

STATE OF ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

DESIGN & ENGINEERING SERVICES DIVISION, NORTHERN REGION

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

2301 PEGER ROAD
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99709-5399
TELEPHONE: (907) 451-2243
TDD: (907) 451-2363
FAX: (907) 451-5103

January 6, 2000

Re: Nightmute Airport Improvements
Project No. 51809

Mr. Ronald J. Morris
Western Alaska Officer Supervisor
National Marine Fisheries Service
Protective Resources Management Division
222 West 7th Avenue, Room 517
Anchorage, Alaska 99513-7577

Dear Mr. Morris:

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration, proposes to upgrade the Nightmute Airport. The proposed project will:

- Reconstruct and extend the existing 60' x 1,600' runway to 75' x 3,199'.
- Enlarge the 100' x 2,000' safety area to 148' x 3,789'.
- Construct a 34' x 279' taxiway on a 79' wide safety area with a 58,124 sq.ft. apron.
- Construct a 24' x 46' unheated equipment storage building on a 98' x 98' building pad.
- Install a medium-intensity airport lighting system including lighted windcone and segmented circle on a 125' x 125' pad.
- Install an unlighted windcone on a 16' x 16' pad.
- Construct a 62' x 62' Automated Weather Observation System (AWOS) pad and two 16' x 16' Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) pads.
- Improve the 1.1-mile airport access road.
- Extend power to the airport from the village.

The Department received initial comments from the Nightmute community in 1995/98. As we continue the scoping process, we depend on your input regarding your area of expertise to develop a thorough and relevant research document. Please including the following in your response:

- Relevant data
- Agency contact person(s)
- Potential permit requirements
- Comments and concerns

Please respond by February 7, 2000. If we can provide further information or assistance, please contact Adam Umholtz, Project Designer, at (907) 443-3418 or Ms. Terry Richards, Environmental Analyst, at (907) 451-2243. We appreciate your participation.

Sincerely,


John R. Mazzitello
Environmental Coordinator

TR/dt

cc: Adam Umholtz, Project Designer, DOT&PF, Nome
John G. Wahl, P.E., DOT&PF, Anchorage

**NIGHTMUTE AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS
PROJECT NO. 51809
MAILING LIST
January 6, 2000**

← **Mr. Ronald J. Morris**
Western Alaska Officer Supervisor
National Marine Fisheries Service
Protective Resources Mgmt Division
222 West 7th Avenue, Room 517
Anchorage, Alaska 99513-7577

Gary Wheeler contacted
← **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**
Ecological Services Division
605 West 4th Avenue, Room 62
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2231

Don Rice contacted
← **Chief, Regulatory Functions Branch**
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Alaska District
P. O. Box 858
Anchorage, Alaska 99506-0898

Francis R. Cherry, Jr.
✓ **State Director**
Bureau of Land Management
Alaska State Office
222 West 7th Avenue, #13
Anchorage, Alaska 99513-7599

✓ **Realty Officer** *now working with...*
Bureau of Indian Affairs
1675 C Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99513-7599

Mr. C. D. Robison, Jr., P.E.
Environmental Protection Agency
Water Quality Section
222 West 7th Avenue, #19
Anchorage, Alaska 99513-7588

Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Southcentral Regional Office
555 Cordova Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Judith E. Kaitner
Dept of Natural Resources
Div of Parks and Outdoor Rec.
Office of History and Archeology
211 7th Ave, Suite 1310

Lifeguard
Providence Hospital
P. O. Box 196604
Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6000

← **Office of Management and Budget**
Div. of Governmental Coordination
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1660
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Mr. Rick Thompson
Southcentral Regional Manager
Dept. of Natural Resources
Division of Land
3601 C Street, Suite 1080
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5937

✓ **Mr. Lance Trasky**
Southcentral Regional Supervisor
Department of Fish and Game
Habitat & Restoration Division
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99518-1599

Calista Corporation
601 West 5th Avenue, Suite 200
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2225

Refuge Manager
Yukon-Delta National Wildlife Refuge
P. O. Box 346
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Lower Kuskokwim Economic
Development Council
P. O. Box 2021
Bethel, Alaska 99559

269-7470

AVCP Regional Housing Authority
P. O. Box 767
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation.
P. O. Box 528
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Chairperson
Chinuruk Incorporated
P. O. Box NME
Nightmute, Alaska 99680

✓ **The Honorable Simeon Agnes**
Mayor-City of Nightmute
P. O. Box 90010
Nightmute, Alaska 99690

