Environmental Resources Section

Public Notice

Alaska District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Date MAY 02 2016 Identification No. ER-16-04
Please refer to the identification number when replying.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the following project:

CON/HTRW Removal Action
Yakutat Air Base Formerly Used Defense Sites
F10AK0606-06 (Concern L)
F10AK0606-07 (Concern M2)
Yakutat, Alaska

The Corps' proposed actions are authorized under the Department of Defense (DOD) Environmental Restoration Program – Formerly Used Defense Sites (DERP-FUDS), which provides the means to clean up waste materials, contaminated soil, and unsafe structures and debris from areas formerly used by the DOD.

The proposed project and potential environmental impacts are described in the enclosed EA and unsigned FONSI, which is available for public review and comment for 30 days from the date of this notice. It may also be viewed on the Alaska District's website at: www.poa.usace.army.mil. Click on the Reports and Studies button, look under Documents Available for Public Review, and then click on the Environmental Cleanup link.

The FONSI will be signed upon review of comments received and resolution of significant concerns. Please submit comments regarding the proposed action to Christopher.B.Floyd@usace.army.mil or to the address below.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District
ATTN: CEPOA-PM-C-ER
P.O. Box 6898
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska 99506-0898

For information on the proposed project, please contact Chris Floyd of the Environmental Resources Section at the above email or Corps postal address.

Michael D. Noah
Chief, Environmental Resources Section

US Army Corps of Engineers
Alaska District

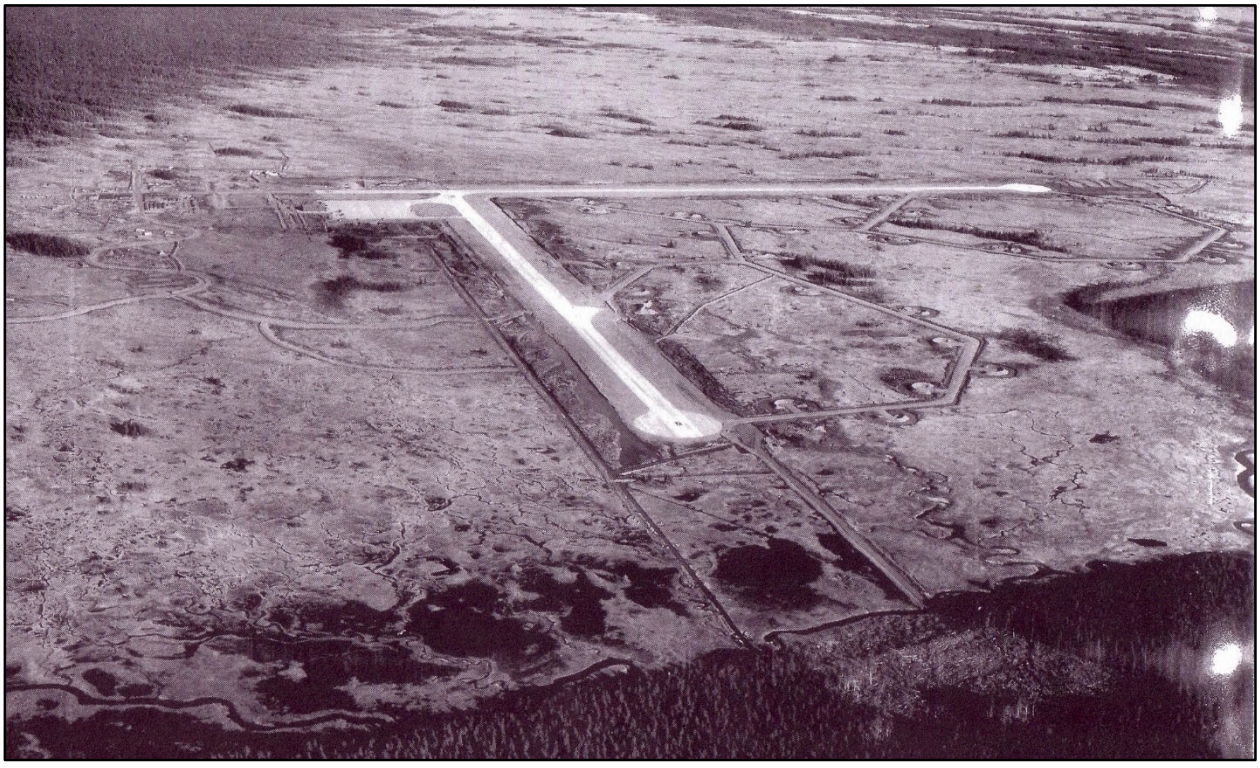
Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

CON/HTRW Removal Action

Yakutat Air Base Formerly Used Defense Sites

F10AK0606-06 (Concern L)
F10AK0606-07 (Concern M2)
Yakutat, Alaska

Formerly Used Defense Sites Program



1943 aerial photograph of Yakutat Air Base

April 2016

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District (Corps) has assessed the environmental effects of the following action:

CON/HTRW Removal Action
Yakutat Air Base Formerly Used Defense Sites
F10AK0606-06 (Concern L)
F10AK0606-07 (Concern M2)
Yakutat, Alaska

This action has been evaluated for its effects on several significant resources, including fish and wildlife, wetlands, threatened or endangered species, marine resources, and cultural resources. No significant short-term or long-term adverse effects were identified.

