



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

April 2008, Issue 13

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.

U.S. ARMY GARRISON ALASKA (USAG ALASKA) 7TH QUARTERLY MEETING WITH UPPER TANANA INTER-TRIBAL COALITION (UTIC)

Several U.S. Army Garrison staff travelled to Tanacross for the 7th Quarterly Meeting with the Upper Tanana Inter-Tribal Coalition, which was held on January 22, 2008. Tanacross President Roy Denny and Amanda Shearer co-presided over the meeting, which started after the group shared lunch and reviewed notes from the last meeting. Topics included:

- Information on the status of the Tok Terminal and Sears Creek remedial investigations along with information regarding the Gerstle River Training Area (GRTA). USAG Alaska is currently waiting for results from the water sampling that was performed on GRTA during the summer of 2007.
- Fish and wildlife surveys are being funded by USAG Alaska and conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the Gerstle River Training Area, which began in 2007. Both agencies have also been coordinating and working with the Healy Lake Traditional Council. Surveys planned for Summer 2008 include fish, small mammals and aquatic species.
- A detailed report was provided regarding the archaeological excavation and data recovery project occurring at the Battle Area Complex (BAX) site on the Donnelly Training Area (Site XMH-00874). In the 2007 field season, 194 square meters were opened and more than 12,000 cultural pieces (stone tools and animal bones) were recovered. Artifacts include microblades, unifaces, bifaces, projectile points, and material from non-local sources (obsidian). A hearth/fireplace was found at the center of the camp. USAG Alaska hopes to have a site date from the hearth by summer 2008.

During the 2008 field season, the size of the archaeological site will be defined. There will not be a formal field trip for tribes to the site in 2008, but anyone that wants to visit the site can contact Aaron Robertson at (907) 873-4717 to set up an informal visit. Range construction at the site will start in 2008 and USAG Alaska plans to offer a field trip for tribes to tour the new training range in 2009.

• The traditional cultural properties and sacred sites study of the Donnelly Dome Area was discussed. The project is being funded by USAG Alaska in response to comments that Donnelly Dome is culturally important to Upper Tanana tribes. The oral history interview work was completed by Clarus Environmental. USAG Alaska expects a draft report in spring of 2008. The final report will include the interview transcripts and analysis of the transcripts. It will be distributed to tribal councils in the Upper Tanana region, along with those that were interviewed for the project.

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Amanda Shearer presents Tanacross Village Council President Roy Denny with an Army plaque on behalf of Colonel David Shutt and the U.S. Army Garrison Alaska.



Aaron Robertson provides information on the Donnelly Training Area archaeological excavation.



Community meeting hall in Tanacross Village, Alaska

ANNUAL SUBSISTENCE POTLATCH IN EAGLE VILLAGE

Fort Wainwright Garrison Commander Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Johnson, Command Sergeant Major Todd Wentland, and Cultural Resources Manager Meg Thornton traveled to Eagle Village, Alaska, to participate in a potlatch hosted by Tribal Leader Mark Malcolm and the Eagle Village IRA Council.

The annual potlatch was held on February 26, 2008 and provided a wonderful opportunity for guests to gain a better understanding of the subsistence lifestyle. We truly enjoyed talking with everyone about their lives in Eagle. The meal was delicious and included fabulous fish and meat dishes as well as wonderful desserts. Many individuals donated items to a door prize drawing. The rhubarb sauce that Meg won was taken back to Fort Wainwright to be shared and enjoyed by many.

We sincerely appreciated everyone's generosity and hospitality during our visit. Thanks go to all those involved in the planning and preparing of the subsistence potlatch!



USAG Alaska Cultural Resources Manager Meg Thornton (bottom right) chats with potlatch participants.



A beautiful sunrise appears on the way to Eagle.



Eagle is also the home of Fort Egbert.



Lieutenant Colonel Ron Johnson (bottom right) chats with attendees at the potlatch.

