



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

October 2014, Vol. 12/No. 4

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

## Northway Village and USAG FWA Launch Community Project

Representatives from the USAG FWA Environmental Division and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) met with the Northway Village Tribal Council during Council's regular meeting on October 14 to seek approval and launch a co-operative project in the community.

The Northway Community Environmental Survey is a partnership of the tribe, the garrison, USFWS and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG). It will assist the community in better understanding the federal actions (including many Army-facilitated) that occurred in the area, and in the greater, general watershed that resulted in contamination substantial enough to warrant environmental restoration. This project is a result of conversations between the tribe and USAG FWA command and personnel during the years of government-to-government relations building.

Following a presentation to the council and tribal staff members, questions were answered about the project's goals and procedure. Council members expressed interest in getting local youth involved in the topic through assistance with resource sampling and other educational opportunities, the possibility of local hiring for the project, long-standing concerns regarding contamination in the community, and appreciation for the Army's participation in past meetings and the government-to-government process.

Following unanimous council approval, the 3-year project launched with a literature review of past projects and resulting clean-up. Mapping will be done to get a spatial view of that work and that information will be reviewed with the community. Gaps in administrative records for restoration projects will be identified and those records will be discussed with the community to present a more holistic picture of how the local environment has been addressed.

After review and mapping, the community will be consulted regarding environmental concerns that still exist in the community. Through consultation, a sampling process for subsistence resources will be developed, including a determination of which contaminants might be sampled for.

At the project's conclusion, results from resource sampling will be discussed with the community and shared with fellow stakeholders within the watershed.

## FWA Gains Game Enforcement Officers

Fort Wainwright has recently filled three Game Enforcement Officer positions that have long been vacant. The addition of these positions to the Fort Wainwright workforce will provide many benefits to the Fort Wainwright community.

These officers will help educate the public on requirements for recreating on military lands. They will conduct regular patrols of the training areas to help provide separation between military training and the recreating public, increasing public and soldier safety on training lands. These patrols will help reduce many conservation issues that are currently impacting Fort Wainwright's training areas.

The officers will be trained to enforce conservation laws such as the Migratory Bird Protection Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act and will ensure that recreational users are utilizing training lands in accordance with regulations. Additionally, they will be enforcing all permitting regulations including those relating to general recreation, wood cutting, trapping, ceremonial game hunts, and other land uses.

Recreationists and hunters using Army-managed lands are reminded that they need to be in possession of a Recreation Access Permit (RAP) and must use the iSportsman USARTRAK system to check themselves onto training lands before entering.

Additionally, USAG FWA wood cutting permits, state hunting and fishing licenses, and other permits for special use must be possessed when appropriate. Check with ADFG or the USAG FWA Environmental Division staff with questions. All Army-managed training lands are within the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area as defined by ADFG.

For more information about rules for use of Army-managed lands, visit the iSportsman USARTRAK website, <http://usartrak.isportsman.net/>

**FORT WAINWRIGHT**

**USARTRAK**  
powered by i-SPORTSMAN

What is USARTRAK?

It is the U.S. Army Recreation Tracking System (USARTRAK). USARTRAK has been established to facilitate public access to Fort Wainwright training lands, and allows recreational users to check in by phone, or online at <http://usartrak.isportsman.net>

As always, recreational activities are permitted on Fort Wainwright training lands, (providing they do not conflict with the military mission or training activities.)

The USARTRAK system is designed to keep you informed of training area closures.

In the interest of safety, you must stay within the boundaries of the training areas open to recreation.

**How To Gain Recreational Access to Fort Wainwright Training Lands**

**1. Obtain a Recreation Access Permit (RAP).**  
This can be obtained online or at one of our three kiosk locations: the Fort Wainwright Visitors Center, Fort Greely Visitors Center, and Fort Wainwright Natural Resource office.

**2. Check in by calling the USARTRAK automated phone system or online.** This must be done before entering the training lands and you will need your RAP number to access the system.

This permit is free to all individuals and required by those 16 years of age and older.

Enjoy your time on Alaska Army Lands!

