

Regulatory Division (1145) CEPOA-RD Post Office Box 6898 JBER, Alaska 99506-0898

Public Notice of Application for Permit

PUBLIC NOTICE DATE: May 25, 2021

EXPIRATION DATE: June 24, 2021

REFERENCE NUMBER: POA-2012-00768

WATERWAY: Innoko River

Interested parties are hereby notified that a Department of the Army (DA) permit application has been received for work in waters of the United States (U.S.) as described below and shown on the enclosed project drawings.

All comments regarding this Public Notice (PN) should be sent to the address noted above. If you desire to submit your comments by email, you should send it to the Project Manager's email as listed below or to: regpagemaster@usace.army.mil. All comments should include the PN reference number listed above.

All comments should reach this office no later than the expiration date of this PN to become part of the record and be considered in the decision. Please contact Steve Moore at (907) 753-5713, toll free from within Alaska at (800) 478-2712, or by email at Stephen.A.Moore2@usace.army.mil if further information is desired concerning this notice.

<u>APPLICANT</u>: Mr. Brett Nelson, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF), 2301 Peger Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99709. Email: brett.nelson@alaska.gov; telephone: 907-451-2238.

<u>LOCATION</u>: The proposed project is located within Sections 15, 22, 26, 27; T31N, R55W Seward Meridian; USGS Quad Map; Latitude 62.66124 N° N., Longitude 159.54055° W., near the City of Shageluk, Alaska.

<u>PURPOSE</u>: The applicant's stated purpose is to maintain safe access from the City of Shageluk to the nearby State-owned airport.

<u>PROPOSED WORK</u>: The project consists of reconstructing 2.7 miles of the existing airport access road, starting at the north bank of Hamilton Slough (aka Shageluk Slough) and ending at the airport property. The project will include minor road realignment; relocation of an

overhead and underground electric power transmission line; and resurfacing of the roadway with approximately 9-inches of crushed surface course. The surfacing material would be mined from Doyon's 4.5 Mile Quarry, which would be enlarged. The ADOT&PF proposes accessing the 4.5 Mile Quarry via a winter ice road over the Innoko River or via summer barging. Access to the river would be from Innoko Street, a platted public road owned by the City of Shageluk, located approximately 120 feet upstream from the confluence with Hamilton Slough. The material would be temporarily stockpiled on a staging area located in an upland site.

The proposed work will result in the placement of approximately 5,080 cubic yards of clean gravel fill into a total of 9.3 acres of wetlands.

All work would be performed in accordance with the enclosed plan (sheets 1-13).

<u>APPLICANT PROPOSED MITIGATION</u>: The applicant proposes the following mitigation measures to avoid, minimize, and compensate for impacts to waters of the U.S. from activities involving discharges of dredged or fill material.

- a. Avoidance: The applicant has stated that due to the location of the airport and to meet the purpose and need for this project that complete avoidance of wetlands is not possible.
- b. Minimization: The applicant has stated that the project design has sited the staging area entirely within an upland area. Additionally, the project avoided further impacts to wetlands by maintaining the existing road alignment, when practical; the minor roadway realignment proposed between survey stations 81+00 and 94+00 is necessary to provide a safety buffer between the road and section of riverbank where erosion from the river has completely removed the road's shoulder.

Further wetland impacts will be avoided and minimized by the following measures:

- The location of the access road is fixed based on the existing layout and its function. The area surrounding the access road has wetlands, thus, the project cannot avoid impacts to wetlands. Project design took into consideration measures to minimize unavoidable permanent wetland impacts, such as hauling in material on a winter ice road rather than constructing a summer haul route, and keeping the clearing and grubbing areas to a minimal footprint.
- Project components have been sited to avoid impacts to wetlands where practicable by utilizing existing embankments along the existing access roads, and disturbed areas.
- Road embankment side slopes are proposed as 3:1 (H:V) fill which will reduce impacts compared to more common 4:1 roadway side slopes.
- Tundra mats or other means will be used when placing utility poles in wetlands to minimize wetland damage for work off of the existing embankment.
- Expanding the proposed material site will avoid impacts required to develop a new
 material site. The existing site is located in close proximity to the Innoko River which
 minimized haul distance through wetlands yet has sufficient setback to minimize
 sediment discharge into the river from mining operations.

- The material site will be expanded in uplands when possible to minimized impacts to wetlands.
- c. Compensatory Mitigation: The applicant has stated that given the avoidance and minimization measures incorporated into the project that compensatory mitigation is not proposed for this project.

<u>WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION</u>: A permit for the described work will not be issued until a certification or waiver of certification, as required under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (Public Law 95-217), has been received from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. The applicant submitted a pre-filing meeting request to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) on March 24, 2021.

<u>CULTURAL RESOURCES</u>: ADOT&PF has made a No Historic Properties Adversely Affected determination, to which the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with on October 22, 2020. This application is being coordinated with the SHPO. Any additional comment SHPO may have concerning presently unknown archeological or historic data that may be lost or destroyed by work under the requested permit will be considered in our final assessment of the described work.

