



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Alaska District

# Public Notice of Application for Permit

ANCHORAGE  
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<b>PUBLIC NOTICE DATE:</b>	<b>May 3, 2016</b>
<b>EXPIRATION DATE:</b>	<b>June 6, 2016</b>
<b>REFERENCE NUMBER:</b>	<b>POA-1992-439</b>
<b>WATERWAY:</b>	<b>Norton Sound</b>

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

Comments on the described work, with the reference number, should reach this office no later than the expiration date of this Public Notice to become part of the record and be considered in the decision. Please contact Jeremy Grauf at (907) 753-2798, toll free from within Alaska at (800) 478-2712, by fax at (907) 753-5567, or by email at [Jeremy.Grauf@usace.army.mil](mailto:Jeremy.Grauf@usace.army.mil) if further information is desired concerning this notice.

**APPLICANT:** Brett Nelson, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF), [brett.nelson@alaska.gov](mailto:brett.nelson@alaska.gov)

**AGENT:** Emily Creely, DOWL, [ecreely@dowl.com](mailto:ecreely@dowl.com)

**LOCATION:** The project site is located at the St. Michael Airport, which is approximately two miles west of the community of St. Michael, Alaska, at Latitude 63.487° N., Longitude 162.114° W.

**PURPOSE:** The applicant's stated purpose is to upgrade the runway, taxiway, apron and safety areas to meet current Federal Aviation Administration safety guidelines for the aircraft using the airport. Additional improvements needed at the airport to enhance safety and accessibility include expansion of the apron operational surface and aviation support area, and repair and realignment of the existing airport access road.

**PROPOSED WORK:** The proposed work would expand the St. Michael Airport by placing approximately 140,000 cubic yards of fill material into approximately 10.98 acres of tundra palustrine wetlands. The proposed project would use fill material from the Halfway Mountain material site, which is approximately three miles to the Northwest of the airport. The proposed project would be performed in accordance with the enclosed plan (sheets 1-8), dated April 20, 2016.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** The construction of the St. Michael Airport was originally authorized by DA permit POA-1992-439 on October 13, 1993.

**APPLICANT PROPOSED MITIGATION:** The applicant proposes the following mitigation measures to avoid, minimize, and compensate for impacts to waters of the United States from activities involving discharges of dredged or fill material.

a. Avoidance: The proposed project cannot avoid impacts to wetlands because the land adjacent to the existing St. Michael Airport is exclusively wetlands, and the St. Michael Island is dominated by wetlands.

b. Minimization: The proposed project in 2008 included 24 acres of wetland impacts. During subsequent design development, the wetland impacts were reduced to 10.98 acres. The existing airport and facilities have been maintained in order to avoid the need for a new airport, which because of the dominance of wetlands on the St. Michael Island wetlands would not be able to avoid wetland impacts. Best management practices (BMP) will be used to minimize the impacts during the construction of the proposed expansion. The BMP's include flattening side slopes creating a gradual insulation margin and use of insulation board to reduce permafrost melting, re-seeding of areas temporarily impacted from construction activities using regionally-native seed plant mix, and upsizing the cross drainage culverts to improve and maintain the hydrologic connection of wetlands. The proposed project would also improve instruments providing safe approaches which allows for a minimal expansion of the airport footprint.

c. Compensatory Mitigation: For the 10.98 acres of unavoidable impacts to wetlands DOT&PF proposes permittee-responsible mitigation in the form of reducing road dust impacts to wetlands and water sources adjacent to the 10 mile road between the communities of St. Michael and Stebbins on the St. Michael Island by the placement of a dust palliative. The dust palliative would contain calcium chloride and would potentially last for up to two years. Please refer to the attached mitigation plan for additional information.

**WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION:** A permit for the described work will not be issued until a certification or waiver of certification, as required under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (Public Law 95-217), has been received from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

**CULTURAL RESOURCES:** The latest published version of the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRs) has been consulted for the presence or absence of historic properties, including those listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

There are no listed or eligible properties in the vicinity of the worksite. Consultation of the AHRS constitutes the extent of cultural resource investigations by the District Commander at this time, and he is otherwise unaware of the presence of such resources. This application is being coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Any comments SHPO may have concerning presently unknown archeological or historic data that may be lost or destroyed by work under the requested permit will be considered in our final assessment of the described work.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES:** The project area is within the known or historic range of the spectacle eider (*Somateria fischeri*), Steller's eider (*Polysticta stelleri*), and polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*).

We have determined the described activity may affect the spectacle eider, Steller's eider, and polar bear. We will initiate the appropriate consultation procedures under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Any comments they may have concerning endangered or threatened wildlife or plants or their critical habitat will be considered in our final assessment of the described work.

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

No EFH species are known to use the project area.

