Environmental Resources Section

Public Notice

Alaska District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Date JAN 13 2014 Identification No. ER 14-03
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 action:

Removal Action
Petroleum-Contaminated Soil
Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline (F10AK1016-04,06)
Multiple Sites, Alaska
Formerly Used Defense Sites Program

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

The comment period will close 30 days from the date of this notice. Written comments received on or before this date will become part of the official record. The FONSI will be signed upon review of comments received and resolution of significant concerns. Please submit comments regarding the proposed action to the following address:

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

Please contact Mr. Christopher Floyd of the Environmental Resources Section at (907) 753-2700 if you have any questions about the proposed action. Comments or requests for additional information may also be submitted electronically to the email address: Christopher.B.Floyd@usace.army.mil.

Michael R. Salyer
Chief, Environmental Resources Section

US Army Corps of Engineers
Alaska District

Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

Removal Action
Petroleum-Contaminated Soil

Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline (F10AK1016-04,-06)
Multiple Sites, Alaska

Formerly Used Defense Sites Program

January 2014

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:

Removal Action
Petroleum-Contaminated Soil
Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline
Multiple Sites, Alaska (F10AK1016-04,-6)
Formerly Used Defense Sites Program

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 proposed removal actions.

_____ _____

Christopher D. Lestochi Date
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander

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) to address, under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the excavation of petroleum-contaminated soils and other ground-disturbing activities to be performed along the route of the former Haines-to-Fairbanks military fuel pipeline within 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. 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 soils contaminated only with petroleum, which falls outside the purview of CERCLA.

1.2 Site Description and History

The Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline extends 626 miles from Haines, Alaska, through the Canadian provinces of British Columbia and the Yukon Territory, through Tok, Alaska, and on to Fairbanks, Alaska. The pipeline route generally parallels the Haines Highway from Haines, Alaska, to Haines Junction, Yukon Territory, follows the Alaska and Richardson Highways to Delta Junction, Alaska, and continues along the Richardson Highway to Fort Wainwright, Alaska (FES 2012; CEMML 2003).

The U.S. military constructed the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline in 1953 and 1954 to transport fuels from the protected ice-free port at Haines in Southeast Alaska to the military installations in Interior Alaska. Much of the 8-inch-diameter pipeline was laid on the ground surface, although approximately 96 miles of the pipeline near Delta Junction, Alaska, and most of the 42 miles of Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline between the Haines Fuel Terminal and the Canadian border were buried. Other portions of the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline were also buried; however, these intervals were small and intermittent (FES 2012; CEMML 2003).

Originally, the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline was constructed with five pump stations; they were located at Haines and Tok, Alaska, and Border, Haines-Junction, and Donjek in Yukon Territory, Canada. Bulk fuel storage facilities were also constructed at Haines and Tok, Alaska. Six new pump stations were added to the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline in 1962 in response to increased military fuel demands. The new pump stations were located at Blanchard River, Destruction Bay, and Beaver Creek in Yukon Territory, Canada, and at Lakeview, Sears Creek, and Timber, Alaska (FES 2012; CEMML 2003).

The Haines-to-Tok section of the pipeline was shut down in July 1971. In 1973, the Tok-to-Eielson section of the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline was deactivated. The bulk fuel storage facilities in Haines and Tok, Alaska, continued to operate until 1979, when the U.S. Army closed the Tok fuel storage facility. The Tok-to-Fairbanks section of the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline was briefly reactivated to pump the remaining fuel from the station. All of the fuel was removed from the Tok terminal in July 1979, and the pipeline was shut down. Only the Eielson-to-Fairbanks portion of the pipeline remains operational today. Most of the unused pipeline has been removed or salvaged by nonmilitary entities (FES 2012; CEMML 2003).

The Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline was plagued with leaks from corrosion, ice damage, and vandalism (e.g., bullet holes) throughout its operational history. Underground portions of the pipeline experienced damage from broken welds and at least one accidental breach from borehole drilling. Releases of fuel from the pipeline also occurred during maintenance or operational mishaps at gate valves, scraper traps, and other control structures along the pipeline (FES 2012).

