these areas started melting just before 15,000 years ago. Glacial outwash flowed north from the Alaska Range, creating rivers and carving terraces in the Tanana Flats. Gravels deposited from this flow pushed the Tanana River toward the Yukon-Tanana Uplands. Using the depth of gravel deposits as an indicator for river position (the gravel layers indicating riverbed), the Tanana River has migrated northeast during the last 12,000 years— since the glaciers have melted.

The beginning of windblown silt deposits coincides almost exactly with rapid recession of glacial ice. Strong glacial winds in mountain valleys beyond former glacier limits had significant implications for late Pleistocene archaeology. Winds moved sand and silt from unvegetated windswept flood plains of braided glacial melt-water streams, creating dunes and silt deposits.

During the late Pleistocene (14,000 years ago), the Tanana River would have flowed closer to archaeological sites located on terrace edges and sand dunes. The active floodplain and strong winds carried sands up onto terrace edges. Artifacts are found in these deposits, suggesting human occupation within a highly active geologic climate. Finer windblown silt deposits from the Holocene cover the archaeological sites.

Late Pleistocene Archaeology (Figure 1)

Ten sites in the Tanana Flats contain cultural material that date to the late Pleistocene. These sites are deeply buried in silt and windblown sands from that time period. Artifacts and charred bone are commonly found buried at the transition between windblown sands and silts. Stone tool assemblages from these sites dating to this time period are related to projectile point sharpening. Raw materials found include chert, rhyolite, and basalt.

Figures: Archaeology at Blair Lakes Yields Information About the Ancient Landscape and Change

