



Permit allows development of CD-5 oil field

By Pat Richardson
Public Affairs Office

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District issued a permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act to ConocoPhillips Alaska Inc. for the CD-5 Alpine Satellite Development Project Dec. 19.

The Colville River Delta 5 project is located 8.5 miles northwest of Nuiqsut in the 25-million-acre National Petroleum

Reserve-Alaska. The district denied the initial permit application Feb. 5, 2010 and ConocoPhillips appealed two months later.

This decision culminates a nearly yearlong review process that included an in-depth analysis of engineering alternatives along with an examination of supplemental technical information provided by state and federal agencies.

In a detailed 134-page record of decision, the Corps required

ConocoPhillips to use the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative as mandated by law.

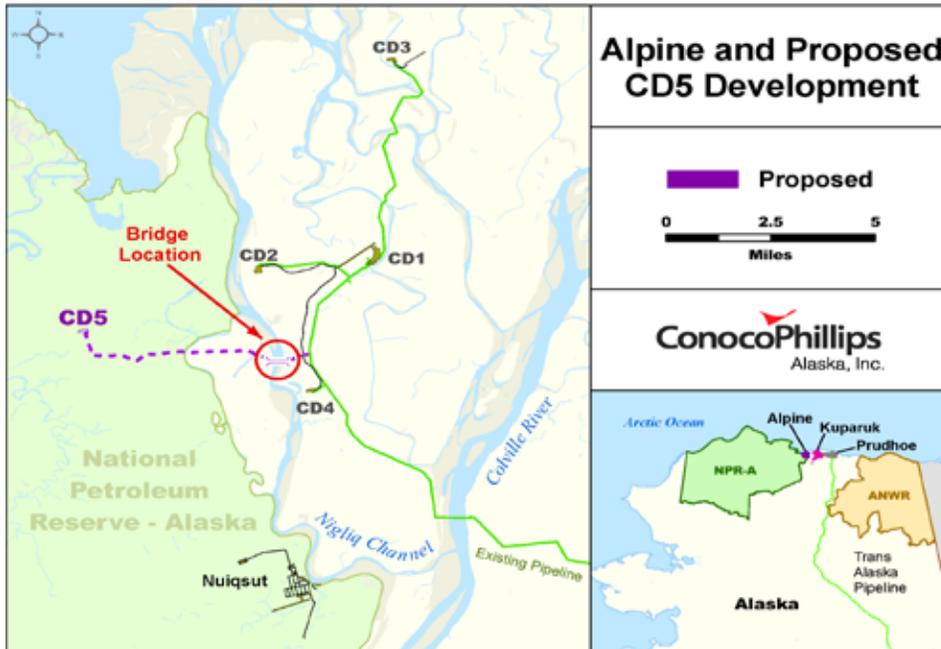
“(This) decision is entirely consistent with the mission of the Corps of Engineers’ Regulatory Program, which is to protect the nation’s aquatic resources while allowing reasonable development,” said Kevin Morgan, Regulatory Division chief. “It’s indicative of a program that is fair, flexible and balanced.”

The CD-5 permit authorizes construction of a drill pad, six-mile-long access road, four bridge crossings, two valve pads with access roads and new pipeline support structures. A bridge across the Nigliq Channel of the Colville River will be the first for a major channel crossing within the Colville River Delta.

The permit also includes 22 special conditions intended to minimize impact on the environment within the Arctic Coastal Plain.

ConocoPhillips made minor modifications to the project by revising road alignment, reducing road width, adding a fourth bridge, narrowing the width of bridges to one lane, decreasing the number of pilings and including more culverts. These changes further avoided and minimized impacts to the floodplain.

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District takes on contracting for Ghazi Stadium

By Sgt. 1st Class Mark Porter
U.S. Forces-Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan - Ghazi Stadium was crowded with people Dec. 15, many waving and cheering in a show of national pride and celebration as the soccer field reopened. The ceremony was in stark contrast to past images of the stadium, when it was often used for public executions and stonings during the dark days of Taliban rule.

