

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

April 2013, Issue 31

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

Important Changes to the Recreation Tracking System Happened April 1

contributed by John Haddix, USAG FWA Natural Resources Manager

Effective April 1, Fort Wainwright's recreational access system— U.S. Army Recreation Tracking (USARTRAK)—updated to a new version powered by iSportsman. USARTRAK can now be accessed at the new web address *usartrak.isportsman.net*, the new toll-free phone number (877) 250-9781, or the current local numbers— 353-3181 in Fairbanks and 873-3181 in Delta Junction. In addition to the new online accessibility, there are also self-service kiosks that provide access to USARTRAK and other services previously only available through staff at the installation. These are located at Fort Wainwright and Fort Greely visitor centers and at the Fort Wainwright Environmental Division Office, building 3023.

Current Recreational Access Permit (RAP) holders may continue to use their existing permits to check in to open training areas, but must first update personal information online at *usartrak.isportsman.net* or at a self-service kiosk.

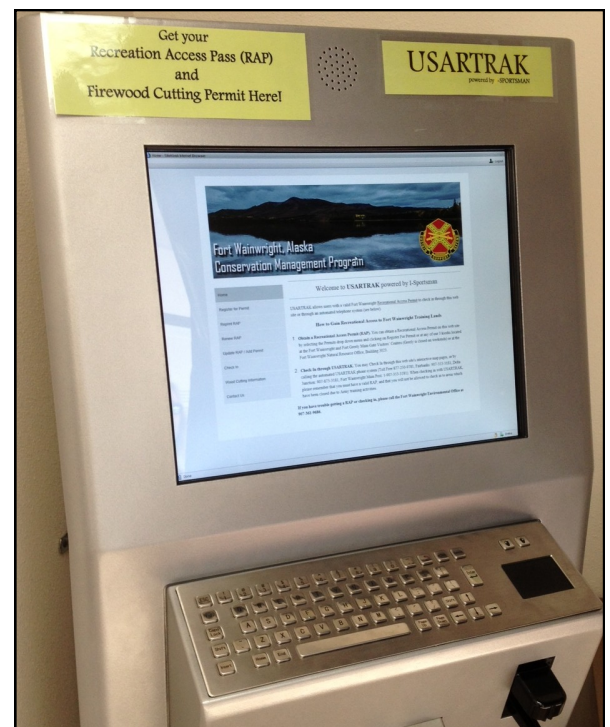
The new USARTRAK powered by iSportsman contains all the functionality of the previous version as well as a number of new features, including functions to:

- Obtain a free RAP and check in to training areas at self-service kiosks,
- Purchase wood-cutting permits online or at self-service kiosks with credit or debit card,
- Complete bear baiting and trapping harvest reports online (Initial registration is still at the Fort Wainwright Environmental Division Office or by calling 873-1616 for Donnelly Training Area.),
- View and print Fort Wainwright recreation maps and the Fort Wainwright Outdoor Recreation Regulation Supplement online from a home computer,
- Check in 24 hours ahead of time for up to 14 days, and
- Check in multiple permit numbers for groups.

As before, to legally access Fort Wainwright training lands a RAP must be acquired. The RAP may be obtained online at *usartrak.isportsman.net* or from one of the self-help kiosks. The permit is free and required for people age 16 and older. The RAP number and PIN (created when you update your personal information in the new system) is needed to check in.

Land users are reminded that recreational activities are permitted in Army training areas, providing they do not conflict with the military mission or training activities. In the interest of safety, land users must stay within the boundaries of the training areas open to recreation. The USARTRAK system is designed for the land-user's safety, to spread up-to-date information on training-area closures. Failure to use USARTRAK, resulting in recreational permit violations may result in the loss of recreational access privileges on Army lands.

Please have a safe and enjoyable visit on Army lands. If you have trouble getting a RAP or checking in, please contact the Fort Wainwright Environmental Division Office at 361-9686.



More on items discussed here— policy documents, meetings, comment deadlines, g2g policy, natural and cultural resources management, and land restoration/environmental clean-up— can be found at <http://www.wainwright.army.mil/env/>.