This Corps action complies with the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. The completed environmental assessment supports the conclusion that the action does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human and natural environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not necessary for the removal action at these former Yakutat Air Base sites.

_____ _____

Michael S. Brooks
Colonel, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
District Commander

Date

Environmental Assessment

1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED OF REMEDIAL ACTION

1.1 Introduction

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) prepared this environmental assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Council of Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508) to address the removal of containerized waste, contaminated soil, and buried structures at the former Yakutat Air Base military facilities near Yakutat, Alaska. The Corps' proposed actions are authorized under the Department of Defense (DOD) Environmental Restoration Program – Formerly Used Defense Sites (DERP-FUDS), which provides the means to clean up waste materials, contaminated soil, and unsafe structures and debris from areas formerly used by the DOD (DOD Instruction 4715.07). Most FUDS projects follow Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) processes, which would not include preparation of an EA under NEPA. However, the proposed project involves the excavation and removal of petroleum-contaminated soil which falls outside the purview of CERCLA.

1.2 Site Description and History

The subject Yakutat Air Base areas of concern for this action are located in the City of Yakutat, Alaska, near the community's airport, approximately 225 miles northwest of Juneau and 220 miles southeast of Cordova at 59° 33' N Latitude, 139° 44' W Longitude (Section 30, Township 27 South, Range 34 East, Copper River Meridian; figure 1).

Construction of the World War II-era Yakutat Air Base began in October 1940 and was completed in 1943. The U.S. Army declared the base surplus in 1945; it was transferred to the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) in 1947. In 1984, a Corps contractor conducted a debris cleanup and site restoration project at Yakutat. According to the project report, most of the military infrastructure that had remained in place after the air base had been disposed of was demolished and removed. In 1995, hazardous, toxic, and radioactive waste (HTRW) and containerized HTRW (CON/HTRW) projects were approved for the Yakutat Air Base FUDS property in response to waste materials and environmental contamination remaining at the site. Remedial investigations began in 2000 and continued intermittently until 2014 (BSI-TLI 2016). For the purposes of the ongoing remedial activities, the former air base facilities at Yakutat have been divided into several different "areas of concern" (AOC; a.k.a, "Concerns"), and identified with letters. The areas of contamination targeted for removal actions in 2016 (figure 2) include:

- "AOC L" -- Air Corps Operations Reserve (ACOR) Tank Farm. This facility included 15 aboveground fuel storage tanks (with a total capacity of almost 750,000 gallons) on