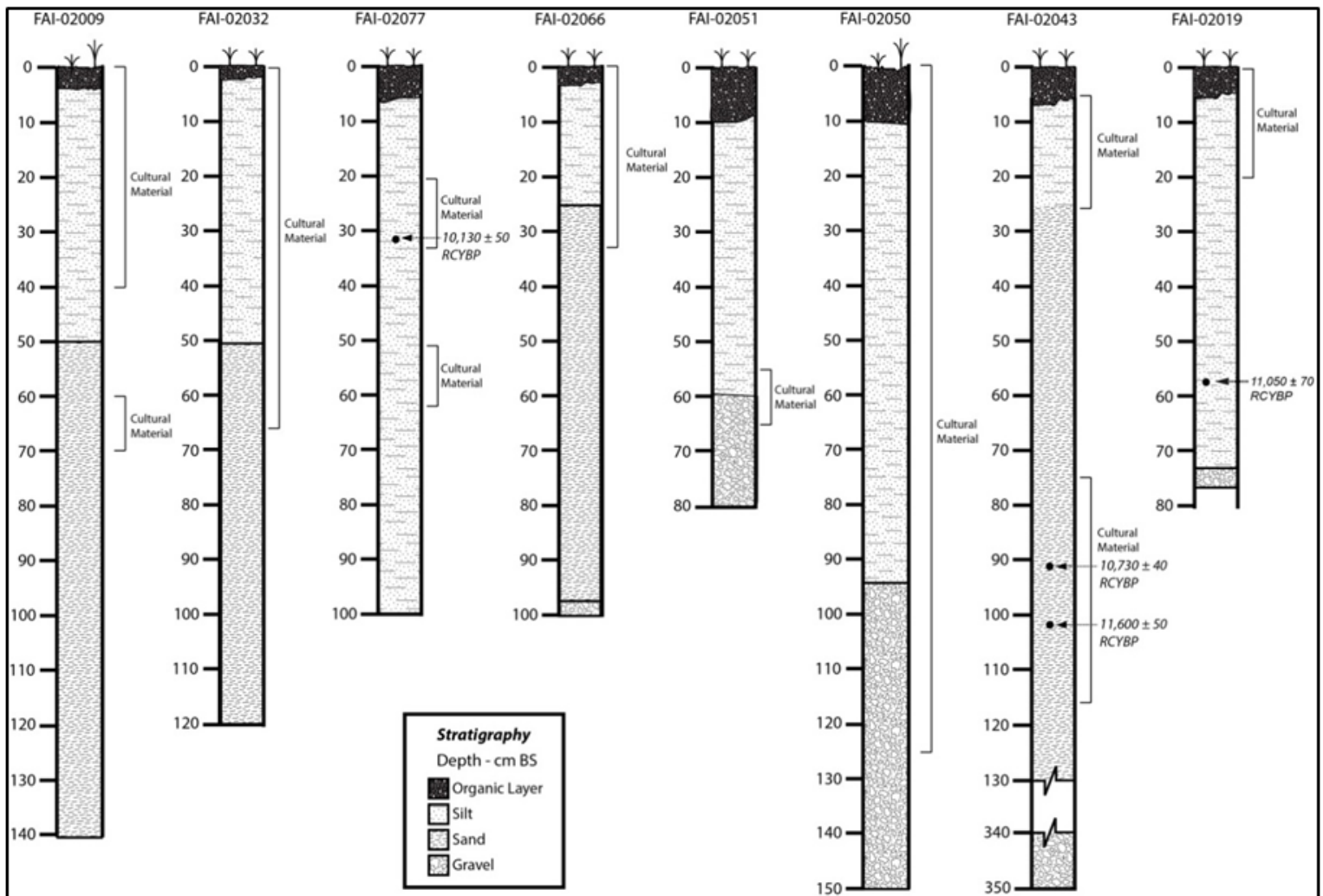


Figure 1. Stratigraphic profiles of late Pleistocene sites in Tanana Flats. Site numbers (ex. FAI-####) are referenced in figure 3. Profiles are measured in centimeters by tens (cm BS = centimeters Below Surface). Radiocarbon years (RCYBP = radiocarbon years before present) are approximately 2,000 years before the “years ago” date. For example, 11,000 RCYBP equals approximately 13,000 years ago.

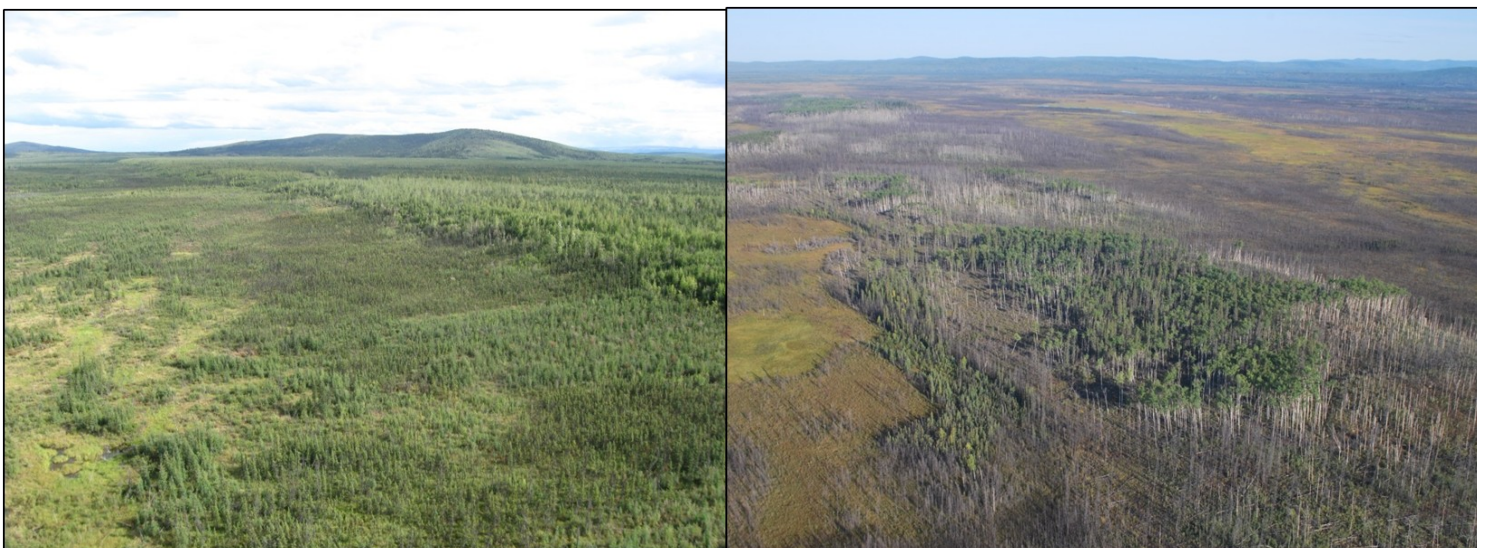


Figure 2. A glacial outwash terrace edge (left) is delineated by the higher treeline. Sand dunes (right) in the Tanana Flats can be identified by tree plots across the landscape.

