

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Case File No.: AA-085609

AK-040-04-EA-037

Applicant: Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities  
P.O. Box 196900  
Anchorage, Alaska 99519

Type of  
Action: Free Use Mineral Materials Permit

Location: Lot 1, USS No. 03584, Sec. 19, T. 56 S., R. 73 W., Seward Meridian.  
Located near Sand Point, Alaska

Prepared  
By: Carl Persson, Geologist

Preparing  
Office: Bureau of Land Management  
Anchorage Field Office  
6881 Abbott Loop Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Date: August 26, 2004

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF), is proposing to rehabilitate and extend the runway located at the village of Sand Point, Alaska (Project No. 54455). The current runway was built between 1992 and 1994, which completely replaced an earlier runway. The purpose of the federally funded project is to improve the safety of airport operations. This will be accomplished by extending the runway safety area embankment into Popof Strait by 810 feet.

An environmental assessment was prepared by the State of Alaska for the entire airport project, and the Decision Record signed on August 23, 1990. However, due to funding the original project had to be scaled back with a shorter runway embankment area than originally planned. With new funding, the State hopes to complete the runway extension during the fall of 2004. Three additional reevaluations of the State EA/FONSI have occurred since the original on July 15, 2002, September 4, 2003, and September 11, 2003.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

No land use plan exists for this area. However, this environmental analysis assesses the impacts of the Proposed Action and provides a basis for a decision on the proposal, 43 CFR 1610.8 (b)(1).

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

The subject mineral material free use permit is in conformance with 43 CFR 3600 regulations which contain the rules and procedures for mineral material free use permits. Additional information about the project, existing permits from other agencies, stipulations and monitoring plans is contained within the project Environmental Assessment Reevaluation, prepared for the State in July 2002.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE

A. Proposed Action:

The ADOT&PF proposes to mine approximately 489,420 cubic yards of rock materials from a sloping area several acres in size. The mining would occur during the months of September through December 2004, and continue the next summer and fall until completion sometime before December 31, 2005. The mining would occur in two nearly adjacent previously mined areas consisting of rocky knolls and low hills located along and to the north of the Sand Point airport runway. Both sites are contained within Lot 1, USS No. 03584, Sec. 19, T. 56 S., R. 73 W., Seward Meridian. The southern rock site is composed of altered

andesite, and the smaller northern site is composed of a lithic tuff. Approximately 11,000 cubic yards would be removed from the northern site and 478,420 cubic yards from the southern site. The required rock material would need to be drilled and blasted, stockpiled, then transported by dump truck to the end of the existing runway.

Reclamation of the mined area will follow the guidelines set forth in the Development Guidelines submitted by the State (see attached document). Some brushy vegetation will need to be removed. The pit walls will be graded to a 2:1 slope for the southern site, and a 4:1 slope for the northern site (necessary due to FAA requirements as the present knoll is considered an airway obstruction by the FAA). The pits will be reseeded to the standards listed in the Guidelines.

B. No Action Alternative:

The BLM would deny the mineral materials free use permit and the ADOT&PF would need to find another source of mineral materials for the project.

II. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Critical Elements:

The following critical elements are either not present or would not be affected by the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative:

- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- Environmental Justice
- Farmlands, Prime or Unique
- Floodplains
- Invasive, Non-native Species
- Native American Religious Concerns
- Water Quality, Surface/Ground
- Wetlands/Riparian Zones
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness

1. Air Quality:

The air quality of the project site is generally good.

2. Cultural Resources:

A Report of Examination for Cultural Resources was completed on August 18, 2004 (see attachments).

3. Subsistence:

A Section 810 ANILCA Compliance/Clearance was completed for the project on August 17, 2004 (see attachments).

4. Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species:  
Stellar's sea lions and Stellar's eiders, both federally listed species, occur in the off-shore areas near the mining site. The northern sea otter, a candidate species under the Endangered Species Act, may occur in off shore areas. No threatened or endangered species were identified within immediate mining area. Monitoring plans for threatened and candidate species have been developed and will be used as the project progresses. A T&E species evaluation was completed on August 19, 2004 (see attachments).

5. Wastes, Hazardous or Solid:  
There are no known wastes on the site.

B. Land Status:  
This land is patented to the State of Alaska for airport purposes. Patent 50-78-002 was issued in 1977 by the U.S. Department of the Interior. All minerals were reserved to the United States government, including mineral materials such as rock.

C. Vegetation:  
The site has already been cleared by previous rock removals. Some limited revegetation of alder brush has occurred where overburden was re-spread onto the quarry sites.

D. Visual Resources:  
The site is located in an area that has already been disturbed. Visual quality has been impacted by extensive development in the area. Using the BLM's Scenic Quality Inventory and Evaluation Chart this area rates as a Class C.

E. Wildlife:  
The subject lands have been relatively recently cleared when the existing runway was constructed, with only sparse re-growth of alder brush, which provides little habitat for wildlife. An eagle nest exists several thousand feet from the northern quarry site. Stellar's sea lions, Stellar's eiders, and northern sea otters exist in the nearby Popof Strait. Dolly Varden trout exist in a small heavily impacted drainage known as Whisky Bill's Creek.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

1. Critical Elements:

a. Air Quality:

There will be temporary impacts to air quality by the pollutant emissions from large scale blasting activities, vehicles emissions, construction equipment and dust. In particular, considerable quantities of nitrate gases and fly rock will be generated by the blasting necessary to loosen the rock. The effects will quickly disappear after excavation is completed.

b. Cultural Resources:

There are no impacts to cultural resources. The State already has a project stipulation in place addressing the unexpected discovery of cultural resources.

2. Vegetation:

The site has been recently cleared of all vegetation. Some alder brush has been re-established, which will need to be removed.

3. Visual Resources:

There will be no long term change in visual quality.

4. Wildlife:

Wildlife in the immediate project vicinity will be temporarily relocated by the noise and activity generated from the blasting and excavation activities. Some minor habitat destruction will occur.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

Since the only alternative is to deny the free use permit request, the only impact of the No Action Alternative would be that the ADOT&PF would need to find another source of mineral materials to complete the runway extension. This would increase the cost to complete the project by potentially forcing the State to buy the material at fair market value and increasing the distance to move the mineral materials. Currently, the only other proposed mineral material site in the area is a privately owned quarry site several miles away, which will probably provide some of the armor stone needed for the project.

- C. Cumulative Impacts:  
The area has been impacted by repeated airport projects and previous rock removals. The removal of the additional rock will have a negligible cumulative impact.
  
- D. Mitigation Measures:  
Reclamation of the staging area will follow the guidelines set forth in the Development Guidelines (see attached document). Reclamation guidelines have been established by the State who has patent to the surface. Additionally, an extensive set of stipulations have already been established by the State for the project which are also set forth in the Development Guidelines.

V. **CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

- A. Persons and Agencies Consulted:  
Velton Cason, P.E., Project Engineer, State of Alaska  
Rindy Patterson, Right of Way Agent, State of Alaska
  
- B. List of Preparers:  
Carl Persson, Geologist  
Jeff Denton, Subsistence Specialist  
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