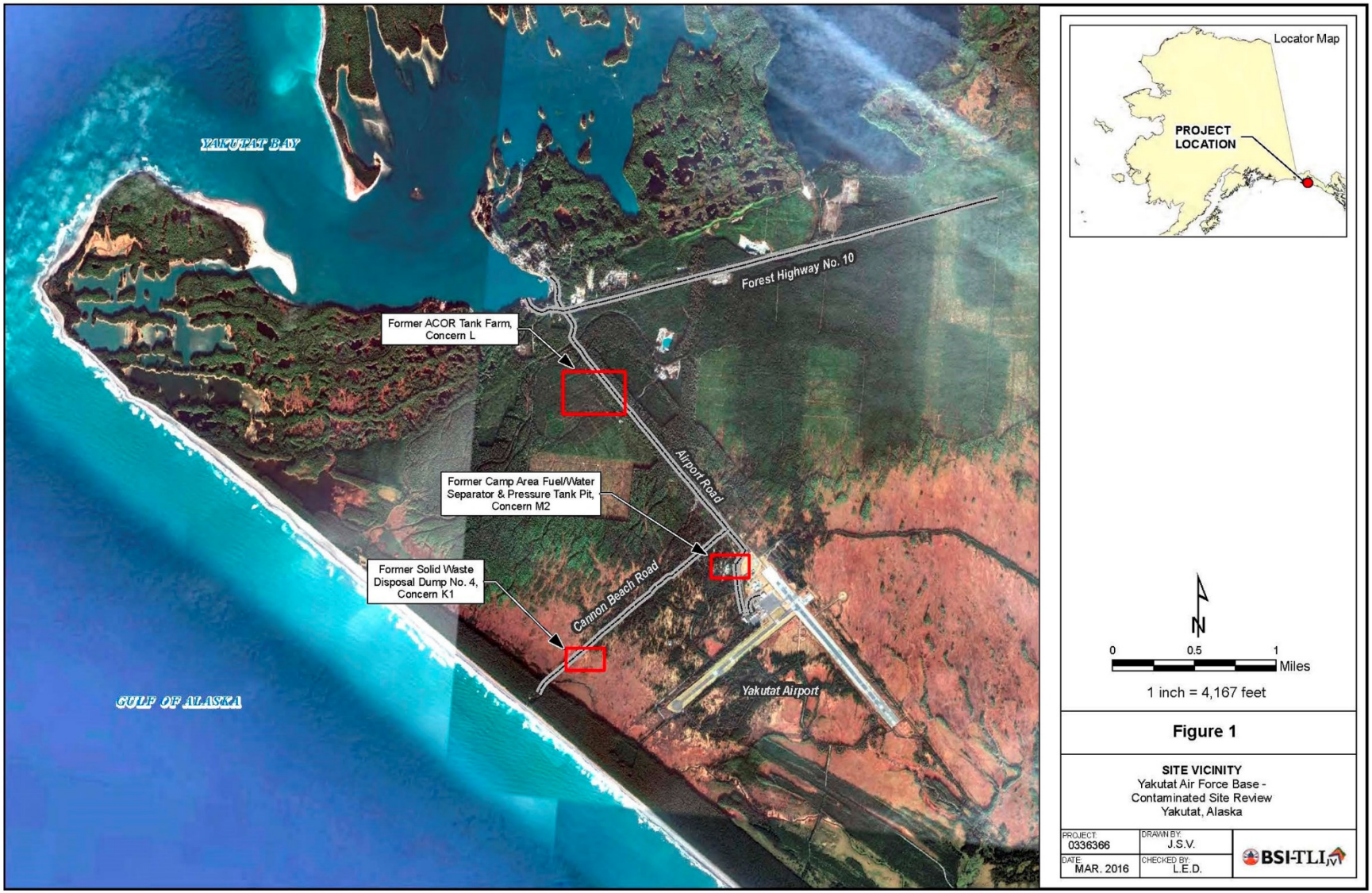


Figure 1. Location and Vicinity of Yakutat Air Base 2016 project areas (BSI-TLI 2016).

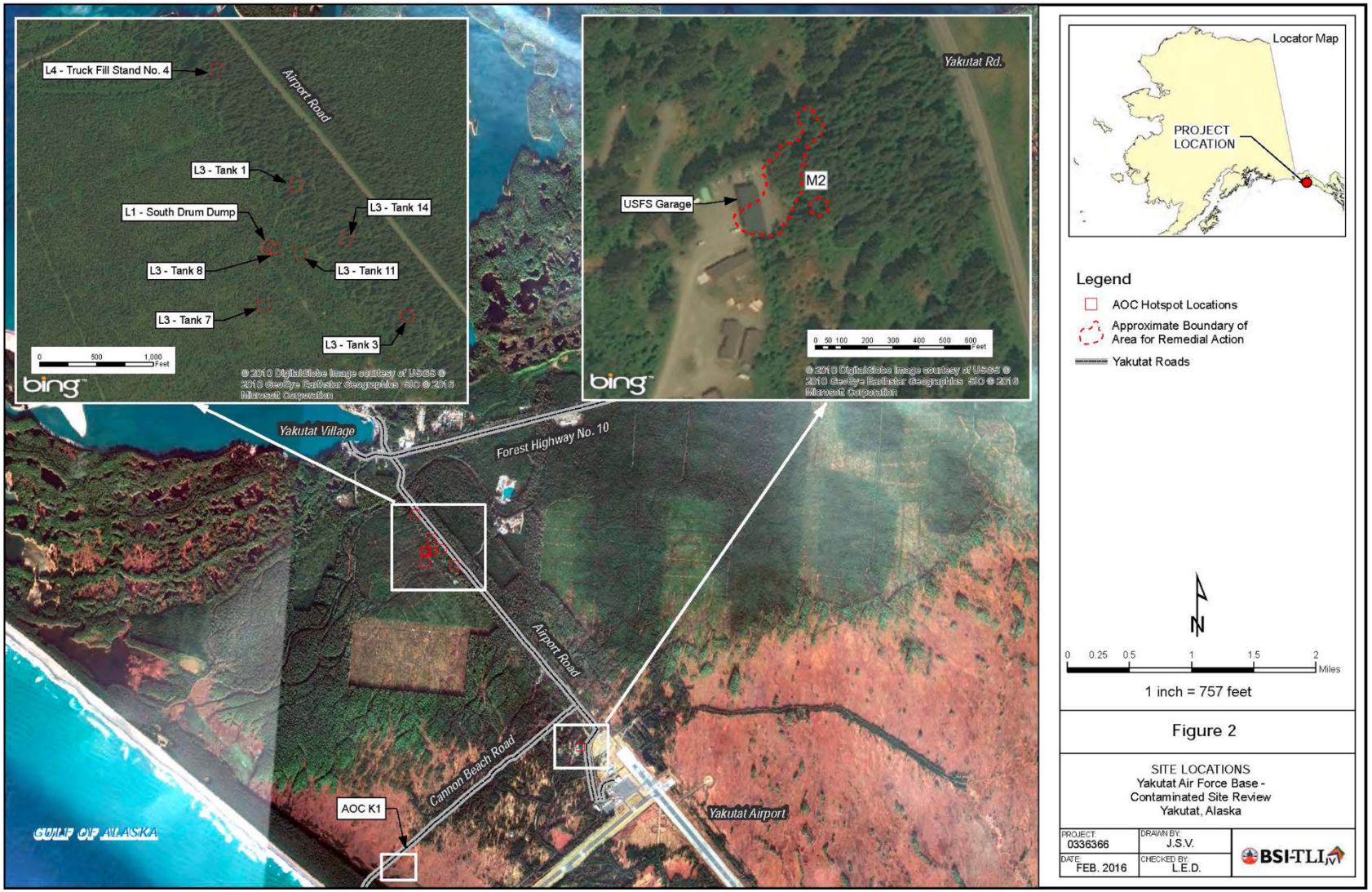


Figure 2. Detailed locations of Yakutat Air Base 2016 project sites.

concrete saddles, a system of pipelines, and a pump house. A number of remedial investigations were performed from 1994 to 2005 to characterize site contamination. Removal actions were performed in 2003 and 2008 to remove existing pipelines (BSI-TLI 2016).