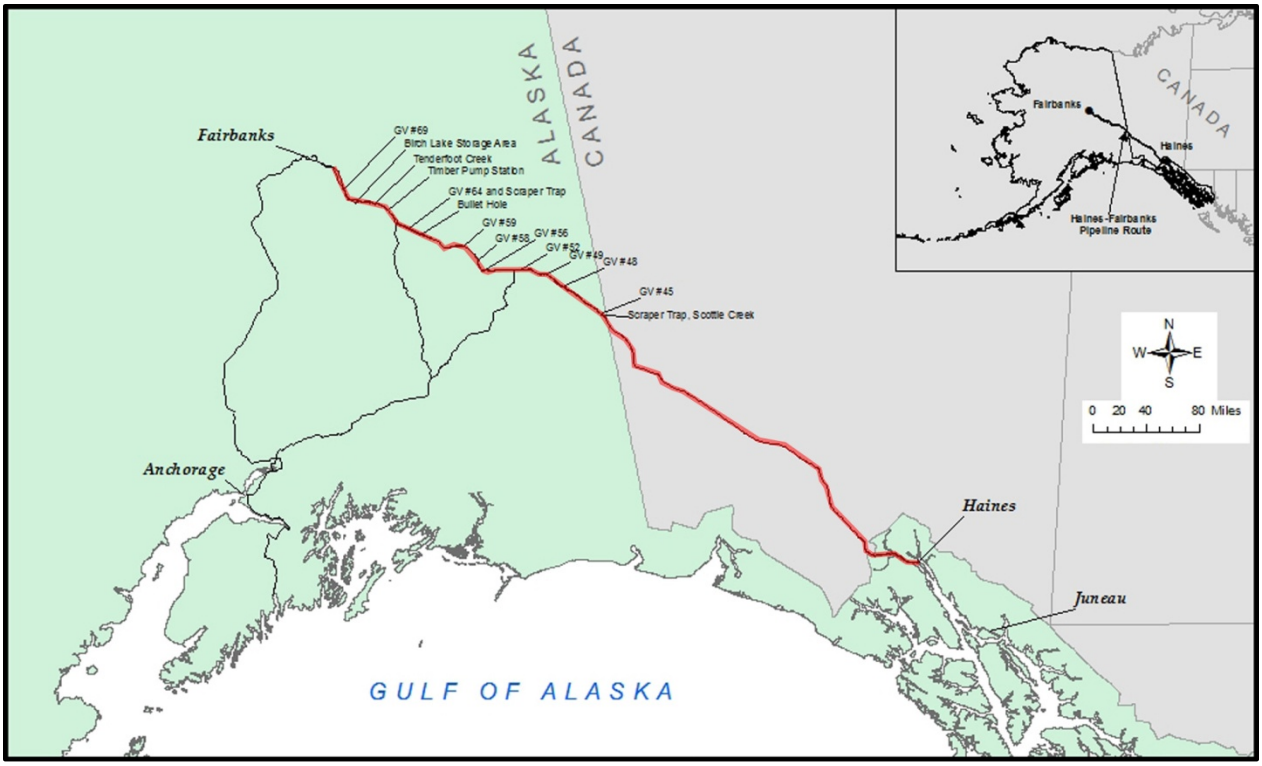

Figure 1. Overall route of the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline.

1.3 Need for Action

The Corps has investigated 43 reported and potential release sites along U.S. portions of the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline and assessed contaminant concentrations at many of these locations. The Corps has received authorization for closure (i.e., no further action required) at 27 of these sites from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). Eleven sites require further investigation and delineation of contamination before a remedial action can be planned, and at four sites, the landowner has not granted the Corps a right-of-entry to perform investigations or cleanup work. The Corps has identified three sites at which remedial action is required and for which adequate data currently exists to proceed with a remedial action: Gate Valves 45,48, and 49 (figure 2).