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

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

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

**EVALUATION:** The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity and its intended use on the public interest. Evaluation of the probable impacts, which the proposed activity may



have on the public interest, requires a careful weighing of all the factors that become relevant in each particular case. The benefits, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. The outcome of the general balancing process would determine whether to authorize a proposal, and if so, the conditions under which it will be allowed to occur. The decision should reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. All factors, which may be relevant to the proposal, must be considered including the cumulative effects thereof. Among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shore erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. For activities involving 404 discharges, a permit will be denied if the discharge that would be authorized by such permit would not comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's 404(b)(1) guidelines. Subject to the preceding sentence and any other applicable guidelines or criteria (see Sections 320.2 and 320.3), a permit will be granted unless the District Commander determines that it would be contrary to the public interest.

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

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

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

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

District Commander  
U.S. Army, Corps of Engineers

Enclosures

# STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION  
DIVISION OF WATER  
401 Certification Program  
Non-Point Source Water Pollution Control Program

## **ANCHORAGE**

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WQM/401 CERTIFICATION  
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## **NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR STATE WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION**

Any applicant for a federal license or permit to conduct an activity that might result in a discharge into navigable waters, in accordance with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (PL95-217), also must apply for and obtain certification from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation that the discharge will comply with the Clean Water Act, the Alaska Water Quality Standards, and other applicable State laws. By agreement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Environmental Conservation, application for a Department of the Army permit to discharge dredged or fill material into navigable waters under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act also may serve as application for State Water Quality Certification.

Notice is hereby given that the application for a Department of the Army Permit described in the Corps of Engineers' Public Notice No. POA-1992-439, Norton Sound, serves as application for State Water Quality Certification from the Department of Environmental Conservation.

After reviewing the application, the Department may certify there is reasonable assurance the activity, and any discharge that might result, will comply with the Clean Water Act, the Alaska Water Quality Standards, and other applicable State laws. The Department also may deny or waive certification.

Any person desiring to comment on the project, with respect to Water Quality Certification, may submit written comments to the address above by the expiration date of the Corps of Engineer's Public Notice.

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**PERMITTEE-RESPONSIBLE MITIGATION PLAN  
ST. MICHAEL AIRPORT**

April 2016

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) proposes to rehabilitate and repair the St. Michael Airport to meet safety and capacity guidelines by widening the runway safety area, taxiway safety area, and taxiway.

The project will occur in the Norton Sound watershed, and is expected to permanently impact 10.98 acres of wetlands. Mitigation is a sequential process of avoidance, minimization, and compensation. Compensatory mitigation is not considered until after all appropriate and practicable steps have been taken to first avoid and then minimize adverse impacts to the aquatic ecosystem.

In order to meet FAA Safety guidelines and current service needs, a complete avoidance of wetlands is not feasible due to the fact that the project consists of improvements to an existing facility, which is surrounded on all sides by wetlands.

## **2.0 AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION MEASURES**

Key avoidance measures include:

- The project proposed in 2008 identified 24 acres of wetland impacts. During subsequent design development, several modifications reduced impacts from 24 acres to approximately 11 acres.
  - The proposed apron expansion to the south was deleted from the project and a smaller expansion to the east was added.
  - The required buffer area for temporary impacts has been greatly reduced. Current erosion and sediment control practices should keep temporary impacts to within 10' of the slope, allowing a temporary reduced impact area.
- This project maintains existing facilities through key improvements, thereby preventing more wetland impacts in the future by avoiding the need for a new airport
  - Rehabilitating the existing runway avoids impacts off runway to the maximum extent possible.
  - Flattening the side slopes and improving the thermal insulation at the edges of the runway will help extend the life of the existing runway surface in its present location.
- A new material site in wetlands will be avoided as material will be sourced from an existing site that is located within uplands.

Key minimization measures include:

- Flattening the side slopes will minimize permafrost degradation adjacent to the runway by creating a gradual insulating margin to heal the areas where permafrost has melted under the weight of the pad.
- Insulation board will be used and the thermal benefit of this material compensates for additional material, thereby reducing the project footprint.
- Widening the existing runway safety area, to accommodate the planes now using the runway, minimizes the impacts to the adjoining wetlands.
- Improving the instruments providing safe approaches and lighting will allow for the airport to function at a higher safety level with minimal expansion of the airport footprint in wetlands.
- A 10-foot buffer zone around the area of permanent wetland impacts facilitates construction machinery and activity. These impacts are temporary as once construction is completed, wetlands within the buffer zone will be re-seeded. No permanent effects to the hydrology or soils of the wetlands are anticipated. All re-seeding will be completed with a regionally-native seed plant mix provided by Palmer Plant Material Center.
- Cross-drainage culverts will be upsized to both improve and maintain the hydrologic connection of wetlands and concave features adjacent to the existing airport facilities.