- "AOC M2" – Garrison Laundry Area. AOC M2 consists of a former wood-stave tank foundation and the foundation of the dry cleaning building (BSI-TLI 2016).

1.3 Need for Action

Remedial investigations in 2001 and 2005 identified fuel contamination of soil exceeding State of Alaska soil cleanup levels at AOC L, mostly limited to hotspots. At AOC M2, investigations in 2000 and 2005 showed two plumes of fuel contamination in the area. The Corps is required to continue pursuing remedial actions at the former Yakutat Air Base under its DERP-FUDS authority and State of Alaska environmental regulations.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES

2.1 No-Action Alternative

Under the no-action alternative, the known contaminated soil would remain in place. This would potentially allow the migration of chemical contaminants to nearby habitat and water sources, and may result in regulatory enforcement actions by the State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). Knowledge of the extent of contaminated soil and groundwater would remain incomplete. The no-action alternative would avoid the short-term disruptions to the local environment that would be caused by the operation of heavy equipment and excavation of soil.

2.2 Remedial Action Alternative

The preferred alternative includes the removal and disposal of containerized waste and contaminated soil from the project site.

1. Remove and properly dispose of 2,500 tons of fuel-contaminated soil (i.e., exceeding ADEC soil cleanup levels) from eight areas within AOCs L and from two within AOC M2. Up to an additional 2,000 tons of contaminated soil may be removed based upon field screening and observations.

The contamination hotspots to be targeted for soil removal in AOC L include:

- L1 – South Drum Dump; 314 square feet (sq ft) / 167 cubic yards (cy)
- L3 – Tank No. 1301 Foundation (Aboveground storage tank [AST] 1); 97 sq ft / 7 cy
- L3 – Tank No. 1313 Foundation (AST 3); 97 sq ft / 7 cy
- L3 – Tank No. 1308 Foundation (AST 7); 97 sq ft / 7 cy
- L3 – Tank No. 1303 Foundation (AST 8); 525 sq ft/ 45 cy
- L3 – Tank No. 1306 Foundation (AST 11); 97 sq ft / 7 cy
- L3 – Tank No. 1305 Foundation (AST 14); 97 sq ft / 7 cy
- L4 – Truck Fill Stand No. 4; 570 sq ft / 49 cy

At AOC M2, the removal action focuses on subsurface soil in two areas associated with plumes of contamination:

- Former tank location: 16,921 sq ft / 1,441 cy contaminated soil / 2,883 cy of clean overburden.
- Former Quonset hut: 1,514 sq ft / 97 cy contaminated soil / 226 cy of clean overburden.

2. Collect the chemical and physical data at AOC M2 necessary to calculate ADEC alternative soil cleanup levels for the POL-contaminated soil left within a garage footprint at the site.

3. Reinstall, develop and sample three monitoring wells at AOC L1 after the fuel-contaminated soil has been removed.

4. Dispose of an intact steel drum left over from the 2001 remedial investigation at AOC K1. The drum is believed to contain monitoring well purge water.

2.3 General Work Practices and Environmental Protection

The details of the proposed remedial activities are provided in the project work plan (BSI-TLI 2016). The soil excavation and removal activities present the greatest potential for environmental impacts. In general, an excavator or other construction equipment will be used to remove soil at each site. Excavation will be guided by information from previous site characterization efforts, field screening, and confirmation soil sampling. Contamination is assumed to extend from 4 to 6 feet below ground surface (bgs) at AOC L, and 3.5 to 5 feet bgs at AOC M2. Shallow groundwater is expected at the project sites. Clean overburden will likely be present at AOC M2. To the extent possible, the equipment operator will remove the clean overburden layer and keep the overburden separate from the contaminated soil; field screening confirmed by laboratory analyses will be used to segregate the soils. Soil designated as clean will be stockpiled for re-use

as backfill material. Contaminated soil will be placed into bulk storage bags and staged for removal and transportation off-site (BSI-TLI 2016).

The work plan presents environmental protection measures in an Environmental Protection Plan. These include sedimentation controls such as silt fences, temporary sediment traps, and diversion dikes or berms. To minimize the amount of soil exposed during construction activities, perimeter controls (e.g.fencing) will be used to control vehicle access and ensure that vegetation outside the construction area remains undisturbed. Vehicles will be confined to designated transportation corridors and existing roads within the work areas. Vegetation and topsoil will be preserved to the maximum extent possible and placed aside for re-use in site restoration. Care will be taken to minimize damage to the surrounding vegetation during project operations. To the extent practicable, clearing and grubbing will be limited to overgrown roads and areas of excavation (BSI-TLI 2016).

Upon completion of field work activities, all investigation derived waste (IDW), liner material, and excess material will be removed from the site. Excavation areas, stockpile areas, and other construction-related support areas will be restored to their pre-existing condition or re-graded and revegetated. Land clearing waste will be left at each site where those activities occur. Restoration will include backfilling and compacting the excavation area to its original condition. Contouring will be conducted to match surrounding topography to avoid ponding, to encourage sufficient positive drainage, and to discourage erosion. Site restoration and seed selection will be in consultation with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and follow guidance of the USFS Seeding Recommendations for the Tongass National Forest. The contractor will confirm the backfill material meets soil cleanup standards (BSI-TLI 2016).

