



US ARMY GARRISON FORT WAINWRIGHT QUARTERLY UPDATE FOR ALASKA NATIVE TRIBES

January 2011, Issue 23

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

Fairbanks Native Community Joins to Hold Potlatch for Deploying Soldiers

Between deployment ceremonies for the 6-17th Cavalry and C Company of the 1-52nd Aviation Regiment on 25 January, the Fairbanks Native community held a potlatch for those Soldiers in Hangar 1 at Fort Wainwright. A combination of effort from Alaska Native Veterans Association, Door of Hope Church, Doyon Ltd, Fairbanks Native Association, and Tanana Chiefs Conference made the event a kind and generous tribute and show of support to the 400+ troops being deployed soon.

The idea was originated and the event organized by local volunteer Rita Pierce. She rallied the organizations to help and discovered from the elders that this type of supportive event had not been held since World War II. The impact of this discovery was not lost on leaders from either group.

The celebration included an elaborate meal of moose meat and soup, salmon and halibut, salads, sweets, breads, and tea. Service was provided by volunteers from the organizations. Volunteer hunters and fishermen were present to be recognized.

Elders Poldine Carlo, Dorothy Sommer, Florence Keyse, and Geraldine Charlie all sang songs wishing the Soldiers well and blessing them. Several of the songs were those that had been created years ago to send off Soldiers from the village in wars past. Eleanor Roehl and Sandra Knutson danced and drummed several warrior-themed songs. Several ministers and a rabbi prayed for the troops' safety and the protection of the Soldiers in the field and the families left at home.

Representatives of the Native leadership spoke about being proud of the military tradition and of their support for the Soldiers and their families living in the community. Repeatedly the thought was expressed that the community would be here to lend whatever support was needed while Soldiers were away. Leaders explained that this is what they do in their villages for their community's Soldiers and that Fairbanks is now their 'village' so they were here to do the same for Fort Wainwright's Soldiers.

Unit commanders accepted gifts of beaded bolo ties containing protective scripture and other items. Unit leaders presented the organizers with gifts and thanked the community for their generous outpouring. It was a moving event for all, well-appreciated by the Soldiers and mobilized with speed and thoroughness by the Native community as a grassroots effort.

US Army Garrison Fort Wainwright and US Army Alaska thank the Fairbanks Native community for their generosity and support.



Food and tea are prepped for service



A volunteer serves tea to Soldiers



Soldiers enjoy food and entertainment

Does your tribal government have a consultation policy that directs agencies how to interact with your tribe? If so, please share it with us. Don't have one? A workshop for creating such documents is being planned. Let us know if you're interested!



USAG FWA and UTIC Meets

In November, USAG FWA Commander Colonel Tim Jones and staff members met with representatives of the Upper Tanana Inter-tribal Coalition in their 12th regular meeting. These regular gatherings maintain the government-to-government relationships that have developed between the tribes and the garrison through the years.

Attendees at the meeting, hosted by Dot Lake Village, enjoyed lunch and discussed a full agenda. Topics included the ALCOM initiative JPARC; the history of activity and clean-up at Gerstle River Training Area; results from the field season of the USAG FWA biologists; and a project being launched this winter/spring to document personal accounts of interaction between the tribal community and the Army during training exercises and other activities off training lands in the upper Tanana region.



Colonel Jones thanks President Miller for hosting the event

Very Early Occupation Dates Established for New Sites Located on Tanana Flats

Recent archaeological surveys identified 15 sites in the Tanana Flats that have been dated to the Pleistocene/early Holocene timeframe. Five of these sites are located east of the Wood River, and ten are found on an alluvial terrace near Blair Lakes. Radiocarbon dating and inter-site stratigraphic comparisons date these sites to 9,130—13,570 years ago.

Ned Gaines, USAG FWA Archaeologist, and staff members are preparing a paper for presentation at the Alaska Anthropological Association meetings in March. More information will be presented to tribes in April's newsletter.

NEPA Branch Launches Cumulative Effects Project

When new projects or actions are proposed by Federal agencies or some private entities in interior Alaska, the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) must be met through the preparation of Records of Environmental Consideration (RECs) Environmental Assessments (EAs), or Environmental Impact Statements (EISs). Additionally, projects may require permits which are supported by this impact-related information. One specific requirement associated with NEPA compliance documents and permitting relates to the analysis of cumulative effects. Such cumulative effects are of special concern due to the unique environmental, natural and cultural resources in the interior Alaska region. The proposed study area encompasses approximately 24,000 square miles of the Interior, in the general vicinity of Fairbanks.

USAG FWA's NEPA Branch has begun a 12-month project to conduct a regional cumulative effects assessment and management (CEAM) baseline study. The goal of the resulting comprehensive baseline report is to compile information on the cumulative effects that past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions of all federal, state or local agencies, governments, and private industry have on specific natural and man-made resources within interior Alaska.

This compilation will simplify similar research efforts during future, individual NEPA project analysis, saving time and money. The report will also be a valuable reference to tribes and agencies during review of various NEPA documents prepared by the Army. Collaborating with multiple stakeholders in the region on preparation of this baseline study will provide information and analysis to decision-makers that has already been reviewed and accepted by these stakeholders. Ultimately, this project will define follow-on strategies to keep the report current. By being a living document, the CEAM report can effectively contribute to on-going NEPA work.