It also marked the completion of nearly two years of work between the Afghan Olympic Committee, coalition forces and the U.S. Embassy to restore the field and revitalize the sports culture in the country.

The project began in December 2010, when Gen.

David Petraeus, then-commander of International Security Assistance Forces, directed U.S. Forces-Afghanistan to work with Afghan political leaders to build more sports fields in Kabul.

U.S. personnel traveled to the Olympic Sports Complex to meet with the secretary general of the Afghan Olympic Committee.

“A few days later, the president of the Afghan National Olympic Committee [Lt. Gen. Mohammad Zaher Aghbar] formally asked us to resurface the field,” said Air Force Maj. Robert Lyons, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan strategic plans officer at the time.

The project started under Petraeus and finished under

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Permit

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In addition, ConocoPhillips agreed to pay mitigation fees to The Conservation Fund to compensate for direct impacts to 58.5 acres and indirect impacts to 49.4 acres of tundra wetlands associated with developing the new drill pad.

Of the total impacts from CD-5, 23.6 acres will be in the Colville River Delta. The CD-5 pad, located in the NPR-A, is 11.7 acres.

The permitted project will have less of a direct environmental impact on wetlands and be nearly 10 acres smaller than horizontal directional drilling alternatives.

In the initial permit denial, the Alaska District identified alternatives involving horizontal directional drilling to place the pipeline under the Nigli Channel and without a road in the Colville River Delta. Access to the pad would have been via an airstrip or road from the existing Nuiqsut airfield.

During the review process, the Corps evaluated four proposed practicable alternative that included both above and

below-ground pipelines. Additional information provided by ConocoPhillips, combined with opinions from agencies responsible for pipeline oversight in Alaska, documented that an above-ground pipeline, in this particular situation, presented less risk of damage to the aquatic ecosystem.

"The clarifying information we reviewed and conditions agreed to by ConocoPhillips cleared the way for us to issue this permit," said Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander.

The authorized above-ground pipeline connected to a bridge will transport a three-phase product of water, natural gas and oil to the Alpine Central Processing Facility.

"The ConocoPhillips proposal will provide year-round quick and effective pipeline monitoring, leak detection and spill response," Koenig said.

The record of decision is available on the Alaska District's Web site at <http://www.poa.usace.army.mil>.

Photo memento

Phil Shephard, Great Land Trust director (left), presents a framed aerial photograph of the 4,800-acre Eklutna Inc. conservation easement to the Alaska District during the annual Great Land Trust gathering in Anchorage Dec. 15. Corps representatives accepting the gift are Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, holding the hand of his daughter, Caroline, and Mary Lee Plumb-Mentjes, project manager in the Regulatory Division. Plumb-Mentjes is chair of the Port Mitigation Advisory Committee, which authorized the use of Port of Anchorage expansion project mitigation funds to secure the property. Eklutna Inc., the native corporation for Anchorage, is conserving the land for traditional uses, such as hunting and fishing by shareholders, and public access for those with permits.

The property contains habitat for all five species of salmon in Cook Inlet as well as many other wildlife species. Additionally, the property is adjacent to the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge and Chugach State Park, two popular recreational areas.

Eklutna, Inc. was paid \$1.95 million for the easement, which was made possible through resources set aside to offset habitat losses associated with the expansion of the Port of Anchorage.

(Courtesy photo)



GOLD NUGGETS

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Stadium

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current ISAF Commander Marine Gen. John Allen and U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker. “We were committed to honoring their request and working with the Afghan Olympic Committee to complete the project,” Lyons said.

For Aghbar, the return of sports to the 88-year-old stadium equaled a return to normalcy for his war-ravaged country.