Field Crews Go to Blair Lakes in 2013

contributions from Julie Esdale, Archaeologist; Aleya Brinkman, Wildlife Biologist; and Amy Tippery, Wetlands Scientist for USAG FWA

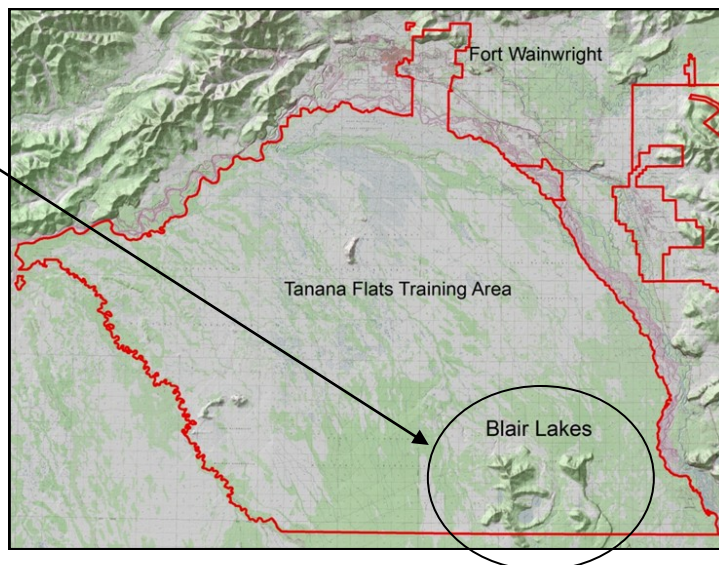
Natural and cultural resources crews from Fort Wainwright will be busy conducting research in the Blair Lakes region of the Tanana Flats Training Area during July of 2013. The Blair Lakes area has a rich natural and human history.

People have been living in the Blair Lakes area since the end of the last glacial period. Twelve-thousand-year-old archaeological sites can be found deeply buried under wind-blown silts on an ancient terrace of the post-glacial Tanana River. Archaeological sites around the lakes themselves span the entire Holocene (or last 10,000 years) up to historic times. The Blair Lakes have a unique history of varying lake levels. The current level of the lake is higher than it was in the past, and some archaeological sites are actually found under water.

Chinook, coho, and chum salmon use streams in the Tanana Flats for rearing and spawning habitat. These fish have been found in the lower reaches of Clear, Bear, McDonald, and 5-mile Clear Creeks, but it is unknown how far upstream they travel, particularly as they near Blair Lakes. In addition to salmon, arctic grayling, slimy sculpin, longnose sucker, and whitefish spp also inhabit these slim, often seasonally available waters. During summer 2013, the Army will be sampling creeks to identify and inventory both anadromous and resident fish species in the Blair Lakes region.

Wetlands crews will be mapping resources around the Blair Lakes. Along with wild streams and rivers, the Tanana Flats boast vast stretches of wild muskeg, bog, and fen wetlands that safeguard and recharge local aquifers and water tables from drought, pollutants, and flooding. These are critical parts of the landscape for water security in the middle Tanana watershed and also secure the livelihoods of many species of wildlife which rely on wetlands as hunting grounds, refuge, and sustenance. At the foundation of these wetlands sometimes lays ancient permafrost, a holdover from the last ice age.

The Army and Air Force have used this area for decades and are considering it as an access point to a restricted area west of the lakes in the future. Work done by scientists this summer are precursors to this potential development.



NEPA Updates

contribution from Matthew Sprau, USAG FWA NEPA Coordinator

Hangars 2 and 3 EIS: USAG FWA is gearing up to release the *Disposition of Hangars 2 and 3 Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (EIS) to the public in May 2013. There will be a 45-day public comment period, in which comments can be submitted to USAG FWA regarding the Army's analysis and preferred alternative. There will be a public meeting to present the findings during the comment period. The Draft EIS was prepared using information received during the scoping period from Army representatives; federal, state, and local agencies; tribes; and interested individuals.

Army 2020 PEA: The Army has released the *Final Finding of No Significant Impact* (FNSI) and *Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment* (PEA) for the *Army 2020 Force Structure Realignment*. The PEA analyzed the potential scenarios of gaining or reducing Soldiers at 21 installations around the country through the restructuring of Brigade Combat Teams. Fort Wainwright was analyzed for a gain of 1,000 Soldiers or a reduction of 4,900 Soldiers between Fiscal Years 2013 and 2020. The FNSI and PEA do not identify a preferred alternative. Any decisions made for the individual installations will be analyzed in subsequent site-specific NEPA documentation.

Links to both documents can be found on the USAG FWA Environmental Division website <http://www.wainwright.army.mil/env/NEPA/Current.html>.

Do your community members have knowledge they would like to share about Army-managed lands? USAG FWA welcomes Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and other information in order to be better stewards of the natural and cultural resources it cares for. Call or email (907) 361-6323 / elizabeth.a.cook80.ctr@mail.mil for questions or discussion.