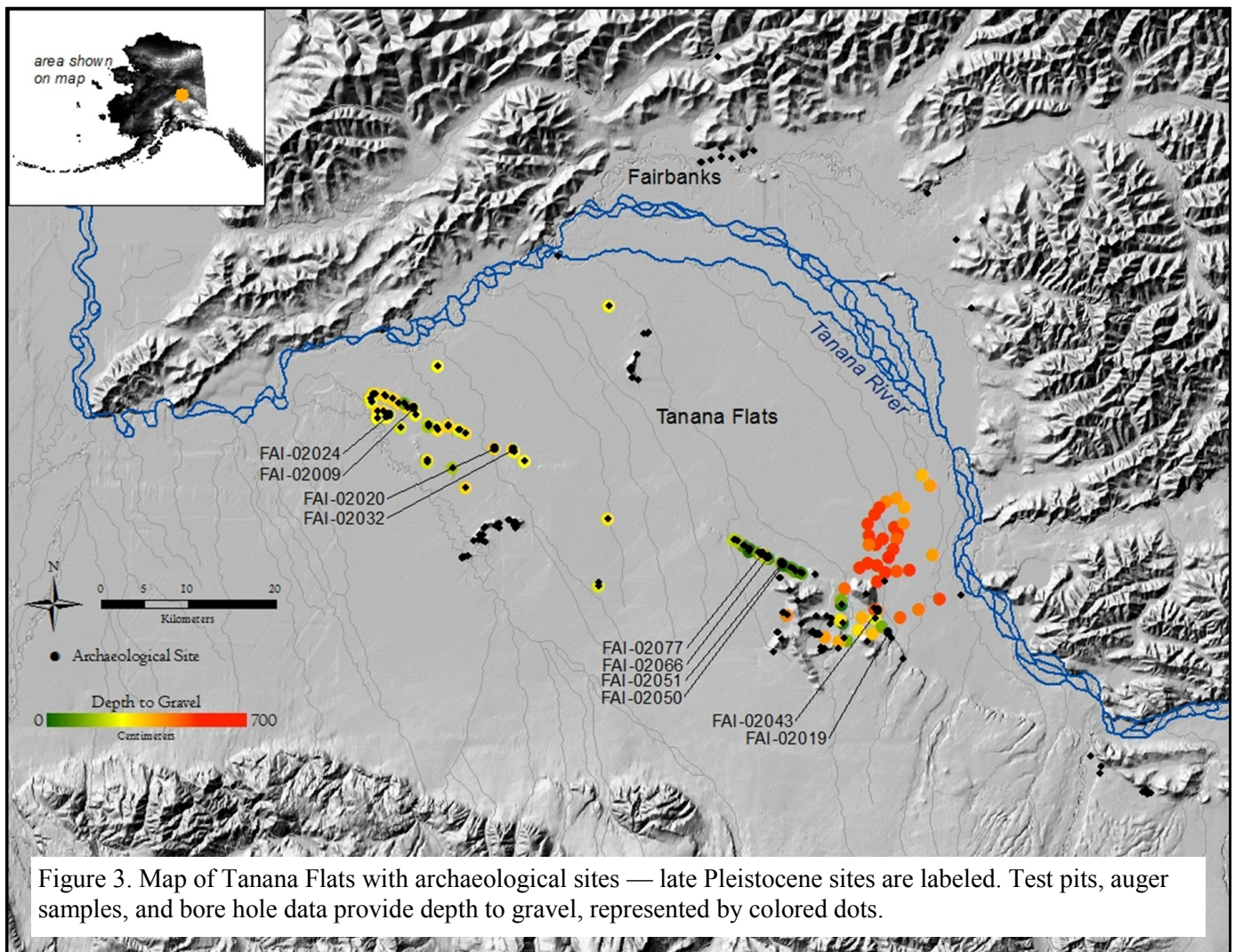


Figure 3. Map of Tanana Flats with archaeological sites — late Pleistocene sites are labeled. Test pits, auger samples, and bore hole data provide depth to gravel, represented by colored dots.