MANAGEMENT OF NIKE SITE SUMMIT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

USAG Alaska has finalized the Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for management of Nike Site Summit at Fort Richardson. This document evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with a management strategy that addresses existing military training needs, Site Summit's important history, human health and safety concerns, along with vandalism and trespassing. USAG Alaska has chosen Alternative 2, Selective Retention, which will implement a management strategy that includes selective retention and securing of structures that are critical to the historical understanding of Site Summit, demolition of

unused structures, and securing of other remaining structures at Site Summit. The Final Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact can be viewed at:

http://www.usarak.army.mil/conservation/NEPA_FRA.htm

A summary of public and agency comments and Army responses can be found in Appendix B of the Final Environmental Assessment. Release of this document concludes the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for this action.

EAGLE RIVER FLATS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)

The U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK) continues to conduct work on an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that proposes to remove existing winter-only firing restrictions and maximize year-round weapons training opportunities at Eagle River Flats (ERF) Impact Area, Fort Richardson, Alaska. The EIS will help the Army better understand the extent of potential impacts of year-round firing on areas within ERF previously contaminated by white phosphorous, the Cook Inlet population of beluga whales (very soon to be listed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as endangered species), as well as noise impacts on other wildlife. The Draft EIS will likely be published by Summer 2008, and will be made available to tribes, agencies and the public over a 45-day comment period. Prior notice will be provided to Upper Cook Inlet region tribes regarding the release of the Draft EIS.

AVIATION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)

USARAK also continues to work on an EIS that will assess the potential environmental impacts associated with the stationing and training of increased numbers and types of aviation assets (helicopters) within 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. Additional impacts include stationing of new aviation assets to Alaska whose impacts to wildlife and noise levels have not been analyzed. The Army is planning to release the draft EIS for tribal, agency and public review in early summer 2008. Comments will be accepted over a 45-day period. Prior notice will be provided to tribes regarding the release of the draft EIS.

USAG ALASKA 7TH QUARTERLY MEETING WITH UTIC

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- Three current and upcoming National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents were discussed, including:

- The Environmental Assessment (EA) for proposed Donnelly Training Area (DTA) East Mobility Enhancement analyzes three mobility and maneuver enhancement projects proposed for DTA East. The public comment period closed February 12, 2008.

- The Environmental Assessment (EA) for proposed DTA West improvements to accommodate military training will analyze the proposed creation of an all season trail on DTA West between the eastern boundary of DTA West (beginning at the existing ice bridge location near Arkansas Range), onto Observation Point 26, and eventually to the Delta Creek Assault Landing Strip/Drop Zone located in the western portion of DTA West.

- The Aviation Task Force Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will analyze the impacts of increasing aviation (helicopters) at either Fort Wainwright, Eielson Air Force Base, or Fort Richardson.

- The following information was provided due to questions about Air Force training at past meetings: Red Flag and Northern Edge training dates for 2008 have been published as follows (subject to change):

- Red Flag Alaska: April 3-18, May 1-16, and October 2-17, 2008.

- Northern Edge Training: June 5-20, 2008.

Farewell from Amanda Shearer, USAG Alaska Native Liaison

After much thought and consideration, I have decided to accept the Tribal Liaison position at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District. My last day as the Native Liaison for the U.S. Army Garrison Alaska (USAG Alaska) will be April 9, 2008.

I have greatly enjoyed my tenure at USAG Alaska and I appreciate having had the opportunity to work with many of you. Thank you for your partnership, support, and friendship during my time here. Even though I will truly miss working for USAG Alaska, I do look forward to working with many of you in my new position.

Ms. Lisa Graham, Cultural Resources Specialist, will be the point of contact until USAG Alaska hires a new Native Liaison. Lisa may be reached at (907) 384-1175 or e-mail: Lisa.Graham2@us.army.mil.

Thanks again for everything!

Yours truly,

Amanda M. Shearer

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