Army Continues to Implement Training Area Cleanup Program

As part of its effort to be a good steward of the lands withdrawn for Army use, USAG FWA is continuing the training cleanup component of its land management program. The Training Area Cleanup Program was implemented in 1998 by USARAK Commander Major General Kenneth Simpson to remove debris, old hunting structures, and trespass cabins from the Army's large training areas. Since the program's initiation, the Army has documented removal of over 200 tons of trash and other debris from Donnelly Training Area and 150 tons from Yukon and Tanana Flats Training Areas. This spring, five tons of debris have been removed from Fort Wainwright-managed training lands.

USAG FWA staff conducts periodic inventories to locate trash, military operations residue, and illegal structures. Based on information collected during the inventories, sites are prioritized and cleanup schedules are established. Illegal structures are removed in response to Public Law 106-65 and Army Regulation 405-80 (*Management of Title and Granting Use of Real Property*). Prior to structure cleanup, encroachment notices are posted on illegal structures notifying the builders of their responsibility to remove the structures and offering the builders a minimum of 45 days for personal property removal.

Since 2000, the Army has removed 75 illegal structures from Tanana Flats and Donnelly Training Areas. In Fiscal Year 2013 (February-April), eight illegal structures have been removed from Tanana Flats and Donnelly Training Areas (GMU 20A and 20D), including one in Alpha Impact Area on the Tanana Flats. Five illegal structures remain and are scheduled to be removed in fiscal year 2013. Seven additional sites consisting of platforms and additional materials that could turn into permanent structures continue to be monitored. Illegal structure removal costs to date for Fiscal Year 2013 are \$38,000. Army records indicate that the cost of structure removal from 2000 to 2003 totaled over \$470,000.

Structures not in violation of applicable regulations will be permitted on the training area lands. Land management policy continues to allow platforms and other temporary structures used during hunting, trapping, or other recreational activities, provided they are removed when not in use. Additionally, USAG FWA maintains five shelters along the Tanana and Wood Rivers for use by the public in case of emergency.

Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan Update

contribution from Lisa Graham, USAG FWA Cultural Resources Manager

The 2013 revision of the Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan (ICRMP) was recently signed by the Garrison Commander. This plan was created by the USAG FWA Cultural Resources Section with input from stakeholders, including tribes of the Upper Tanana region and the Nenana Native Association. Meetings with tribal staff were held to review and establish agreeable protocols for managing the cultural resources on USAG FWA-managed lands.

A link to the ICRMP can be found in the *What's New* section of the USAG FWA Environmental Division website at <http://www.wainwright.army.mil/env/default.html>. If you are interested in receiving a hardcopy of the document, please contact the USAG FWA Native Liaison at (907) 361-6323 or elizabeth.a.cook80.ctr@mail.mil.

USAG FWA Celebrates Earth Day April 22

Fort Wainwright's annual Earth Day observance fair was held on April 22 and drew various USAG FWA departments and other vendors who promoted environmentally-friendly services/products and sustainability information. The attending crowd found booths where they could do everything from turn in their used household batteries for recycling to learn about worm composting (even getting starter worms to take home!).

The day finished with Garrison Commander COL Ron Johnson joining the mayors of North Pole, Fairbanks North Star Borough, and Fairbanks and Eielson Air Force Base command in signing a community sustainability agreement.



Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP)

The INRMP for Fort Wainwright-managed lands is being updated. Although the appendices are still under development, the plan narrative can be found in the *What's New* section of the USAG FWA Environmental Division website at <http://www.wainwright.army.mil/env/default.html>. This portion of the plan is currently under review by USAG FWA INRMP development partners, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Paying Homage to our Veterans in 2013

submitted by Al Grunin, VA Outreach Specialist

I was honored to join the Alaska Native Veterans Association (AKNVA) and participate in several events recently, including the Yukon Quest annual banquet, UAF's Festival of Native Arts, the membership meeting of Fairbanks Native Association, the annual conventions of Doyon Ltd and Tanana Chiefs Conference, and the funeral service honoring military veteran and Tanacross elders, Kenneth Thomas, Sr. I also witnessed the honoring of veteran Ralph "Greywolf" Amouak. An Honor Guard from Fort Wainwright presented the Amouak family with the flag as the bugle sounded taps in St. Matthews Episcopal Church that afternoon in late March.

While at the Doyon Ltd shareholder convention, it was also good to note the living and departed military veterans from the region being honored with a display of names in the main corridor of the Westmark Hotel. I am pleased that Alaska Native veterans are getting more attention and recognition. Alaska Natives have always had a rich tradition of entering military service.

Allen Grunin is a retired, 22-year service veteran who works for Caduceus Healthcare, Inc., assisting veterans in utilizing earned VA benefits.

Only 3,800 of the Interior's 12,000 veterans are registered with the VA. Are you? Register for VA benefits today.

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

OFFICIAL BUSINESS