The report is intended to be a resource for all stakeholders – governmental, tribal, and other—and will eventually be available to other agencies, and tribes for their use. If your tribe has a planned endeavor that should be recorded during this process because of its environmental effects, or if your tribe has thoughts on various resources of concern within the region that should be highlighted within the study, please share your information with us. Other agencies and industry have also been invited to discuss their plans with USAG FWA so that an accurate snapshot of cumulative effects to the Interior's environment can be created. For more information or to discuss participation in this study, please contact Carrie McEnteer, NEPA Branch Chief, Environmental Division, USAG FWA, (907) 361-9507 or carrie.mcenteer@us.army.mil.

ITAM Maintains Training Lands for Soldier Safety and Environmental Benefit

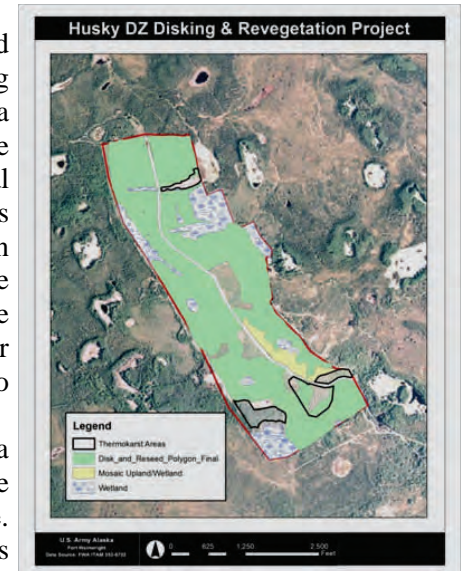
submitted by Josh Buzby and Michael Gibson

The Integrated Training Area Management (ITAM) program is responsible for balancing the needs of the Army to train Soldiers with responsible stewardship of the land. To do this, the ITAM program uses standard land management practices to repair, maintain, and reconfigure the landscape to provide for specific training opportunities in a realistic environment. The ITAM program began one such project, repairing the Husky Drop Zone (Husky DZ) located in the Army's Yukon Training Area in 2010.

The Husky DZ is a field approximately 218 acres in size that was originally constructed in 1965 to support personnel and equipment drop training. Mowing and prescribed burning have periodically been utilized to control woody vegetation and maintain the drop zone in a serviceable condition. Through the years however, woody vegetation became more established and mowed vegetation was presenting a significant safety concern. Residual stems resulting from mowing created stubs which had the potential to injure Soldiers parachuting into the DZ as well as tearing parachutes, tangling lines, and damaging tires on vehicles used to retrieve dropped equipment. Prescribed burning helped to encourage growth of grasses and forbs not dangerous to Soldiers; however, it also encouraged the growth of woody vegetation. Ultimately, these conditions increased the potential for Soldier injury and equipment damage and significantly reduced the ability of the DZ to support training.

Compounding the issue of woody encroachment, the DZ also was constructed in an area with pockets of ice-rich soils. As the ice melted when the ground was exposed to more solar radiation, large areas of subsidence (thermokarst) occurred leaving an uneven surface. In some areas, thermokarsting left patterned ground with steep-sided hills up to 2 meters tall that is unsuitable for training.

The ITAM program developed a plan with help from the Salcha Delta Soil and Water Conservation District (SDSWCD) to rehabilitate the DZ and get it back into a year-round use status. The plan was to implement rehabilitation of the DZ in two phases. Phase 1, completed during the summer of 2010, applied an agricultural disking and reseeding prescription in order to remove woody vegetation and establish native grasses. Phase 2 requires leveling the thermokarst areas and reseeding. This phase will require a wetland permit and heavier earth moving equipment. Implementation is planned for 2011 as funding allows.



Future maintenance of the DZ will use a combination of mowing, disking, reseeding, fertilizing, prescribed burning, and selective use of herbicides and hand crews to prevent woody encroachment into the DZ. Monitoring of the DZ for woody encroachment and grass establishment will be done through the Range and Training Land Assessment (RTLTA), a component of the ITAM program. RTLTA will gauge the success of the project, document lessons learned, and make recommendations concerning future maintenance activities.

Through projects like this, the ITAM program helps to maintain, repair, and enhance the training land platform and sustain training lands for future use. For more information on the ITAM program and its associated components contact Michael Gibson at (907) 353-6702.

Thanks to Josh and Michael for submitting this article explaining another facet of environmental stewardship on Army training lands. US Army Garrison Fort Wainwright employs range managers, wildlife biologists, foresters, archaeologists, wetlands scientists, and many others who work toward the Army's goal of responsible, sustainable land management. It's a practice that is good for the land, good for the resources, and good for the people who use and appreciate both.

Soldiers Volunteer for AFN Convention Preparation

Soldiers from Fort Wainwright's 1-52 Aviation Regiment volunteered their time toward preparations for the annual Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) convention held 18-23 October. Soldiers volunteered to prepare facilities where the AFN delegates met and the First Alaskans Institute Elders and Youth conference was held during the first part of the week.

The Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau was responsible for preparing all the venues and recruited 100 volunteers to do the work.

Soldiers volunteered their time at the Carlson Center to set chairs and move equipment. Later in the week, Soldiers from C and E companies of the 1-52nd dismantled some walls, covered the ice and set up chairs for the welcome potlatch held by the Native leadership at the Big Dipper Ice Arena. Two days later, the volunteers returned the arena to its original condition for that night's Ice Dogs game.

Big thanks go to the volunteering Soldiers who labored to help Fairbanks get ready for this big event. Thanks also go to their supervisors who excused them from their regular jobs to assist with this community effort.



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

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Issues are mailed to tribal administrators and tribal leaders.

Please post these newsletters for your tribal and community members to share.

Thank you.