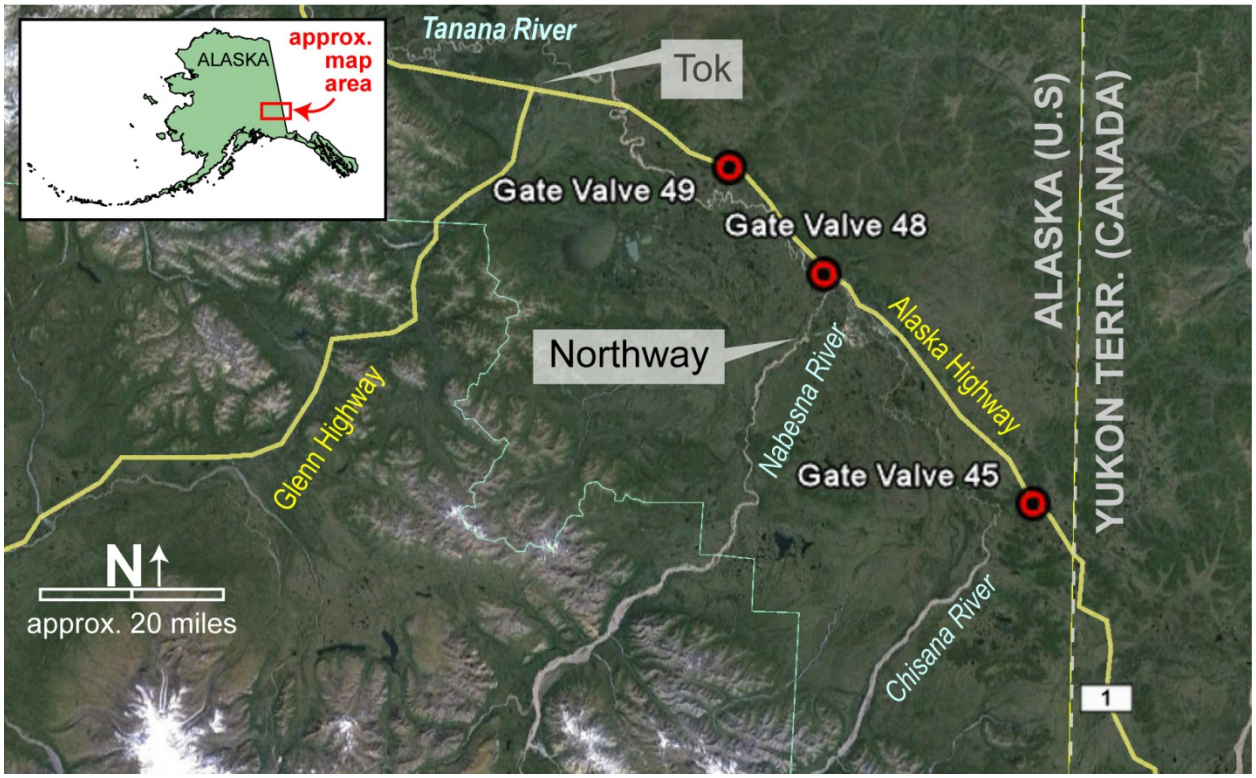

Figure 2. Locations of Gate Valves 45, 48, and 49 along the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline.

- **Gate Valve 45**
  62.6993N, 141.1404W

A gate valve and bleeder valve are located at Pipeline Milepost (PMP) 347 or Alaska Highway Milepost (AHMP) 1230.3, about 8 miles from the border with Canada (figures 3 and 4). The bleeder valve is 50 feet south of the gate valve location. Both the gate valve and bleeder valve are in boggy, ponded areas with a thick growth of black spruce. A 2011 investigation found the site underlain by permafrost at depths varying from 1 to 30 feet below ground surface (FES 2012). No documented releases are associated with Gate Valve 45, although 2007, 2008 and

2011 investigations found subsurface soil fuel contamination (CH2MHill 2008, USACE 2010, FES 2012). The landowner is the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT-PF).