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Community

Yakutat is located on the Gulf of Alaska lowlands adjacent to Yakutat Bay, about 225 miles northwest of Juneau, Alaska. The community is accessible only by air or ocean-going vessel. The greater Yakutat area (Yakutat Borough) has an estimated population of 613 as of 2015. The local economy is driven by fishing, hunting, guiding, chartering, employment by State and Federal agencies, commercial fishing, mining, and subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering. The area maintains a traditional Tlingit culture with influences from Eyak Athabascans, as well as Russian, English, and American traders and miners. About 43 percent of the population is Alaska Native solely or in combination with another race (ADCRA 2016).

3.2 Current Land Use

The lands of the former Yakutat Air Base are currently managed or owned by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the City and Borough of Yakutat, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) Mental Health Trust Land Office, private owners, Native allotments, Yak-Tat Kwaan, Inc, and Sealaska Corporation. The current Yakutat Airport occupies much of the same footprint as the original military airfield and is operated by the State of Alaska. The lands surrounding the airport are primarily part of Tongass National Forest, administered by the U.S. Forest Service. Beyond the current airfield complex, the general area is little developed (BSI-LTI 2016).

3.3 Climate

Yakutat's climate is dominated by maritime conditions due its proximity to the coast. Meteorological data for Yakutat from 1952 to 2000 indicate a yearly average temperature of 39.5 degrees Fahrenheit (ºF), with maximum summer temperatures of up to 87 ºF and winter temperatures down to -24 ºF. January exhibits the lowest monthly mean temperature at 26 ºF. The highest monthly mean temperature of 54 ºF is in July. The yearly average precipitation is approximately 140 inches, including over 200 inches of snowfall. Precipitation infiltration and runoff both occur during breakup when the winter snowpack melts. Wind in the Yakutat area is generally from the west, from the Gulf of Alaska.

In winter, these winds are more likely to blow east/northeast and in summer east/southeast. Surface wind velocities average 7 miles per hour (BSI-TLI 2016, ADCRA 2016).

3.4 Topography, Soils, and Hydrology

The Yakutat town site and airport are located on the Yakutat foreland, a gently sloping glacial outwash plain between the Saint Elias Mountains and the Gulf of Alaska. Typical soil geology in AOC L consists of an organic surface soil layer over silty sand transitioning to gravelly sand, and sandy gravel at greater depths. Soil geology in AOC M2 consists of a thin surface layer of organic soil, transitioning to poorly graded sand with gravel extending to greater depths. Extensive areas of fill in AOCs L and M2 were placed there for construction of the airfields and supporting structures (BSI-TLI 2016).

Unconfined groundwater in the Yakutat area has been found to range in depth from within the top 10 feet bgs to greater than 70 feet bgs. This fluctuation appears to be a function of the surface topography, as the piezometric groundwater surface is relatively flat. The groundwater flow direction also appears to be generally dictated by topography, with flow towards the principal surface water bodies, including streams, lakes, the coastline, and constructed drains. The Yakutat

foreland aquifer is fed by precipitation infiltration and drained by small streams. Recharge can also occur by the streams when the stage of streams is higher than the local water table. Groundwater flows both vertically and horizontally through this unconfined water table. The groundwater table at Concern L is reported to range from 6 feet bgs to 10 feet bgs, and approximate groundwater flow direction varied between southwest to west-northwest. The depth to groundwater in Concern M2 is anticipated to be shallow, reported at a depth of approximately 0.5 foot bgs. The approximate groundwater flow direction at Concern M2 was reported as south-southeasterly (BSI-TLI 2016).

3.5 Air Quality and Noise

The project sites presumably enjoy good air quality due to the low number of emission sources and persistent winds from the nearby ocean. There is no air monitoring station near the project site and no existing data to compare with other National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) established under the Clean Air Act (CAA). These air quality standards include concentration limits on the "criteria pollutants" of carbon monoxide, ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and lead. Potential sources of air pollution in the project area would be limited to emissions from planes using the nearby airport and particulates lofted from unpaved roads. Local emissions from wood and oil stoves, burning distillate oil, industrial sources, and mobile emissions contribute to particulate pollution.

No specific noise data exist for Yakutat, but it is probably comparable with other small coastal Alaskan communities. Air traffic, boat traffic, vehicles, construction equipment, and generators are the most likely sources of man-made noise.

3.6 Habitat and Wildlife

The main terrestrial vegetative community in the Yakutat area is coastal western hemlock-Sitka spruce forest. The coastal forest consists of three plant communities: true forest, grass-sedge meadows, and muskeg. The dominant tree species in the true forest are western hemlock, Sitka spruce, Alaska cedar, and western red cedar. Understory vegetation is represented by alder shrubs and moss. Wetland habitats and ponds along glacial moraines are dominated by sedges, mosses, and low shrubs. Wetlands along streams are dominated by tall willows, alder, sedges, mosses, and low shrubs. Low lying muskegs are dominated by thick mats of sphagnum moss, sedges, herbs, and low shrubs (USACE 1999, 2013; USFS 2016).

Black bear and brown bear are common in the Yakutat region, along with deer, moose, mountain goat, wolf, and wolverine. Other mammals known to inhabit the area include marten, land otter, fox, ermine, lynx, coyote, and weasel. The Yakutat area is on a major flyway for migratory songbirds, waterfowl, and shorebirds, and is important for nesting bald eagles and swans (USACE 1999, 2013; USFS 2016).