“We want the world to know that young athletes here are ambassadors for peace,” he said. “Their country is burning. There is smoke rising from it. But despite murders and explosions caused by the criminals of the last century, our young athletes can have a strong presence in international sports and bring medals to their country through healthy competition.”

The Afghan Olympic Committee helped outline the requirements and the organizations worked as a team to get the project under way.

With more than \$1 million in funding approved as part of the ISAF Commander’s Emergency Relief Program and a grant from the U.S. embassy, an Afghan company—Kabul-based Miad Eiffel Road and Construction Co.—was awarded an Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity contract April 18 for \$773,854 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District to resurface the soccer field inside the stadium.

Afghan firms executed most of the construction work and performed quality assurance. The business teamed with a Dutch company, Greenfields, to

install a turf that will be certified for international competition.

The Alaska District put into place several complementary IDIQ tools, including vertical and horizontal capabilities as well as engineering services, to support strategic CERP objectives in the Kabul region, said Chris Tew, Alaska District Contracting Division chief.

The firms were selected for performance excellence and vetted for nonperformance criteria. Using a contracting officer’s representative in country to perform all contract functions reduces the Corps’ footprint there and still provides the required oversight and performance, Tew said.

These tools were implemented because he experienced a mission coverage gap while deployed to Afghanistan. The tools were too small to be managed in accordance with existing doctrine and resources at the Afghanistan Engineer District and too complicated to be managed by a contracting activity that was not experienced with construction and engineering services.

“Further, I thought the mission nested well with our humanitarian assistance mission and provided a great opportunity for our military contingency contracting team to get some real hands-on experience with CERP, which is very unique,” Tew said.

The project is part of a larger partnership between Afghanistan and the United States to encourage and



Courtesy photo

Afghan women play soccer on the new field at Ghazi Stadium in Kabul, Afghanistan.

support youth sports in Afghanistan.

“The intent is to provide a culture of sports for Afghan youth and give them viable alternatives to some of the other negative influences that are out there, such as crime, drugs, the insurgency,” said Navy Rear Adm. Hal Pittman, ISAF deputy chief of staff for Communications. “It’s one more step in Afghanistan’s march to being a modern country in this part of the world.”

Unlike some CERP projects, the Ghazi Stadium returfing will have an instant impact.

“Many of these infrastructure projects will not have an immediate impact,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Robert Umstead, deputy commander for plans and policy at USFOR-A. “A school, for instance, may start teaching kids right away, but the real payoff does not happen until the student grows up, graduates and joins the work force. This is partly why it can take a generation to defeat a determined insurgency.”

“In contrast, the stadium provides an immediate result that can be seen and deliver right away through sports,” Lyons said. “With a new field like this, Afghanistan as a nation state can invite members of the international community to play games in Kabul. This generates excitement in Afghanistan as they see their national teams compete. All peoples of the world know the power of sports and its relationship to the spirit of mankind.”

As part of the project, the dirt beneath the field—dirt once so soaked with blood that grass could not grow—was removed and replaced with fresh soil, symbolizing a new start and a break with the atrocities of the past.

Alaska District Public Affairs contributed to this report.



Courtesy photo

ISAF Commander Marine Gen. John Allen and U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker participate in the reopening ceremony for the new soccer field at Ghazi Stadium in Kabul, Afghanistan, Dec. 15.

Commentary

Roth TSP among financial changes for 2012

By Curt Biberdorf
Public Affairs Office

This year brings some certain, likely and unknown changes to federal employee pay and retirement benefits.

Remaining frozen is general pay, and it's too soon to know whether new legislation will extend it another year or longer.

Because of the Non-Foreign Area Retirement Equity Assurance Act of 2009, federal employees in Alaska are now receiving a full locality pay rate of 24.69 percent. To prevent a loss in take-home pay, a tax-free Cost of Living Allowance of 5.57 percent remains.

Phasing in the final one-third of locality pay this year marks a new beginning for Alaska and other areas receiving COLA.