Figure 3. Location and vicinity of Gate Valve 45 site.

Figure 4. 2011 photograph of Gate Valve 45 site with concrete vault (FES 2012).

- **Gate Valve 48**
  63.0622N, 141.9072W

Gate Valve 48 is located at PMP 383/AHMP 1270, and about 150 feet from the Tanana River (figure 5). The pipeline, valve, and concrete vault have been removed from the former Gate Valve 48 location (CH2MHill 2008). Twenty cubic yards of fuel-contaminated soil were excavated from this site in 2007 (CH2MHill 2008), but the Corps' 2008 Rapid Optical Screening Tool (ROST) investigation indicated subsurface fuel contamination remained at the site (USACE 2010). A bleeder valve is located about 100 feet to the southeast of the gate valve, but the 2008 ROST investigation did not find contamination at that location (USACE 2010). The landowner is Northway Natives, Inc.

Figure 5. Location and vicinity of Gate Valve 48 site.

- **Gate Valve 49**
  63.2286N, 142.2594W

Gate Valve 49 is located at PMP 399.5/AHMP 1288, approximately one-half mile north of Midway Lake (figure 6). The partially buried gate valve and vault are on a moderately sloping, south facing hillside, approximately 100-feet northwest of the Alaska Highway. The pipeline is underground near the valve pit although a section of pipe is aboveground down slope of the valve pit. The pipeline route runs southeast from the gate valve, crossing the Alaska Highway and continuing along the east side of Midway Lake until rejoining the Alaska Highway. The vault lids are missing from the vault (FES 2012). There is a drainage ditch running along the north side that slopes towards the northeast. There is no surface water other than seasonal runoff within the drainage ditch. The site is within boreal forest with a mixture of white and black spruce and aspen. The pipeline corridor itself is clear of trees and brush. No documented releases are associated with the valve, although fuel contamination has been confirmed in subsurface soil near the valve vault and down gradient towards the Alaska Highway. The landowner is the State of Alaska DOT-PF.

Figure 6. Gate Valve 49 location and vicinity.

Subsequent removal actions are likely to occur at several other Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline sites in the future. These removal actions are expected to be similar to those described in this EA in terms of their scope, the surrounding environment (previously impacted land adjacent or in proximity to a major roadway), and the remedy pursued (excavation, transport, and treatment of fuel-contaminated soil). This EA is intended to serve as the NEPA document for those future similar removal actions along the Interior Alaska portion of the HFP between the Canadian border and Fairbanks if the Corps determines that to be appropriate after consideration of the particular sites, their surrounding environment, and the selected remedy. Coordination with resource agencies would be renewed for each future removal action and documented in a Record of Environmental Consideration (REC).

2.0 ALTERNATIVES

2.1 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, under the no-action alternative, the contaminated soil would remain in place. This would potentially allow the migration of chemical contaminants to nearby wetlands and subsistence areas and limit the use of the area by the community.

2.2 Removal Action Alternative

Excavation of contaminated soil is the only action alternative presented in this EA. The Corps' extensive experience with environmental cleanup projects in Alaska has shown that *in situ* remediation or natural attenuation strategies tend not to be practicable or economically feasible at small, remote contaminated sites due to cold temperatures and the high costs of maintenance and monitoring. In such situations, direct removal and treatment of contaminated soil is generally the fastest, surest, and most economical means of eliminating or reducing the environmental contamination.

2.3 Preferred Alternative

The action alternative of excavation and removal of the contaminated soil is the preferred alternative.

2.4 Construction Considerations and Minimization of Environmental Impacts

At each site, an excavator or similar equipment would be used to remove contaminated soil from the ground and place it in an adjacent stockpile. The stockpile would have a 10-mil liner and be located at least 100 feet from bodies of surface water. The stockpiled soil would be covered with a 6-mil liner in such a way as to prevent infiltration of precipitation and water runoff. Saturated soils would be allowed to drain, and the liquid would be captured and combined with decontamination water for later processing.