Area streams support all five species of Alaska salmon (red, chum, pink, king and coho), along with steelhead trout, cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden, northern pike, and rainbow trout. Salmon are known to spawn in drainage ditches and other water bodies adjacent to the airport runway. Many of the lakes, especially the larger lakes such as Malaspina, Harlequin Mountain, and Italio provide important fish habitat. Saltwater habitats support important species including herring, halibut, flounder, cod, rockfish, crab, clams and cockles. A significant portion of Yakutat's economy is tied to the use of marine fishery resources. Sport fishing for salmon and steelhead trout plays a vital role in the area's economy (USACE 1999, 2013; USFS 2016).

3.7 Wetlands

The project area has not been delineated for jurisdictional wetlands. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) mapper (USFWS 2016a) indicates that the area surrounding Yakutat Airport is almost entirely emergent and forested freshwater wetlands (as defined by the USFWS) except where built up with fill. Figure 3 shows the general distribution of wetlands identified in the NWI relative to the project areas. AOC M2 and K are in areas dominated by wetlands, while AOC L is in an area where wetlands are less prevalent, but may still be present in small, localized settings.

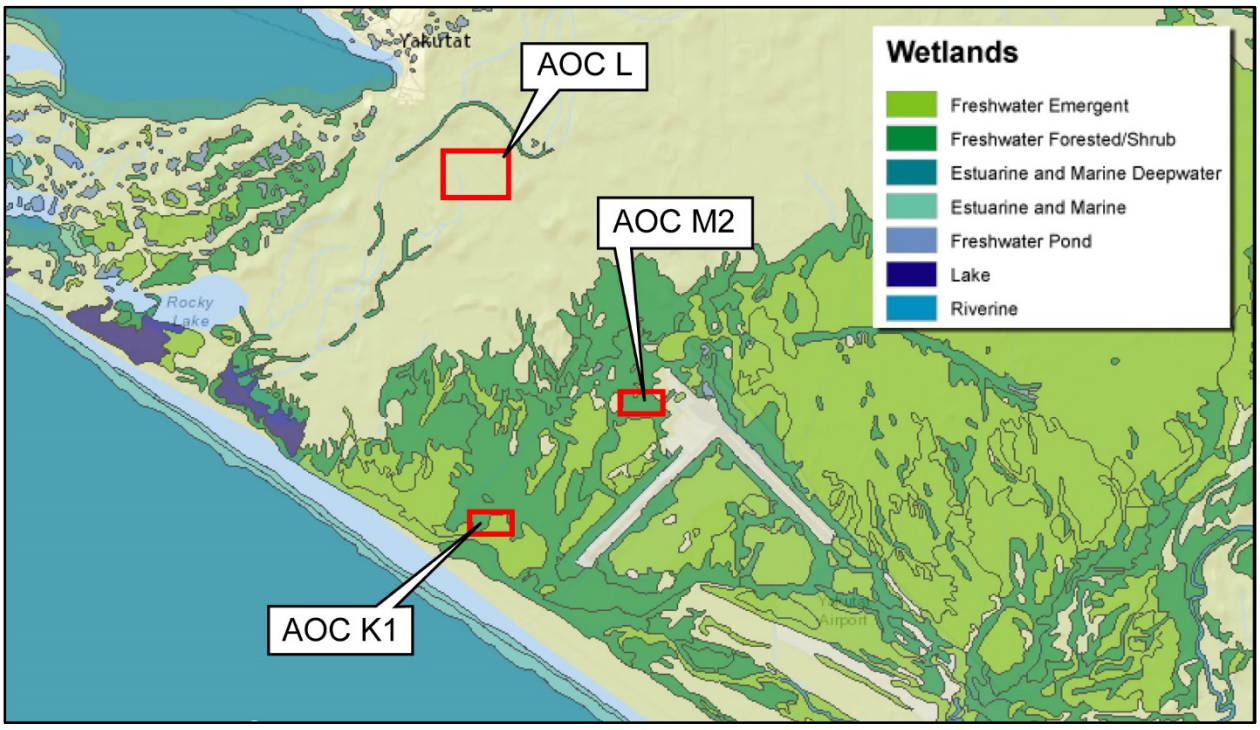


Figure 3. Annotated map of Yakutat-area wetlands, generated at USFWS 2016a)

3.8 Protected Species

Endangered Species Act. No species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) are in or near the project area according to information made available online by the USFWS (USFWS 2016b).

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The Yakutat coastal area provides habitat for many bald eagles, which are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, as well as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (see below). In addition to prohibiting direct takes, such as killing eagles or destroying nests, this act also regulates human activity or construction that may interfere with eagles' normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering habits (USFWS 2011).

Migratory Bird Treaty Act. With the exception of State-managed ptarmigan and grouse species, all native birds in Alaska (including active nests, eggs, and nestlings) are protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA; USFWS 2009).

3.9 Anadromous Streams and Essential Fish Habitat

Several streams listed in the Alaska Department of Fish & Games Anadromous Waters Catalog (AWC; ADFG 2016b) exist in the general project area. Ophir Creek (AWC Code No. 182-80-10100-2005-3015-4022) and an unnamed stream (AWC Code No. 182-80-10100-2005-3015-4022-5010) drain an area near AOC L. Ophir Creek is reported as a spawning and rearing stream for silver and sockeye salmon, a rearing stream for Dolly Varden, and providing habitat for adult cutthroat trout. Unnamed anadromous streams with the AWC Code Nos. 182-80-10100-2005-3014-4010 and 182-80-10100-2005-3012 flow near AOC M2. Tawah Creek (AWC Code No. 182-80-10100-2005) flows south of AOC K1, and provides spawning habitat for silver salmon, with sockeye, cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden, eulachaon, and steelhead present.