Mr. Ignatius Matthias
Vice Mayor
City of Nightmute
P. O. Box 90010
Nightmute, Alaska 99690

Mr. Jonathan Bosco
Police Officer (VPO)
City of Nightmute
P. O. Box 90010
Nightmute, Alaska 99690

President
Native Village of Nightmute
General Delivery
Nightmute, Alaska 99690

The Honorable Al Adams
Alaska State Senator
State Capitol, Room 417
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

The Honorable Richard Foster
Alaska State Representative
State Capitol, Room Room 410
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Air Alaska Inc.
3601 C Street, Suite 360
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Ms. Susan Hoshaw
State Manager
Air Cargo Express
6111 Lockheed Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99502

Mr. Kenny Brunett
Station Manager
Arctic Transportation Services
P. O. Box 790
Nome, Alaska 99762

Station Manager
Arctic Circle Air
6260 Airport Way
P. O. Box 60049
Fairbanks, Alaska 99706

Mr. John Hajdukovich
Station Manager
Frontier Flying Service
3820 University Avenue South
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709

Manager
Greatland Air Cargo, Inc.
3600 West Intl Airport Road, Suite 2
Anchorage, Alaska 99502

Manager
Northern Air Cargo
3900 West International Airport Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99502

Mr. Richard Reeve
President
Reeve Aleutian Airways
4700 West International Airport Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99502

Yute Air Alaska
P. O. Box 190169
Anchorage, Alaska 99519

Mr. Richard Harding
Director of Operations
Peninsula Airways Inc.
6100 Boeing Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99502

Station Manager
Cape Smythe Air
P. O. Box 1856
Nome, Alaska 99762

Station Manager
Cape Smythe Air
P. O. Box 549
Barrow, Alaska 99723

Station Manager
Bering Air
P. O. Box 1650
Nome, Alaska 99762

Mr. Craig Emery
Craig Air
P. O. Box 2018
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Baker Aviation
P. O. Box 116
Kotzebue, Alaska 99752

Mr. Larry Chenaille
President
Larry's Flying Service
3822 University Avenue South
P. O. Box 72348
Fairbanks, Alaska 99707

Station Manager
Larry's Flying Service
P. O. Box 7234
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Mr. Bruce McGlasson
President
Grant Aviation
P. O. Box 92200
Anchorage, Alaska 99509

Station Manager
Grant Aviation
P. O. Box 1978
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Hageland Aviation Services
P. O. Box 220610
Anchorage, Alaska 99522-6010

Station Manager
Kusko Aviation, Inc.
P. O. Box 1425
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Civil Air Patrol
P. O. Box 42
Kotzebue, Alaska 99752

Mr. Tom Ratledge
Yukon Aviation
P. O. Box 976
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Mr. Bruce Larson
Village Aviation, Inc.
P. O. Box 787
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Department of Public Safety
Aviation Personnel
P. O. Box 280
Nome, Alaska 99762

Mr. Richard Smith
Rural Airport Facilities Manager
Alaska Airlines
P. O. Box 68900-SEAPZ
Seattle, Washington 98168-0900

United Villages, Inc. Native Allotment
Royalty Department
Po Box 37148
Toksook Bay, Alaska 99637



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Alaska State Office
222 West 7th Ave.
Anchorage, Alaska 99513

2000
(043) (ld)

JAN 27 2000

Mr. John R. Mazzitello
Environmental Coordinator
State of Alaska
Department of Transportation
2301 Peger Road
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709

Dear Mr. Mazzitello:

I am responding to your letter of January 6, 2000, in which you requested our comments regarding the proposed upgrade of the Nightmute Airport.

Upon review of a map of the proposed project, it appears the airport and proposed improvements are located primarily on lands that have been conveyed to Nunakuiak Yupik Corporation and NGTA Incorporated. Some Native allotment applications also may be within the improvement area. These lands are all within the boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

We recommend the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service be contacted, as well as the Native corporations referenced above. The Bureau of Indian Affairs should also be consulted, as they represent Native allottees who may be affected by this project.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Feel free to contact Stuart Hirsh, Supervisory Realty Specialist in our Anchorage Field Office at 907-267-1252 if you have any additional questions or desire any additional information.