Excavation of the contaminated soil would continue at each site until confirmation samples collected from the floors and sidewalls of the excavation showed that no remaining soil contained contaminant concentrations exceeding State of Alaska cleanup levels. The excavated soil would be loaded into covered trucks and transported to a soil treatment facility (e.g., the OIT facility in North Pole, Alaska). The excavations would be backfilled with clean material from an approved borrow source; the backfill material would not contain muck, frozen material, roots, or sod, and would be tested before use to determine that it was not contaminated.

Contamination at Gate Valve 45 appears to be limited to the area immediately around the valve location based on previous investigations. The site is underlain by permafrost at depths ranging from 13 to 27 feet below ground surface; standing water may be encountered. About 100 cubic yards of contaminated soil would be excavated from this site—an excavation covering roughly 225 square feet and extending a maximum of 16 feet below the surface (North Wind 2013).

Contamination at Gate Valve 48 appears to be located immediately west of the former gate valve. Permafrost is expected at around 5 to 6 feet below the surface, but standing water has not been encountered at this site previously. An estimated 50 cubic yards of contaminated soil would be excavated from this site—an excavation covering about 100 square feet and extending a maximum of 10 feet below the surface (North Wind 2013).

Contamination at Gate Valve 49 appears to be located in the immediate vicinity of the gate valve, continuing down slope (generally east-southeast) towards the highway and the shallow ditch that parallels the highway. Permafrost may be encountered at this site beginning at depths of 13 to15 feet below the surface. There is an 8 to 10-foot-deep V-shaped ditch where the contamination meets the base of the highway. The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) requires that excavation activities not enter the road prism and that the slope of the excavation that goes below the base of the highway be maintained at a 1.5:1 ratio at the embankment hinge point. Additionally, the work area is constrained by the presence of the ditch and the proximity of trees. These elements would be taken into account during the staging of equipment and material for this site. The contractor would prepare a traffic control plan for work at this site due to its proximity to the highway. An estimated 200 cubic yards of contaminated soil would be excavated from this site— an excavation covering about 2,400 square feet and extending a maximum of about 11 feet below the surface (North Wind 2013).

Vegetated areas that are disturbed due to the contaminated soil removal activities would be seeded in accordance with the Revegetation Manual for Alaska (Wright 2008).

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Community and People

The Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline runs through or near several relatively small Interior Alaska communities, including Northway, Tok, Tanacross, Tetlin, Dot Lake, and Delta Junction. Northway, Tetlin, and Tanacross are predominantly Alaska Native communities and rely heavily on subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering.

3.2 Current Land Use

The principle current use of the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline corridor is as a utilities route and an informal roadway for all-terrain vehicles and snow-machines. The corridor may provide access

to hunting areas, although generally it is not far from the highway (USACE 2007). Because of its proximity to the highway, much of the pipeline corridor, including Gate Valves 45 and 49, is within the Alaska Department of Transportation right-of-way. Elsewhere, the corridor frequently runs through Native allotments or land owned by Native village corporations; Gate Valve 48 is on property belonging to the Northway Natives Incorporated.

3.3 Climate

The sites are located in Interior Alaska's continental climate zone. In winter, ice fog, and smoke conditions are common. The average low temperature in the area in January is -32 °F, and the average high in July is 72 °F. Extreme temperatures have been recorded from -71°F in winter to 99 °F in summer. Average annual precipitation is 11 inches, with 33 inches of snow (ADCRA 2013).

3.4 Topography, Soils, and Hydrology

Much of the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline route in Interior Alaska follows the Tanana River Valley, a broad swath of relatively low land stretching from the Tanana River headwaters at the confluence of the Nabesna and Chisana Rivers near Northway, Alaska, northwest to the Yukon River. This region is characterized by extensive wetlands, numerous streams, water bodies ranging from tiny ponds to large lakes, and gently rolling hills in more upland areas. Soils are predominantly alluvial deposits of sand and rounded gravel, overlain by a thin layer of silt and fine sand, with peat in some areas.