There is no marine essential fish habitat (EFH) as defined by the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act at this inland site.

3.10 Cultural and Historic Resources

The proposed activities have been reviewed by a Corps archaeologist. Examination of available records and documentation indicate that there are six known historic sites within the project area of potential effect (APE): the Yakutat Landing Field Historic District (YAK-072), Hangar Road (YAK-107), Air Corps Road (YAK-109), 28th Engineer Road (YAK-117), Air Corps Tank Farm and Pipeline (YAK-126), and Laundry Building #339 (YAK-211). No prehistoric sites have been identified within or adjacent to the project APE (Pierce 2016).

YAK-072, with its associated revetments, was an important part of the defense of western North America and an important re-fueling stop for planes on their way to and from the Aleutian Campaign during World War II. As a World War II facility associated with the military build-

up for the defense of Alaska – YAK-072 has been determined eligible for the National Register under Criterion A (Pierce 2016).

YAK-126, the Air Corps Tank Farm and Pipeline, originally connected the military port at Monti Bay with the air base tank farm and truck filling stations. The tank farm, filling station, pump house, and most of the pipeline valves were removed in 1948. Remaining sections of pipeline were removed in 2008 as part of a Corps cleanup project. Because the tanks, truck fill station pump house, valves, and pipeline were removed, the site was found to no longer retain integrity. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) determined the site to be ineligible for the National Register in 2007 (Pierce 2016).

Laundry Building #339 (YAK-211) is a concrete, 16 by 72-foot Quonset hut foundation that once served as the laundry/dry cleaning building for the garrison. The laundry building was previously identified as a contributing feature of YAK-133. Only the concrete foundation remains. An associated 12 by 12-foot concrete pad formerly supported a wood stave tank that serviced the laundry facility. The wood-stave tank has been removed; only the footprint remains. No determination of eligibility has been conducted on the Building #339 foundation or the associated stave tank foundation (Pierce 2016).

Other historic properties that will be utilized to access the 2016 FUDS project areas include the Hangar Road (YAK-107), Air Corps Road (YAK-109), and the 28th Engineer Road (YAK-117). Engineer Road was rerouted from the original World War II-era road by the Alaska Department of Transportation (ADOT). The historic YAK-117 road is located to the east of AOC M2. These are raised gravel roads built during construction of the Air Field in the 1940s. Although the roads themselves are not the most significant properties identified, they played a central role in transportation both during the military period as well as in the post-military period. The three roads retain moderate integrity as they have been maintained by ADOT and the community (Pierce 2016).

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF ALTERNATIVES

4.1 No-Action Alternative

The no-action alternative would avoid the short-term disruptions to the local environment that would be caused by the operation of heavy equipment and excavation of soil. However, the contaminated soil and waste materials would remain in place, which would limit use of the area by the community and potentially allow the migration of chemical contaminants to the nearby environment.

4.2 Preferred Alternative

Under the preferred alternative, contaminated soils and waste materials would be removed from the site to the extent practicable. The potential environmental consequences are described below.

4.2.1 Effects on Community and Land Use

The project sites are in areas generally not frequented or used by the public. The project will cause an increase in truck and equipment traffic on local roads, which may briefly affect the use of those roads by local residents; however, blocking of roads or rerouting of traffic should not be necessary. The AOC M2 excavation area is adjacent to a garage building used by the USFS; the project work will be coordinated with the USFS to minimize impacts on their activities.

4.2.2 Effects on Air Quality and Noise

Air quality may be affected during the project period from the use of heavy equipment, construction vehicles, and generators. The Corps believes any increase in pollutant emissions caused by the project would be transient, highly localized, and would dissipate entirely at the completion of the project. The area is not in a CAA "non-attainment" area, and the conformity determination requirements of the CAA would not apply to the proposed project at this time.

The project sites are not near any residences. The noise generated by project activities will be comparable to moderate construction noise, and should not disrupt human activity.

4.2.3 Effects on Topography, Soils, and Hydrology

The areas of excavation would be small, and backfill would be contoured to approximate the existing grade. The project will not significantly alter the topography or patterns of overland water flow in the area.

4.2.4 Effects on Habitat and Wildlife

The planned activities would be highly localized in their impacts and affect an area already altered by the former military construction and past cleanup efforts. Some brush may need to be cleared, primarily along existing trails, to access project locations. The project sites will be restored to the extent practical. The backfilled and contoured excavation sites will be revegetated in accordance with USFS guidance as described above. The planned activities may displace some wildlife from the sites while work is ongoing. The project sites are surrounded by areas of similar, higher-quality habitat, and any wildlife displaced from the project area by noise and activity should be able to quickly resume their natural behavior. In the longer term, the project will improve wildlife habitat by removing hazards such as containerized waste and contaminated soil.