With the COLA rate declining before the law was passed authorizing full locality, the change is a welcome one and will provide a higher pension, which was the driving force behind its implementation.

Another difference is that more income can now be contributed to the Thrift Savings Plan. The TSP is among the best retirement plans available from any employer considering its low costs, simple but effective investment options, and for those under the Federal Employees Retirement System, government matching of the first 5 percent of employee contributions.

Mirroring the 401(k) retirement savings plan in the private sector, contribution limits increased from \$16,500 to \$17,000. Employees 50 years and older, and those turning 50 years of age this calendar year, can contribute up to another \$5,500, which is the same limit as 2011.

A more significant TSP change, the biggest since the launch of life cycle funds, has been in the planning since 2009.

After a delay from the initial January 2012 introduction date, the TSP is set to offer a Roth 401(k) option this spring.

Employees and service members will be able to contribute after-tax income into the fund or funds they have selected in the TSP. In turn, those contributions and all earnings are not taxed upon withdrawal in retirement.

Many financial planners recommend the Roth 401(k) and Roth IRA. Employees who expect to be in a higher tax bracket in retirement will likely find it advantageous. Still, in

matters of personal finance, it's up to individuals to examine the pros and cons to figure out what is the better deal, whether with the help of a financial planner or on their own.

Either way, what is most important is saving money for retirement, and the TSP makes it easy. Expect to see more information from the TSP as the Roth option is unveiled.

Beyond the unknown future of the pay freeze, efforts to trim the national deficit include reducing government retirement costs.

The employee pension contribution under FERS is 0.8 percent, but under discussion in Washington D.C. is gradually increasing it to 5.8 percent. Another cost-savings measure proposed is determining the pension annuity based on the average top five earning years rather than the highest three.

Even if these changes are enacted, the federal government retirement system is still generous. Traditional pensions are fading away in America and being replaced by 401(k) plans. FERS provides both plus employees get the Social Security annuity.

In one respect pay is frozen, but employees are still eligible for step increases, promotions and performance bonuses.

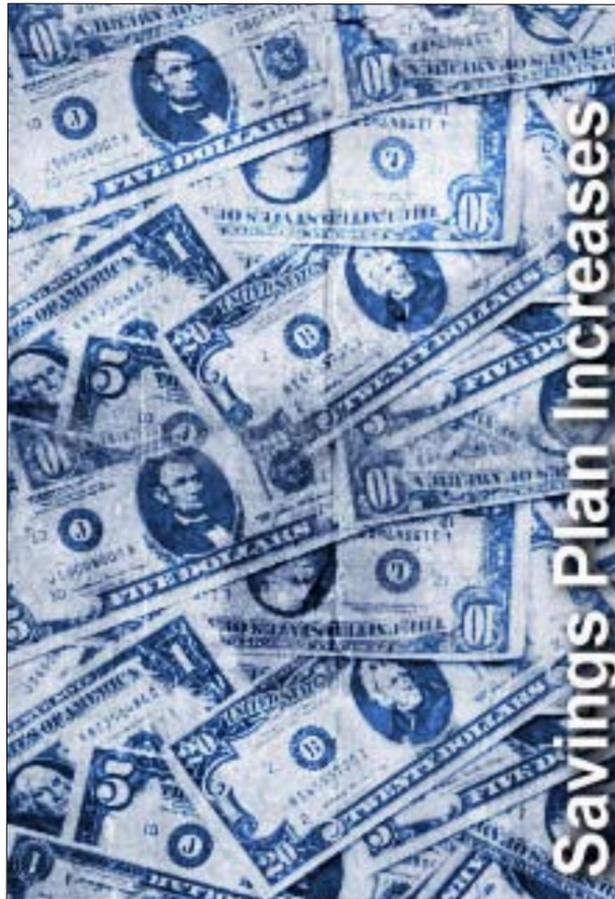
Health care benefits are generous, with the employee paying 28 percent of the actual premium even in retirement. The Federal Employees Group Life Insurance provides a simple way to insure beneficiaries against the loss of income.