For more recreation information please visit our website at: <http://usartrak.isportsman.net>

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## Federal Agencies need Tribal Input for NEPA and Section 106, but Who has the Time?

In support of the government-to-government relationship between tribes and Federal agencies, tribal staff members are often inundated with documents from those agencies and a request for the tribe to respond with questions, concerns, or mere acknowledgement of the document and the project it addresses. These documents are usually tied to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The majority of these documents will be later reviewed by some sort of regulatory entity—from the State Historic Preservation Officer to the Environmental Protection Agency—that will be critical of documents not addressed with tribes. Additionally almost all of these documents have an input deadline, tiered off of the agency's deadline, attached to them by which the federal agency is requesting a response.

In a world of limited resources, it is understandable that the tribal government staff might not have the resources or personnel to answer all these inquiries in the time requested. In each case, the government-to-government relationship is being honored through the process, but time and energy are at a premium. So what are tribes—who might want to respond because a project may impact their tribal rights or resources—and agencies—who need a response in order to gain tribal input for decision-making and to satisfy their regulators—to do? It's a difficult situation, but let's look at some options.

There are many regulatory / legislative mandates for government-to-government consultation. The USAG FWA government-to-government program responds to the policies and regulations from the Department of Defense and Department of the Army as well as laws such as NEPA and NHPA, executive orders, and presidential memos. The primary threshold is that tribal governments should be notified of an action or undertaking and offered the opportunity for consultation if that activity has the potential to significantly affect protected tribal rights and resources.

### ***So what does the tribe need from the agency?***

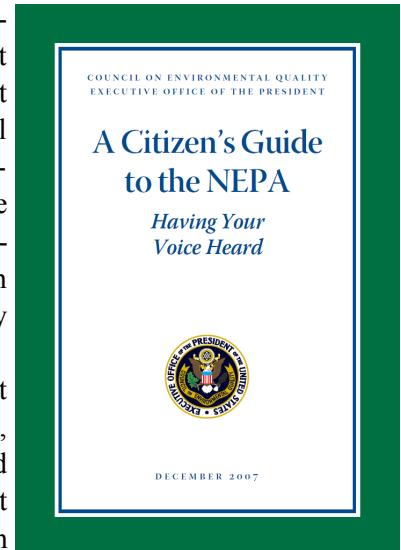
In the beginning, tribal government staff should be given enough information to understand what the "action" (NEPA) or "undertaking" (NHPA) is and what its ramifications are so that staff and leadership can judge whether the tribe is impacted. As steward of the tribe's well-being, such impacts are leadership's to determine. The agency should offer consultation with its designated decision-maker for the tribe to accept or decline based on that understanding and judgment. This agency notification AND the tribal response should come early enough in the process for tribal input to be meaningful to agency decision-makers. If more time is needed to understand the project or determine potential effects on tribal rights or resources, it can be requested and should be granted.

Initiating correspondence from the agency should be followed by email or phone calls, ensuring that the tribe received the correspondence and providing more information if needed. For the purposes of the government-to-government relationship, it is helpful if tribes have conveyed to the agency what staff preferences are regarding reliable contact method.

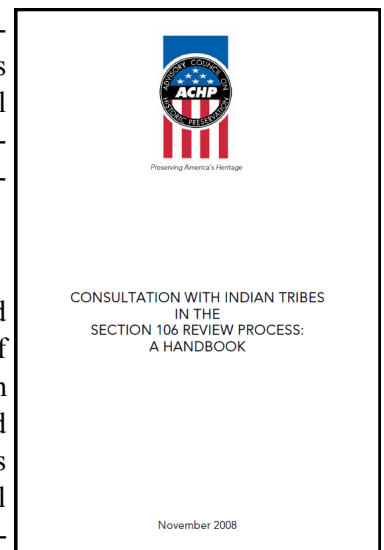
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In short, the agency needs some tribal input, acceptance of consultation, or declination of the consultation offer. Preferably the acceptance or declination responses should be in writing to ensure that the agency has the response on file in its administrative record and the tribe has its wishes on record. At a minimum, these responses should be given to the agency by phone or email, making it the agency's job to make a 'memo to file' in the administrative record. In respect of the tribe's sovereignty, it's important that the agency know what the desire of the tribe is and respond accordingly.