Sincerely,

Francis R. Cherry, Jr.
Francis R. Cherry, Jr.
State Director

ROUTE TO:	
E. Gerke	_____
R. Homer	_____
L. Jacobs	<u>X</u> _____
K. Matten	_____
J. Mazzitello	_____
M. Parker	_____
T. Richards	_____
C. Storey	_____
D. Todd	_____
P. Wightman	_____
Please do the following:	

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF PARKS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION OFFICE OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

550 W. 7TH AVENUE, SUITE 1310
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501-3565
PHONE: (907) 269-8721
FAX: (907) 269-8908

February 15, 2000

File: 3130-2R DOT/PF

Subject: Nightmute Airport Improvements

John R. Mazzitello
Design and Engineering Services
Northern Region
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
2301 Peger Road
Fairbanks, AK 99709-5294

Dear Mr. Mazzitello:

We have reviewed the information you provided about the proposed Nightmute Airport Improvements, Project No. 51809. There do not appear to be any conflicts with cultural resources for the project. If the material source designated Site 4 is needed, we would like to see good air or ground photos prior to geotechnical exploration. As shown in the photos provided for Site 1, that activity is likely to destroy any possible site that was there.

Sincerely,



Judith E. Bittner
State Historic Preservation Officer

JEB/dr

ROUTE TO:	
E. Gerke	_____
R. Horner	_____
L. Jacobs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____
K. Maitlen	_____
J. Mazzitello	_____
M. Parker	_____
T. Richards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____
C. Storey	_____
D. Todd	_____
P. Wightman	_____

Please do the following:

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Habitat and Restoration Division

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, AK 99518-1599
PHONE: (907) 267-2285
FAX: (907) 267-2464

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. John R. Mazzitello, Environmental Coordinator
Design & Engineering Services, Northern Region
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

FROM: *C. Wayne Dolezal*
C. Wayne Dolezal
Habitat Biologist
Region II

DATE: February 23, 2000

SUBJECT: Scoping Comments; Nightmute Airport Improvements; Project No. 51809

ROUTE TO:	
E. Gerke	_____
R. Horner	_____
L. Jacobs	_____
K. Madden	_____
J. Mazzitello	_____
M. Parker	_____
T. Richards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____
C. Storey	_____
D. Todd	_____
P. Wightman	_____
Please do the following:	

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has briefly reviewed your scoping summary relating to the proposed upgrade of the airstrip at Nightmute, Alaska. From the information provided, we understand that the project would include extending the existing 1,600-foot long, 60-foot wide runway to become a 3,199-foot long, 75-foot wide runway with a lengthened taxiway and enlarged parking apron and support area. Under any of the proposed scenarios, wetlands will be impacted. The following comments are provided to highlight ADF&G's concerns for construction and operational activities likely associated with the airport improvements.

The Tooksook River, located south, west and north of the runway project, has been specified as being important for the spawning, rearing, or migration of anadromous fishes pursuant to AS 16.05.870(a). That portion of the river near the proposed runway supports chinook, chum, pink, and coho salmon, whitefish, and Arctic char. In addition, several species of resident fish are found in the system.

Project related operations and design considerations of particular concern include:

1. Quarry site location for embankment fill and runway capping materials.
2. Method, routes, and time of year for movement of fill or runway surfacing materials.

3. The airstrip is located in a meander bend of the Tooksook River. It appears that the river's approach to the runway from the south and the west is on cut bank or what would normally be expected to be an actively eroding portion of the river channel. Relative to the design life of the airport, what is the projected rate of riverbank erosion and how long will it be before the river jeopardizes the runway? Will the access road encounter similar potential jeopardy? Do you anticipate the need for future streambank stabilization to prevent loss of the runway or road to the river?

As advisory information, near the project site there are no state legislatively designated special areas (i.e., State Game Refuges, Sanctuaries, or Critical Habitat Areas) over which ADF&G exerts Title 16 special areas permitting authority. A Fish Habitat Permit issued by the ADF&G Habitat and Restoration Division would be required if any project-related activities (e.g., either placement of fill or removal of material, equipment operation, fording, barge off-loading ramps or bulkheads, bank stabilization, ice bridges or winter stream crossings, etc.) were to be conducted below the ordinary high water level of specified anadromous fish water bodies such as the Tooksook River.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 267-2285.

cc: T. Richards, ADOT&PF
C. Burkey, ADF&G
R. Seavoy, ADF&G
M. Coffing, ADF&G
G. Wheeler, USFWS
M. Eagleton, NMFS
G. Alstrom, Ceñaliulriit CRSA

PHONE LOG

PEOPLE INVOLVED: MATT EAGLESTON, NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE, PROTECTIVE
RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

DOTPF PERSONNEL: LAURA JACOBS, ENVIRONMENTAL SECTION, ADOT&PF, NORTHERN REGION

PROJECT NAME AND NO.: NIGHTMUTE AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS/51809

DATE: 03/22/00

CC: ADAM UMHOLTZ, PROJECT DESIGNER, DOT&PF, NOME

JOHN G. WAHL, P.E., DOT&PF, ANCHORAGE

Topics: They have no concerns or comments on the Nightmute Airport Improvements Project.