3.5 Air Quality and Noise

Little information exists on air quality along the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline route, although it is assumed to be generally good due to the relatively low number and density of air pollutant sources along the sparsely populated highway and pipeline corridor. The most likely type of air pollutant to be present would be particulates from dust lofted by off-road vehicles, wildfires, and wood burned for heating. Particulate concentrations from wood smoke may become notably elevated within valleys and other low-elevation areas during the winter.

The major source of noise along the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline route is probably from vehicles using the nearby Alaska or Richardson Highways. All-terrain vehicles, snow-machines, light aircraft, and generators would also contribute to noise levels locally.

3.6 Biological Resources

Upland vegetation is boreal forest consisting primarily of black spruce in wet and poorly drained areas and white spruce on drier sites. Quaking aspen commonly occurs on well-drained, south-facing slopes, and along with paper birch, often occurs in recently burned or disturbed areas. Balsam poplar is common along water courses. As elevation increases, dense spruce gives way to open spruce woodlands mixed with tall shrubs, then dwarf-shrub communities, and finally alpine tundra. Shrubs are most common along streams and water bodies, within recently burned

areas, and along gullies that drain subalpine tundra. The shrub component is primarily willow, alder, and dwarf birch (USFWS 2011).

Large mammals include herbivores such as moose and caribou, and carnivores such as wolves, coyotes, black bears, brown bears, and lynx. Porcupines, beavers, muskrats, hares, and voles are also common (USFWS 2011).

The upper Tanana River Valley is on a major bird migration corridor and has a high diversity of species compared with other Interior Alaska regions. Ducks, geese, swans, and other water birds make heavy use of the rivers, lakes, and wetlands. Bald and golden eagles, ospreys, hawks, and owls are known to breed in the area. Ground birds include spruce grouse, ruffed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and willow ptarmigan. The most common migratory songbirds are slate-colored junco, Swainson's thrush, Wilson's warbler, ruby-crowned kinglet, yellow-rumped warbler, and orange-crowned warbler. Year-round residents include ravens, gray jays, black-billed magpies, black-capped chickadees, boreal chickadees, and redpolls (USFWS 2011).

Arctic grayling, burbot, lake trout, northern pike, and humpback whitefish are present in area lakes and streams. There are no significant salmon runs in the upper Tanana River drainage, but small runs of chum salmon and an occasional king and coho have been recorded (USFWS 2011).

3.7 Wetlands

The project sites have not been individually evaluated for the presence of wetlands, but based on descriptions of standing water at individual sites (section 1.3) and general knowledge of the Tanana River Valley, wetlands are presumed to be present at the project sites. The USFWS National Wetlands Inventory website shows the Tanana River Valley to be a complex mosaic of freshwater emergent and forested wetlands, uplands, and riverine habitat (USFWS 2013a).

3.8 Threatened and Endangered Species

No species listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act are present in Interior Alaska. This area is within the historical range of the wood bison (listed as "endangered"), but no wild populations of this species currently live in Alaska (USFWS 2013b).

3.9 Essential Fish Habitat and Anadromous Streams

The Alaska Department of Fish & Game's (ADFG) Anadromous Waters Catalog (AWC) lists numerous anadromous streams flowing into the upper Tanana River Valley, including the Nabesna, Chisana, Tok, Johnson, and Delta Rivers, and the Tanana River itself. The Tanana River is assigned the AWC number 334-40-11000-2490; along the reach closest to a proposed project site (Gate Valve 48), ADFG reports this river to have chum, coho, and king salmon "present" at Tanana (ADFG 2013).

No marine essential fish habitat (EFH) as designated by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) exists near any of the project sites.

3.10 Cultural and Historic Resources

The major historic property at the pipeline sites is the pipeline itself. The Alaska Historic Resource Survey (AHRS) lists the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline under several different designations according to which U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle a given pipeline location is in. Gate Valve 45 is within the stretch of the pipeline with an AHRS number of NAB-498, while Gate Valves 48 and 49 are within AHRS TNX-156 (AOHA 2013).