ENDANGERED SPECIES: We have determined the described activity would have no effect on any listed or proposed threatened or endangered species, and would have no effect on any designated or proposed critical habitat, under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 844). Therefore, no consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is required. However, any comments they may have concerning endangered or threatened wildlife or plants or their critical habitat will be considered in our final assessment of the described work.

<u>ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT</u>: The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996, requires all Federal agencies to consult with the NMFS on all actions, or proposed actions, permitted, funded, or undertaken by the agency, that may adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat (EFH).

We have determined the described activity would not adversely affect EFH in the project area.

TRIBAL CONSULTATION: The Alaska District fully supports tribal self-governance and government-to-government relations between Federally recognized Tribes and the Federal government. Tribes with protected rights or resources that could be significantly affected by a proposed Federal action (e.g., a permit decision) have the right to consult with the Alaska District on a government-to-government basis. Views of each Tribe regarding protected rights and resources will be accorded due consideration in this process. This PN serves as notification to the Tribes within the area potentially affected by the proposed work and invites their participation in the Federal decision-making process regarding the protected Tribal right or resource. Consultation may be initiated by the affected Tribe upon written request to the District Commander during the public comment period.

<u>PUBLIC HEARING</u>: Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests for public hearings shall state, with particularity, reasons for holding a public hearing.

EVALUATION: The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity and its intended use on the public interest. Evaluation of the probable impacts, which the proposed activity may have on the public interest, requires a careful weighing of all the factors that become relevant in each particular case. The benefits, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. The outcome of the general balancing process would determine whether to authorize a proposal, and if so, the conditions under which it will be allowed to occur. The decision should reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. All factors, which may be relevant to the proposal, must be considered including the cumulative effects thereof. Among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shore erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. For activities involving 404 discharges, a permit will be denied if the discharge that would be authorized by such permit would not comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's 404(b)(I) guidelines. Subject to the preceding sentence and any other applicable guidelines or criteria (see Sections 320.2 and 320.3), a permit will be granted unless the District Commander determines that it would be contrary to the public interest.

The Corps of Engineers (Corps) is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

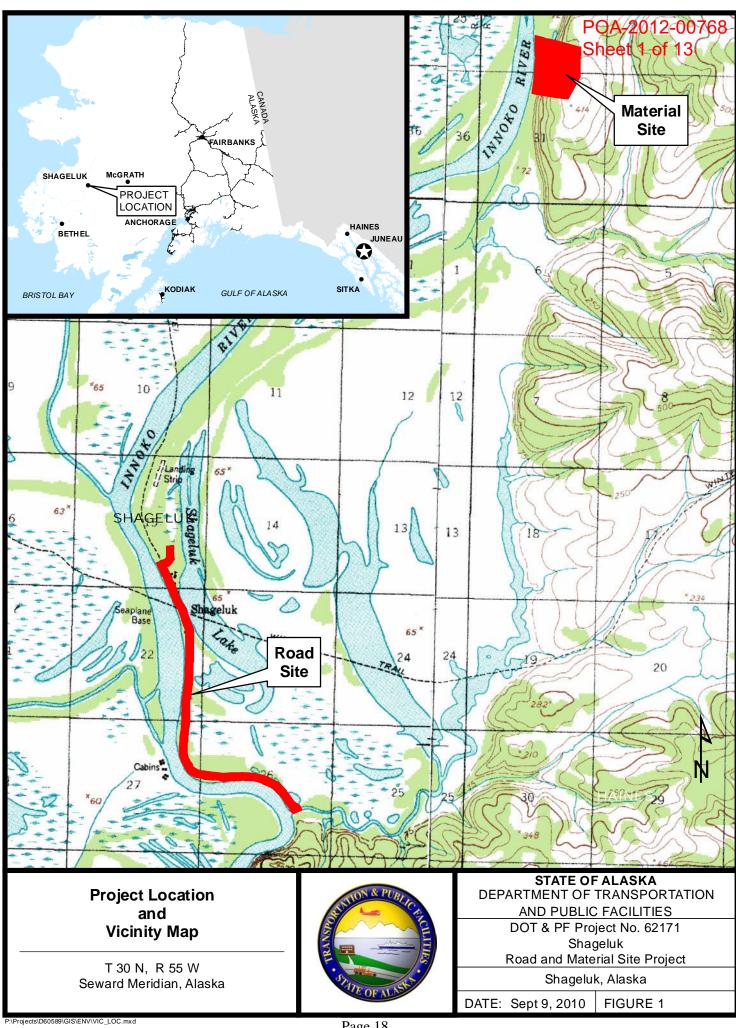
AUTHORITY: This permit will be issued or denied under the following authority:

(X) Discharge dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S. – Section 404 Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344). Therefore, our public interest review will consider the guidelines set forth under Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act (40 CFR 230).

Project drawings and a Notice of Application for State Water Quality Certification are enclosed with this Public Notice.

District Commander U.S. Army, Corps of Engineers

Enclosures



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