Action Items: None

PHONE LOG

PEOPLE INVOLVED: PAUL LIEBERG, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, Assistant Refuge Manager

DOT&PF PERSONNEL: LAURA JACOBS, ENVIRONMENTAL SECTION, ADOT&PF, NORTHERN REGION

PROJECT NAME AND NO.: NIGHTMUTE AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS/51809

DATE: 03/23/00

CC: ADAM UMHOLTZ, PROJECT DESIGNER, DOT&PF, NOME

JOHN WAHL, P.E., DOT&PF, ANCHORAGE

Topics: He has no comments or concerns, other than what the USFWS Ecological Services may have on the Nightmute Airport Improvements Project.

Action Items: None



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services Anchorage
605 West 4th Avenue, Room 62
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2249

WAES

John R. Mazzitello
State of Alaska
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
2301 Peger Road
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-5399

ROUTE TO:	
E. Gerke	_____
R. Horner	_____
L. Jacobs	_____
K. Maitten	_____
J. Mazzitello	_____
M. Parker	_____
T. Richards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
C. Storey	_____
D. Todd	_____
P. Wightman	_____
Please do the following:	

APR 19 2000

Dear Mr. Mazzitello:

We have reviewed your request dated January 6, 2000, for information related to your proposed upgrade of the Nightmute Airport. The following information should assist you as you proceed to investigate and plan this project.

Threatened and Endangered Species

On February 10, 2000, we received your additional request for comment regarding the proposed upgrade and improvement project for the airport facilities at Nightmute, Alaska. Based on our review of preliminary information, the proposed project falls within the historic range of the spectacled eider (*Somateria fisheri*) and Steller's eider (*Polysticta stelleri*), and may coincide with suitable habitat for these species. Both of these species are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA). In addition, it is important to note that critical habitat was proposed for the spectacled eider on February 8, 2000 (65 FR 6114) and is located just south of Nightmute.

Based on the information provided we were unable to determine if the proposed project falls within proposed critical habitat for the spectacled eider. Therefore, as part of project planning and review, a more detailed map indicating the location of all project components needs to be developed and a determination made concerning its location in regards to proposed critical habitat.

Because the Federal Aviation Administration is participating in the project, they must comply with section 7 of the ESA. As stated in the implementing regulations for section 7, all Federal agencies must consult with us if a proposed action *may affect* a listed species or its designated critical habitat. This is normally referred to as informal consultation. This is the point in the consultation process where we are now. If it is determined that the proposed action is *likely to have an adverse affect* upon a listed species, or its designated critical habitat (following an assessment of the project area), formal consultation will be required. Formal consultation has specific time lines

and requirements for us, as well as the Federal agency, per the implementing regulations for section 7. Formal consultation concludes with us issuing a biological opinion. Federal agencies are also required to confer with us if a proposed action is likely to jeopardize a proposed species, or if the action is likely to result in destruction or adverse modification of proposed critical habitat. The conference is designed to assist the Federal agency and any applicant in identifying and resolving potential conflicts at an early stage in the planning process.

For the purposes of section 7, "action" means all activities or programs of any kind authorized, funded, or carried out, in whole or in part, by Federal agencies. Examples include the granting of licenses, contracts, leases, easements, rights-of-way, permits, and grants-in-aid. Other general examples include actions directly or indirectly causing modifications to the land, water, or air. In addition, "action area" means all areas to be affected directly or indirectly by the Federal action and not merely the immediate area involved in the action.

When a "may affect" situation exists, as is the case for this project, the lead Federal agency is required to develop a biological assessment per the implementing regulations for section 7, or similar documentation. The purpose of the biological assessment is to thoroughly evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed action on the listed species. In this regard, the use of this area by these species, as well as the distribution of suitable nesting habitat, needs to be assessed.

Initially, the habitat should be evaluated through inspection of maps and aerial photography, and if the area appears to provide a mixture of vegetated and ponded wetlands, the area will need to be thoroughly surveyed for nesting spectacled and Steller's eiders. Surveys for nesting birds should be conducted between June 1 and June 15, while taking into consideration the yearly variability in initiation of nesting due to weather and the timing of break-up. Both the habitat assessment and nest survey may be conducted at the same time. In this regard, we would like to meet with you to discuss appropriate survey methodologies.