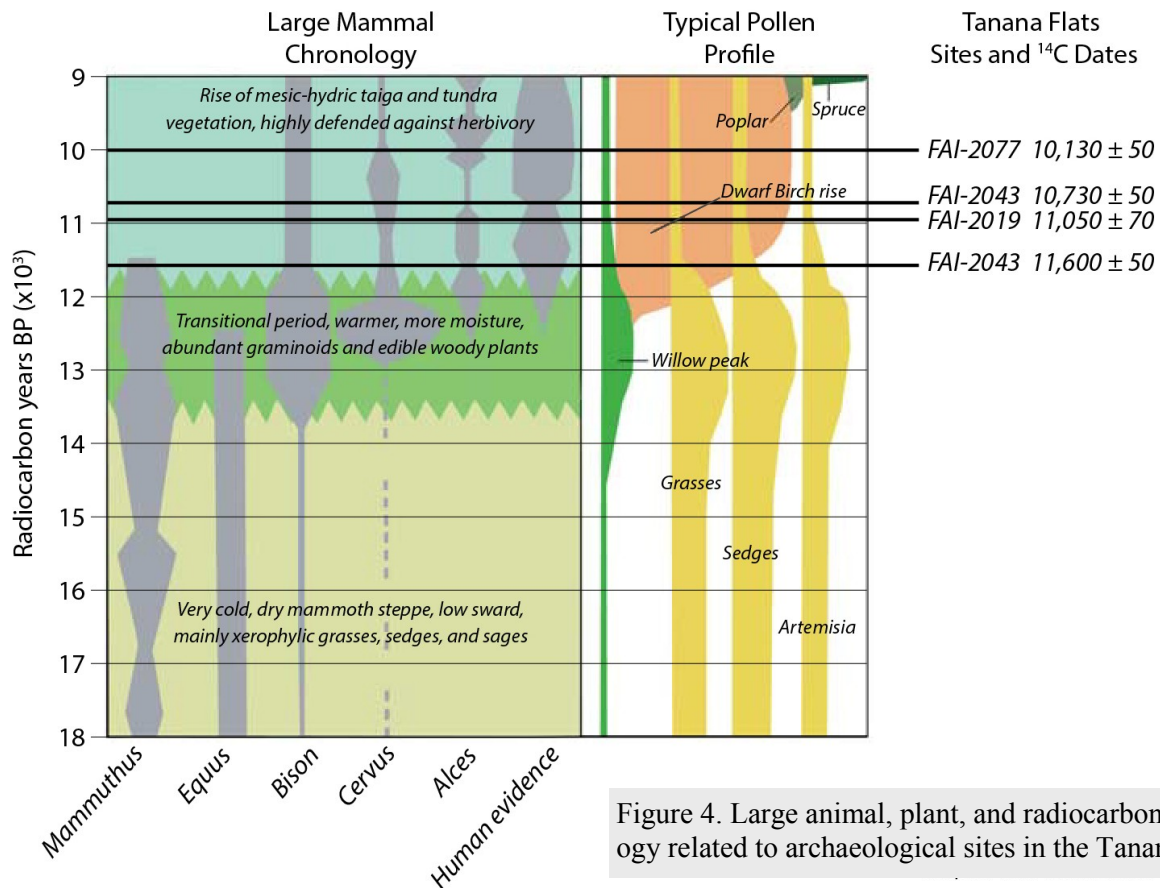


Figure 4. Large animal, plant, and radiocarbon date chronology related to archaeological sites in the Tanana Flats