As Department of Defense employees, fringe benefits consist of access to a variety of services and facilities for health, wellness and recreation. It's also hard to overlook the generous vacation, sick leave and holidays.

One way to prepare for modified pay and retirement benefits is by creating and maintaining an annual spending plan. Think of it as a personal financial map to guide where you want to go and show where to adjust when changes arise.

During 2011, the district invited a financial advisor with a local financial services company, to brief employees on topics such as long-term care insurance coverage and Social Security.

Similar briefings are planned for 2012 to continue to inform district employees about benefits and financial planning.



Around the district

First quarter award winners

The district recognized the following employees for their outstanding performance during the first quarter of fiscal year 2012:

Support GS-02-10: Danielle Shack

Support GS-11-15: Herschel Deaton

Managerial/Supervisory/Team Leader: Michael Salyer

External Team, Shaktoolik Flood Hazard Analysis: Jeremy Allen, Mary Azelton, Raymond Chapman, Ken Eisses, Christina Galles, Mark Gravens, Alan Jeffries, Robert Jensen, Sung-Chan Kim, Dave Mark, Hillary Palmer, Melanie Peterson, Cindy Saldana, Alona Schue, Wendy Shaw, Thomas Sloan, Diane Walters, David Williams, Ernest Woods and Jerry Zuspan

Civil planner selected as team leader

Debbie Fletcher, civil planner in the Emergency Management Office, was competitively selected as an Emergency Support Function 3 assistant team leader. She will be available to fill key leadership roles with the Joint Field Office, Incident Management Assistance Teams, National Response Coordination Center, Regional Response Coordination Centers, USACE Operations Center and other operational nodes. Team leaders are selected after a training process where they are evaluated for knowledge, skills and leadership attributes.

Pre-retirement seminars set for 2012

The Federal Executive Association has announced its pre-retirement seminar schedule for FY2012. The free benefits

training sessions for CSRS and FERS employees fill up fast, and seating is limited. Classes are from 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

In Anchorage, dates for FERS employees are Feb. 8, April 11, June 13 and Sept. 12. CSRS dates are Feb. 9 and June 14. Sessions are conducted at the Federal Building Annex, 222 W. 8th Ave., Mod G, Conference Room A, B, C.

In Fairbanks, dates for FERS are Jan. 12 and April 20. CSRS dates are Jan. 13 and April 21. Sessions are conducted at Westmark Hotel, 813 Noble Street.

In Juneau, the FERS date is March 9 and the CSRS date is March 10. Sessions are conducted at the Federal Office Building, 709 W. 9th Street, Room 285.

For enrollment forms and information, visit this link on the shared drive <http://www.fea.gov/Documents/Training%20Documents/FEA%20FY-12%20Pre-Retirement%20Schedule.htm>

Day planned for youth to visit district

Bring Your Youth to Work Day is scheduled for Feb. 17 at district headquarters. Stay tuned for registration details.

Test preparation software donated

Complimentary college entrance exam preparation software program is available to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers families through eKnowledge. In alliance with the Department of Defense and supported by National Football League and Major League Baseball athletes, eKnowledge is donating SAT and ACT exam PowerPrep programs valued at \$200. The PowerPrep DVD allows self-paced practice that fits the student's needs and lifestyle. Above-average

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Holly jolly party

Food, prizes and games entertained attendees of the district holiday party at the Arctic Chill on JBER-Richardson Dec. 15. (Left) Mary Azelton, Engineering Division, expresses frustration after the CD cases she lined up fall during a Minute to Win It event. (Above) Will Mangano, Environmental Engineering, claims the grand prize, a 42-inch LCD television. (Photos by Curt Biberdorf)

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scores can result in thousands of dollars in scholarships and acceptance to preferred universities. With practice, students become acquainted with the format, timing and subject matter on the tests. The eKnowledge DVD contains over 11 hours of video instruction, animation, graphics, thousands of sample questions and practice tests. The DVD can be ordered online at www.eknowledge.com/USACE or by calling 951-256-4076. The cost of materials, customer support and shipping is \$17.55.