In addition to an assessment of general habitat suitability, a determination needs to be made regarding whether the site contains the essential elements of critical habitat as identified in the proposed rule. Moreover, the amount of suitable nesting habitat in the action area, as well as potential impacts, needs to be quantified. Given the potential for harm to occur to these species due to disturbance (e.g., discovery of nests by predators due to inadvertent flushing of adults), only qualified personnel who possess a recovery permit per section 10 of the ESA, shall conduct habitat assessments and/or surveys for these animals.

It is important to note that this letter relates only to endangered species under our jurisdiction. It does not address species under the jurisdiction of the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Other Fish and Wildlife Resources

Birds seen near Nightmute and the nearby tundra wetlands include Pacific and common loon; red-necked grebe; tundra swan; green-winged teal; mallard; northern pintail; American wigeon;

canvasback; greater scaup; oldsquaw; black scoter; red-breasted merganser; golden eagle; peregrine falcon; willow ptarmigan; sandhill crane; black-bellied plover; Pacific golden plover; bar-tailed godwit; black turnstone; western, pectoral, and rock sandpiper; dunlin; common snipe; red-necked phalarope; parasitic and long-tailed jaeger; mew, glaucous-winged, glaucous, and Sabine's gull; arctic tern; tree, bank, and cliff swallow; common raven; northern wheatear; gray-cheeked and varied thrush; yellow wagtail; American pipit; orange-crowned, yellow, and Wilson's warbler; northern waterthrush; American tree, savannah, fox, golden-crowned, and white-crowned sparrow; Lapland longspur; snow bunting; and redpoll spp.

Moose, musk ox, river otter; arctic and red fox; weasel species; arctic ground squirrel; arctic hare; lemming species; river otter; beaver; muskrat; and mink all may occur within the area. In addition, the Tooksook River and its tributaries support Dolly Varden/arctic char and whitefish.

We are concerned that the runway extension would impact ponds and wetlands used by the species listed above for nesting and feeding. As a result, efforts should be made to minimize the area filled. Adequate water circulation should be maintained in the wetlands complexes through which the runway would be constructed. In addition, vegetation clearing and initial fill placement should not occur during the avian breeding season (May 1-August 1). This would avoid the taking of nesting birds in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Erosion of material from the runway berm could silt in ponds and wetlands, reducing productivity and burying invertebrates fed upon by waterfowl and shorebirds. Consequently, slopes should be stabilized as rapidly as possible utilizing plant species native to the Nightmute area. We would recommend against revegetating the safety area slopes with grasses palatable to geese or geese may be attracted creating a hazard to aviation. We would suggest that within the footprint of the area to be filled, a layer of overburden be stripped and stored, and after the runway fill has been completed, that this material be spread on the slopes to encourage revegetation with native species. We also recommend that silt fence be used at the toe of slope to prevent sediment from being washed into ponds and open water wetlands. Construction equipment should be restricted to operating on established roads, the airstrip, or within the project footprint.

We are also concerned that the project may impact the Toksook River. It appears that the southern terminus of the existing airstrip lies approximately 200 feet east of the river. If the runway is extended to the south or southwest, it would be sited in close proximity to an outer bank on a curve in the river, an area typically undergoing bank erosion. In addition, if construction equipment were to operate between the airstrip and the river, it is likely that vegetation would be killed, and without stabilizing vegetation, bank erosion would be hastened. Consequently, it may be wise to realign the runway a few degrees to avoid closely approaching the river.

The Environmental Assessment on the project should discuss the source of the embankment fill and runway capping material for the airstrip extension, quantity needed, and the size and location of any borrow areas. The method, route, and time of year for movement of fill or runway surfacing materials should be disclosed. The EA should also discuss if any streambank modifications would be needed to provide new barge landing areas.

Realty and Permitting Issues

The Nightmute area resides within the boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. We request that you contact Danielle Jerry or another member of our Realty Division at (907) 786-3335 to discuss surface and subsurface ownership of project lands and permitting requirements. The Service has retained subsurface ownership of some lands on the refuge where surface ownership has been conveyed to Native corporations. A permit from the Service would be required to obtain materials from such lands.

We look forward to further working with you on the proposed action. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact project biologist Gary Wheeler at (907) 271-2780, email: gary_wheeler@fws.gov, or for issues dealing with threatened or endangered species, Arthur Davenport at (907) 271-2781, e-mail: arthur_davenport@fws.gov.

Sincerely,


Acting
for
Ann G. Rappoport
Field Supervisor

cc: Yukon Delta NWR
Realty
ADFG - Wayne Dolezal
NMFS