



U.S. ARMY GARRISON, ALASKA QUARTERLY UPDATE FOR ALASKA NATIVE TRIBES

June 2007, Issue 10

This is a quarterly update on U.S. Army Garrison, Alaska activities and issues that might be of interest to federally recognized tribes in Alaska

TRAINING FOLLOW-UP

Thanks goes to all those who participated in the “Government-to-Government Relationship Building Training in Alaska” hosted by the U.S. Army Garrison, Alaska. The training was held in Fairbanks, February 27 - March 1, 2007. Approximately 60 people attended including tribal representatives from Interior Alaska, U.S. Army personnel and contractors, and agency representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Navy, Alaskan Command, U.S. Department of

Transportation/ Federal Aviation Association, and the National Park Service. Participants learned about the historical and legal basis for government-to-government relationships, the Department of Defense’s policy for consulting with tribes, and Army specific implementation practices in Alaska. The most valuable benefits of the training were the ideas and experiences shared between tribal and agency participants throughout the three days.



During the exercise, class participants broke into two groups to discuss the consultation process between the Department of Defense and federally recognized tribes in Alaska.

“Thank you” goes to the team of folks who helped make this training a success. Elizabeth Cook, Susan Kramer and Heather Leavengood assisted with logistics. A very special “thanks” goes to Sandra Borbridge (who originally created this course six years ago) and Brenda

Takes Horse, both of whom helped plan the agenda. Particular recognition also goes to all the speakers, including (in alphabetical order): Mike Black, Sandra Borbridge, Kevin Illingworth, Lieutenant Colonel Ron Johnson, Al Ketzler, Gary Larsen, Carrie McEnteer, Jerome Montague, Daisy Northway, Colonel David Shutt, Gene Tagaban, Meg Thornton, Jon Townsend, Mike Walleri, Miranda Wright, and Ernest Young.



Above: Gene Tagaban, Alaska Native storyteller and communications trainer, talks with Lieutenant Colonel Ron Johnson, Fort Wainwright Garrison Commander, during a break in the training.



Right: Colonel David Shutt, USAG-AK Commander, chats with President Ted Charles, Dot Lake Village, during a break in the training.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Items of Interest

NIKE SITE SUMMIT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

The Army is currently considering the future management of Site Summit.

Constructed in 1959 and since its deactivation in 1979, the primary uses of the site include occasional military training and home to some critical federal, state, and local communications equipment. The Army provides the lone source of electrical power to support these communications nodes.

Public access is currently restricted at Site Summit due to physical safety risks associated with exposed hazardous substances and nearby live-fire training ranges. As Site Summit is highly visible and readily accessible to the public from adjacent state recreation lands, trespassing and vandalism are reoccurring problems.

In early 2007, the Army resumed the task of developing a management strategy for Site Summit. Our current challenge is to balance the needs to provide uninterrupted military training, protect against deliberate or inadvertent trespassers from physical hazards, secure the sensitive communications equipment from damage/vandalism, and to preserve important historical reminders of Site Summit's Cold War defense legacy.

The Army came to the Anchorage community in late February 2007 requesting input on the future management of Site Summit as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) "scoping" process. Under NEPA, federal agencies conduct "scoping" to determine the various issues of concern to the public about a particular project, and use it to prepare an Environmental Assessment. The public was provided with a 30-day window in which to comment and suggest potential management options.

At this point in the NEPA process, there has been no decision on a management alternative for Nike Site Summit. A decision will not be made until: 1) the release of an Environmental Assessment for public comment; 2) consideration of public, agency, tribal and public interest group comment; and, 3) decision-maker review of all the anticipated impacts and mitigation measures associated with all the management alternatives.

The more than 85 comments received from the general public, agencies and interest groups have been used by the Army to shape potential management options to protect human health and safety, achieve the military mission, maintain the legacy of Site Summit, and to focus analysis efforts to those topics of most concern to the public. The consideration of public comment will be reflected in the range of management alternatives to be presented in an Environmental Assessment.

The Environmental Assessment will be released in June 2007. The public will have an additional 30-day opportunity to comment on the Army's management options for Site Summit. A public meeting will also be held in Anchorage on June 28 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Anchorage Marriott Downtown, 820 W. 7th Ave.



Nike Site Summit is located on a mountain peak near the eastern boundary of Fort Richardson, Alaska.