If the project is of no concern to the tribe, a declination of consultation is a logical choice. If the project is of concern or if the tribal staff has input, they can choose between staff-to-staff consultation or leader-to-leader Consultation. If the tribe does not feel that leader-to-leader consultation is necessary, staff-to-staff interaction can proceed to make the tribes concerns be known and integrated into any planning for the action or undertaking.



[www.wainwright.army.mil/env/PDFs/Native%20Liaison/Citizens%20guide%20NEPA.pdf](http://www.wainwright.army.mil/env/PDFs/Native%20Liaison/Citizens%20guide%20NEPA.pdf)



[www.achp.gov/regs-tribes2008.pdf](http://www.achp.gov/regs-tribes2008.pdf)



## Bison Hunting Camp Reveals a Late-Glacial Visit to Fort Wainwright

contributed by Julie Esdale, USAG FWA Archaeologist

One of Alaska's oldest archaeological sites was recently found on Fort Wainwright in the Tanana Flats Training Area. This ancient hunting lookout dates back to at least 13,900 years ago and contains the remains of an ancient meal enjoyed by hunters at the end of the last glacial period.

The McDonald Creek site was originally discovered by a Fort Wainwright archaeologist in 2010. In 2014, Fort Wainwright awarded Texas A&M University archaeologist Dr. Ted Goebel a permit to conduct scientific excavations at the site. The first year of excavations has just been completed in a multi-year project partnering archaeologists and graduate students from Texas A&M University, Colorado State University, and Fort Wainwright, as well as the aid of specialists from other institutions.

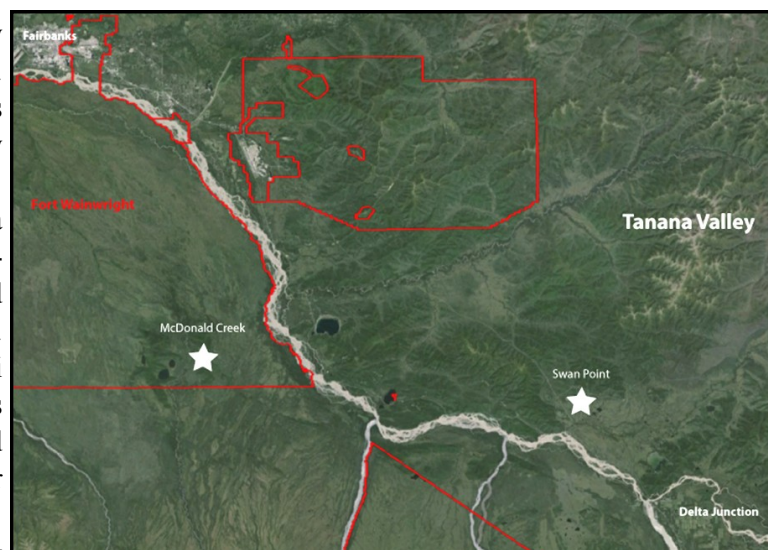
The site is situated on a hill in the Tanana Flats made by ancient glacial gravel deposits that have been carved by the Tanana River. Fourteen thousand years ago this site would have overlooked the nearby Tanana River and a large, treeless plain for miles around. The objects left behind by the ancient hunters were buried by sand and silts blown up from the Tanana River floodplain over the last 14,000 years.

Geologists visited the site this summer to interpret the sedimentary history of the geological deposits and date sand and silt layers using a technique called optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) which identifies the last time sediments were exposed to light. Some elements found within mineral grains decay over time. As electrons are released by the radioactive isotopes, they are trapped in imperfections in the mineral structure of quartz and feldspar grains which typically make up river sands. When the sands are exposed to light, the trapped electrons are released in light waves. If geologists know the production rate of electrons, and can measure the electrons trapped in buried sands by exposing them to light today, they can get an estimate on the age of the sediment package, or the time it was last exposed to light, which was when people were living at the site.