### **3.0 COMPENSATORY MITIGATION**

Permanent wetland impacts total 10.98 acres (Figure 3). Of these, 1.61 acres (14%) are impacts to moderate-to-high valued wetlands and 9.37 acres (86%) are in low-to-moderate valued wetlands. Using compensatory mitigation ratios (described further in Section 3.5), a total of 17.4 credits are needed to adequately compensate for wetland impacts.

Avoidance and minimization measures, as described in Section 2 are extensive, including avoidance of 13 acres from design changes that resulted in permanent impacts decreasing from 24 acres to approximately 11 acres. DOT&PF proposes that 10 credits be reduced from the total for these measures, leaving 7.4 debits remaining to be compensated for.

DOT&PF proposes permittee-responsible mitigation (per 40 CFR Part 230.94(c) in the form of reducing dust impacts to wetlands and water sources adjacent the road between the communities of St. Michael and Stebbins. The following sections provide the mitigation plan components required by the USACE General Compensatory Mitigation Requirements (CFR 332).

#### **3.1 Objectives § 332.4(c)(2)**

The objective of the mitigation is to provide off-site mitigation to compensate for impacts to 10.98 acres of wetlands by mitigating road dust impact on wetlands adjacent to the nearly 10-



mile long gravel road between St. Michael and Stebbins. According to the EPA, road dust consists mainly of coarse particles that become airborne by tire friction that in some cases may be contaminated with man-made and naturally-occurring pollutants. This dust becomes airborne during dry and windy conditions, particularly when the dust is disturbed by four wheelers and other vehicles. Dust along the road that connects St. Michael to Stebbins is so problematic during summer months that residents have to space out their travel on ATVs. If not, dust can affect riders' ability to see or breath.

The proposed dust palliative would reduce loss of fine grain surfacing materials, and thereby protect adjacent wetlands and Clear Lake, the water source for the community of St. Michael.

The following methods are proposed:

- A truck would apply calcium chloride on the road between St. Michael and Stebbins. Application would consist of one pound of dry compound per square yard and approximately 7 tons per mile is anticipated, for a total of 70 tons for the 10-mile long road. The road would be wetted prior to application.
- The calcium chloride will minimize dust for up to two years.
- The contractor would be responsible for obtaining a water use permit from DNR.

### **3.2 Site Selection § 332.4(c)(3)**

The selected mitigation area occurs within the same watershed as project impacts.

### **3.3 Site Protection Instrument §332.4(c)(4)**

As the road is owned and maintained by a shared agreement between St. Michael's and Stebbins, no additional protection instrument will be provided after the dust palliative is applied and accepted by DOT&PF.

### **3.4 Baseline Information §332.4(c)(5)**

No formal documentation has been collected, however on-site observations and local comments indicate the road is often very dusty, at times limiting visibility and transporting dust off of the road onto adjacent wetlands.

### **3.5 Determination of Credits §332.4(c)(6)**

Permanent impacts were initially 24 acres and have been reduced to 10.98 acres, with 1.61 acres in moderate-to-high valued wetlands and 9.37 acres in low-to-moderate valued wetlands.

Using compensatory mitigation ratios, as previously determined within USACE guidance (RGL 09-01), the 1.61 acres (2:1) result in the need to provide 3.22 compensatory mitigation credits; the 9.37 acres (1.5:1) result in the need to provide 14.14 compensatory mitigation credits for a total of 17.4 credits.

### **3.6 Mitigation Work Plan §332.4(c)(7)**

DOT&PF proposes to reduce dust impacts to wetlands and water sources adjacent the road between the communities of St. Michael and Stebbins by incorporating a dust palliative into its construction contract for the proposed airport improvements. The application of the dust palliative would occur after most of the earthwork for the project is completed so that the palliative is not damaged by the project's heavy truck traffic. Applying the palliative after the project's heavy truck traffic is completed will ensure the effects will last longer, which could potentially total two years. Prior to the dust palliative application, the DOT&PF's contractor will be required to provide dust control for roads used during the project.

### **3.7 Maintenance Plan §332.4(c)(8)**

No maintenance plan will be implemented by the DOT&PF assuming a successful application of dust palliative.

### **3.8 Performance Standards §332.4(c)(9)**

The contractor will be required to apply the dust palliative in accordance with the construction contract. This contract will include plans showing the location of dust palliative to be applied and a specification prescribing application standards. The road will be moistened before and after application of the dry calcium chloride and the application rate will be one pound of dry form equivalent per square yard of roadway.

### **3.9 Monitoring Requirements §332.4(c)(10)**

No ongoing/long term monitoring will be implemented.

**3.10 Long-term Management Plan §332.4(c)(11)**

The road is not owned or maintained DOT&PF and therefore, long-term management by DOT&PF is not feasible.

**3.11 Adaptive Management Plan §332.4(c)(12)**

Not applicable.

**3.12 Financial Assurances §332.4(c)(13)**

Authorization will be obtained by the City of St. Michael & the City of Stebbins prior to dust palliative application. The State is a self-insured entity and the work will be performed by a bonded contractor