5TH STRYKER BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM (SBCT) ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)

The Department of the Army recently published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the permanent stationing of Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) Number 5. The SEIS will assess the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed permanent stationing of the 5th SBCT at its current location in Hawaii and at other reasonable locations outside of Hawaii. One of the four alternative locations could include Fort Richardson and the Donnelly Training Area. Under this possible alternative, Fort Richardson would serve as the permanent housing and life support of the Soldiers and families of the 5th SBCT while the Donnelly Training Area would serve as a separate maneuver training facility.

Public scoping for the preparation of the SEIS was conducted in January and February 2007. The scoping process helped identify environmental issues, concerns and opportunities to be analyzed in the SEIS. Potential moderate impacts to Fort Richardson and Donnelly Training Area were identified as a result of increased noise associated with training, increase in military vehicle convoys on local roads, pollution from stormwater runoff, degradation of maneuver land condition due to soil compaction, rutting and removal of vegetation, potential increase in wildland fires, disturbance of archeological sites, and increased use of petroleum, oil, lubricants and hazardous substances. Public meetings to discuss the draft SEIS will be conducted in Anchorage and Delta Junction in early summer of 2007.

AVIATION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published in the Federal Register on Wednesday, April 4, 2007. The EIS will assess the potential environmental impacts associated with the stationing and training of increased numbers and types of aviation assets within Alaska. This proposed increase and reorganization will allow the Army to transition to a force that is capable of providing a broad range of integrated aviation training experiences to the forces of U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK), and more aviation capabilities when the unit deploys to support operational missions abroad. Existing aviation units would potentially be reorganized and stationed at Fort Wainwright, Fort Richardson or other military installations to support the training of aviation assets on U.S. Army training lands in Alaska. Eielson Air Force Base is also being considered as a potential stationing location for the aviation assets.

The reorganized unit would be capable of providing first line air transport, air reconnaissance, and close air support. The new aviation unit would be built around the existing USARAK aviation fleet of 30 medium and heavy lift transport helicopters, and USARAK's 640 aviation personnel. To this the Army proposes to add helicopters capable of providing medical evacuation, air reconnaissance, close air support, and aviation attack capabilities. The proposed aviation unit, an Aviation Task Force or Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB), would potentially consist of up to 62 medium and heavy lift helicopters, 30 combat scout helicopters, 24 attack helicopters, and between 1,200 to 2,850 personnel. This proposed stationing and training of increased aviation assets involves construction of new facilities, execution of day-to-day support operations, and routine joint military training at nearby training lands and ranges. Helicopter types associated with the proposed action include UH-60 and HH-60 Blackhawks, CH-47 Chinook, OH-58D Kiowa, and AH-64 Apache. Both the Kiowa and Apache are new to Alaska.

An EIS is being prepared primarily due to the potential impacts to historic resources within the cantonment area of Fort Wainwright. Several facilities are proposed for construction and demolition within the Ladd Airfield National Historic Landmark. Impacts to these individual facilities as well as to the National Historic Landmark as a whole would be significant, thus requiring the preparation of an EIS. Additional impacts include stationing of new aviation assets to Alaska whose potential impacts to wildlife and noise levels have not previously been analyzed.

Public and agency scoping meetings were held in Fairbanks, Delta Junction and Anchorage during April 2007. The scoping period ended on May 4, 2007. There were 12 public and five agency comments submitted.

Excavation Summary

The archaeological excavations at site XMH-874, Donnelly Training Area, began during the 2006 field season as a part of mitigation for the construction of a new training range.

During the first season of work on this site, 40 square meters were excavated and 1,845

pieces of cultural material were found,

including 822 stone artifacts and more than 1,000 small fragments of animal bone.

The stone artifacts are comprised

of 53 tools and diagnostics including projectile point fragments (arrowheads)

(Figure 1g, 1j and 1k) and 769 pieces of stone debitage (waste flakes).

Some of the stone tools and waste flakes are made of obsidian (Figure 1n) and jasper

(Figure 1m), which are stone types that cannot be found locally.

These stones would have been brought to the site from many miles away.

USAG-AK will continue the excavation within the site boundaries during the 2007 field season.



Site XMH-00874 Trench A in 2006, facing north.

Figure 1 (left): Artifacts from XMH-00874

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