Contract awarded

A contract was awarded Dec. 16 for ongoing remedial action at Umiat Formerly Used Defense Site. The work consists of safely removing, packaging, transporting, and treating/disposing of nearly 1,300 tons of PCB and petroleum-contaminated soil from the Umiat Test Well No. 9 vicinity and the burn area located almost 500 feet from the wellhead.

Arctic port study progressing

The district received \$182,911 from the State of Alaska for the Arctic Deep Draft Ports Study as part of the new feasibility cost-share agreement executed Dec. 8. The first phase is to identify all possible locations that could be modified to establish a deep-draft port as well as develop the respective engineering, economic and environmental data. The second phase will be to hone in on a selected site and develop the master plan and layout for a potential harbor.

Roads program rolling

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is requesting support for up to 10 construction projects and has three projects in Akhiok, Chuathbaluk, and Nuiqsut scheduled for transfer to the district in FY2012 once an interagency agreement is in

Upcoming events

Jan. 9	Town Hall Meeting and Awards Ceremony
Jan. 9-11	POD Commander Visit
Jan. 16	Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Holiday
Jan. 23	Welcome Home Ceremony
Feb. 6-10	Regulatory NEPA Training
Feb. 17	Bring Your Youth to Work Day

place. The programmed amount for the three projects is \$3.8 million.

Agreement signed with FAA

The district and Federal Aviation Administration-Western Service Area signed a five-year interagency agreement for technical and engineering services support for environmental, communication, navigation and infrastructure activities at FAA facilities in Alaska. The district expects to receive additional funding to support ongoing environmental projects in the second quarter of this fiscal year.

Regulatory digitizes records

All Army permit files were scanned into searchable PDF documents by contractor Micro Media. Nearly 1,000 boxes of permit files from 1910-2010 generated more than a terabyte of digital records.

Deployments

Afghanistan—Juliet Brown, Theodore Champine, Warren Colburn, Leanna Dagley, John Keys, Patricia Lora, John Mitzel, Heather Moncrief, David Purdy, Gary Weiler, Jim Wolfe

Kuwait—Laura Sheldon

Returned—Scott Haan

**Highly decorated**

(Right) Regulatory Division won first place after judging of the annual Alaska District holiday door decorating contest Dec. 21. (Above, from left) Jerry Chambers, mailroom clerk; Lt. Col. Bobby Stone, deputy district commander and Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, make notes during judging. Cost Engineering took second place, and the Credit Union, Military Programs Branch and Real Estate Division tied for third place. Numerous criteria are used to evaluate decorations, such as holiday spirit, technical execution, creativity, Corps theme, humor and "other factors," such as food, to determine the winner. (Photos by Luis Menendez)



Accolades



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents the Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service to Donna West at district headquarters Dec. 8. West was recognized for exceptional meritorious service as contracting officer for the district's Fort Richardson American Recovery and Reinvestment Act program.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents the Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service to Terry Stone at district headquarters Dec. 8. Stone was recognized for exceptional meritorious service as project manager for the Alaska District Fort Richardson American Recovery and Reinvestment Act program.

Hall of Fame



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, inducts Merv Mullins into the Alaska District Hall of Fame during a ceremony Dec. 5 with his wife, Margie, at his side. Mullins served as a civil engineer for the Emergency Management Office and also for a time in dual capacity as the security manager from 1970-2011.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, inducts Abigail Dunning-Newbury into the Alaska District Hall of Fame during a ceremony Dec. 6. Dunning-Newbury was district counsel from 1990-2002. She served as assistant district counsel from 1982-1990 and 1968-1974. Dunning-Newbury retired with 37 years of federal service.