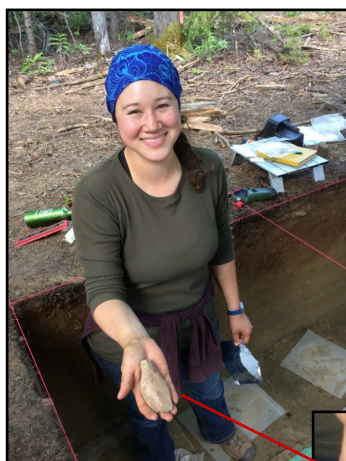
Hunting and gathering people visited the site at least four times between the end of the glacial period and about 6,000 years ago, when environmental conditions and local vegetation would have been similar to today. The deepest (and oldest) cultural levels contain animal bone, stone tool fragments, and abundant charcoal which has also been used to date the site. Animal bone fragments in the deepest layers are the long bones of large mammals, including bison, and abundant bird bone, some of which is waterfowl. Stone debris from resharpening stone knives is also found scattered amongst the bone and charcoal. Charcoal from the bottom of the excavation units dates the site to 13,900 years ago, making it the second oldest site in all of Alaska, dating to only a few hundred years younger than Alaska's oldest site, Swan Point, located 60 miles to the east.

Archaeologists hope to use data from the McDonald Creek excavations to reconstruct the meals of these ancient hunters and identify what time of year the site was used. They are interested to know what kinds of plants and animals people were using for subsistence and how those foods changed over time as the climate grew warmer and wetter nearing modern times. They also hope to learn more about the stone tools hunters were using for killing and processing animals in the past. Excavations at the McDonald Creek site will continue during the summer of 2015.

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Location of the two oldest sites in Alaska, both located in the Tanana River Valley.



Graduate student Melissa Mueller shows off a large mammal bone fragment found deep in excavation.



Graduate student Marine Frouin studies the wall of the excavation unit near a large bone and charcoal scatter in preparation for the removal of geological samples for OSL dating.

## USAG FWA Holds RAB Meeting in Haines

The biannual Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) meeting was held in Haines, on September 18. RAB members, citizens of the local tribes, and other interested community members received an update on the clean-up progress being made at the Haines Fuel Terminal property by USAG FWA Restoration staff and the contractor doing the work, North Wind (a CIRI company).

At the recent RAB meeting, community members were given a status report on the clean-up and monitoring of the existing contamination. They asked questions about restoration methods and the timeline for future activity and clean-up completion.

RABs are designed to be stakeholder groups that meet on a regular basis to discuss environmental restoration at a specific property either currently or formerly owned by DoD and where DoD oversees the environmental restoration process. Local community members participate as either RAB members or through public meeting attendance. RAB members influence clean-up decisions through discussion and provide input to the DoD decision-makers. Representatives of agencies such as the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation also participate in the RAB, giving RAB and community members opportunity to share their questions, concerns, and ideas with agencies overseeing the clean-up.

The Haines RAB has been in existence for over 20 years and will continue to meet until clean-up is complete or they choose to disband themselves.



*Community members listen to reports at the Haines Fuel Terminal RAB meeting in December 2013.*

Restoration Advisory Boards (RABs) are being organized for the Gerstle River Training Area (RAB meetings will be held in Delta Junction) and the Tok Fuel Terminal (RAB meetings will be held in Tok). For more information on details, meeting dates, and topics of concern, contact the USAG FWA Native Liaison at [elizabeth.a.cook80.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:elizabeth.a.cook80.ctr@mail.mil) or 907-261-6323 or Remedial Project Manager at [brian.m.adams18.civ@mail.mil](mailto:brian.m.adams18.civ@mail.mil) or 907-361-6623.

Directorate of Public Works  
Environmental Division  
ATTN: IMFW-PWE (Cook)  
1060 Gaffney Road #4500  
Fort Wainwright, Alaska 99703-4500

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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. Changes can be sent to [elizabeth.a.cook80.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:elizabeth.a.cook80.ctr@mail.mil).