4.2.5 Effects on Wetlands

Wetlands are presumed to be present at the project sites, and the backfilling of the planned excavations is likely to constitute a discharge under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). However, any discharge to wetlands at the site as a result of the proposed activities would be authorized under Nationwide Permit No. 38, Cleanup of Hazardous and Toxic Waste: "Specific activities required to effect the containment, stabilization, or removal of hazardous or toxic waste materials that are performed, ordered, or sponsored by a government agency with established legal or regulatory authority." General Condition No. 31 (Pre-Construction Notification) does not apply to this project, as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (which is the enforcement authority of Section 404, and which issues the Nationwide Permits) is itself conducting the activity, and is not required to notify itself. This EA will serve as notification to other resource agencies that Nationwide Permit No. 38 is being invoked.

4.2.6 Effects on Protected Species

The proposed action will have no effect on ESA-listed species, as none are present at or near the project sites.

The presence of nesting bald eagles at or near the project sites is a possibility, although better habitat closer to food sources is abundant in the Yakutat area. The bald eagle nesting season in Alaska can extend from February through August. The contractor will survey the areas surrounding the project sites for potential bald eagle nests. USFWS guidance (USFWS 2007) calls for allowing moderately noisy and disruptive activities no closer than 660 feet from an active nest if that nest is visible from the work site, or 330 feet if the nest cannot be seen from the work site.

Nesting birds are likely to be the most vulnerable animal species at the site. The destruction of active nests, eggs, or nestlings is a violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service advises that the period 15 April through 15 July should be considered the nesting window for birds nesting in forest or woodland, and 1 May through 15 July for birds nesting in scrub or open land in Southeast Alaska (USFWS 2009) and that any brush-clearing activities should be scheduled for prior to or after this window. The project activities may overlap this nesting window. If the nesting window cannot be avoided, work areas will be examined for bird nests prior to project activities. Any active nests will be avoided and protected.

4.2.7 Effects on Essential Fish Habitat and Anadromous Streams

The project will not require entry into or alteration of water bodies. Best management practices such as silt fencing or other appropriate sediment control will be employed to minimize the risk of runoff reaching streams during excavation. The intent of the project is to remove sources of contamination from the environment and should have a net positive effect on area fish habitat.

There is no marine EFH in the project area, and the Corps determines that the project would have no adverse effects on fish habitat.

4.2.8 Effects on Cultural Resources

In a letter dated 15 April 2016 (Pierce 2016), the Corps proposed a finding of no adverse effect to historic properties with regard to the soil removal proposed at the ACOR Tank Farm, Laundry Building #339, and the 55-gallon drum at AOC K1 Solid Waste Disposal Area No. 4 on the Yakutat Landing Field Historic District (YAK-072). In the letter, the Corps reasons that, given the extensive amount of ground disturbance created by the construction of the ACOR Tank Farm (YAK-126), Laundry Area, and Concern K1 Solid Waste Disposal Area No. 4, there is a low probability of inadvertently discovering/disturbing prehistoric sites within the project areas. YAK-126 was previously determined to be not eligible for the National Register due to a loss of essential physical features, association and lack of integrity. It is recommended that YAK-211 not be considered eligible for the National Register for similar reasons. Furthermore, only necessary brushing is planned along select sections of YAK-107, YAK-109, and YAK-117, which will not adversely affect the historic roads. This letter has been provided to the State Historic Preservation Officer for review and concurrence.

4.2.9 Environmental Justice Considerations

Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," requires Federal agencies to identify and address any disproportionately high and adverse human health effects of its programs and activities on minority and low-income populations.

The express purpose of the proposed project is to reduce future risks to human health and welfare in the region by removing contaminants from the environment. The Corps does not anticipate adverse impacts from this project to the human population.

4.2.10 Cumulative Effects Considerations

Federal law (40 CFR 651.16) requires that NEPA documents assess cumulative effects, which are the impact on the environment resulting from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

The immediate incremental impacts of air pollutants and noise from construction machinery would be of short duration and would not contribute to long-term cumulative effects. The removal of chemical contamination from the project area may make development of the privately-owned land more feasible, and it could conceivably be sold for residential development similar to what exists adjacent to the property.

4.2.11 Coastal Zone Management Considerations

Alaska withdrew from the voluntary National Coastal Zone Management Program (http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/programs/czm.html) on July 1, 2011. Within the State of Alaska, the Federal consistency requirements under the Coastal Zone Management Act do not apply to Federal agencies, those seeking forms of Federal authorization, and state and local government entities applying for Federal assistance.

5.0 PERMITS AND AUTHORIZATIONS

This project would require no resource permits and few authorizations. No agency coordination is required under the ESA. The project as described will not impact fish-bearing streams, so no Fish Habitat Permit will be required from the ADFG. Incidental discharges to wetlands at the project sites in the course of remediating those sites are authorized under CWA Nationwide Permit #38. The Corps has sought concurrence from the State Historical Preservation Officer that the proposed work will not cause adverse effects to historical properties or cultural resources. The contractor will follow USFWS guidance on avoiding takes under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and will survey the surrounding area for potential eagle nests prior to the start of work, and report the siting of any potential nests to the Corps for further evaluation and coordination.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed environmental cleanup project at the former Yakutat Air Base, as discussed in this document, would have some minor, largely controllable short-term impacts, but in the long term would help improve the overall quality of the human environment. This assessment supports the conclusion that the proposed project does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment; therefore, a finding of no significant impact will be prepared.

7.0 PREPARERS OF THIS DOCUMENT

This Environmental Assessment was prepared by Chris Floyd and Diane Walters of the Environmental Resources Section, Alaska District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps of Engineers Project Manager is Christy Baez.

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