The Corps has previously assessed cultural resources at project sites along the pipeline and coordinated its efforts with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). The Corps determined the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as a district or structure in 2007, citing a lack of integrity. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) did not concur, instead stating in a letter dated 26 July 2007, "The Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A ("Event"; the property must make a contribution to the major pattern of American history."). In response to this, the Corps provided a redetermination of eligibility in November 2007, declaring the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline eligible under Criterion A as a discontinuous district with six contributing properties eligible under both Criteria A and C ("Design/Construction"; concerns the distinctive characteristics of the building by its architecture and construction…): the Scottie Creek scraper trap; the scraper trap at Gate Valve 64; Gate Valves 4, 49, and 64; and the Timber Pump Station. This redetermination of eligibility and the supporting report were sent to the SHPO and, pursuant to 36 CFR 800.5(c)(3)(i), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). No response was received from the SHPO or the ACHP. Under the pertinent regulations, a non-response by the SHPO to an agency's determination is the equivalent of a tacit agreement with the agency's findings. Considering this data, the Corps has determined that the Haines-Fairbanks pipeline is presently eligible for the NRHP as a discontinuous district under Criterion A with a period of significance spanning 1955 to 1973 with the six mentioned contributing properties eligible under both Criteria A and C (Salyer & Laughlin 2013).

A 2011 survey of the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline corridor between MP 3.5 and 25.3 for the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) observed that within the 22-mile section, remnants of the buried segments of pipeline retained only integrity of location, and determined the buried segments of pipeline between MP 3.5 and 25.3 not to be eligible as contributing elements of the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline under Criteria A and C. The SHPO concurred with this finding in February 2012 (Salyer & Laughlin 2013).

Gate Valve 45 (NAB-493) is the only one of the three valves under consideration that bears an individual AHRS number. This gate valve lies within a semi-subterranean concrete vault that is fairly intact, but it is missing the standard sheet metal cover. The valve's circular metal handle is

also missing from the valve stem. The other feature associated with the pipeline is a section of pipe with a bleeder valve still intact 50 feet south of the valve and vault. No other cultural resources are known to be in the area. In 2007 Gate Valve 45 was determined ineligible as a contributing component to the Haines-Fairbanks pipeline (Salyer & Laughlin 2013).

Gate Valve 48 is located at Alaska Highway milepost 1270. The concrete vault associated with this valve was found excavated and lying on the surface in 2007, and the concrete has been subsequently removed. The pipe and valve have also been salvaged from the former Gate Valve 48 location. No corridor is evident in the area, and no cultural resources have been identified in the area. In 2007 Gate Valve 48 was determined ineligible as a contributing component to the Haines-Fairbanks pipeline (Salyer & Laughlin 2013).

Gate Valve 49 is located at Alaska Highway milepost 1288. The steel lids are missing from the vault. The pipeline corridor is visible but no pipe was observed in the area. No additional cultural resources are known in the area. Gate Valve 49 was determined eligible in 2007 as a contributing element to the Haines-Fairbanks pipeline (Salyer & Laughlin 2013).

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 would remain in place, which would limit the use of the area by the community and potentially allow the migration of chemical contaminants to nearby wetlands and subsistence areas.

4.2 Preferred Alternative

Under the preferred alternative, contaminated soils would be excavated from the site to the extent practical, and the excavation would be backfilled with clean material. The potential environmental consequences are described below.

4.3 Land Use and Ownership

The planned removal actions may for a brief time (i.e., several days to a week) limit the use of the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline corridor immediately adjacent to a given project site, as an area around the excavation and stockpile would need to be cordoned off for public safety. This would primarily affect the movement of all-terrain vehicles; where practicable, the field crew would leave a path around the work area sufficiently wide to allow the passage of local traffic. Work near the Alaska Highway would be coordinated with the DOT-PF to ensure public and worker safety. The proposed work would take place only on properties with which the Corps has a signed Right-of-Entry with the landowner; the project would have no impact on land ownership.

4.4 Effects on Air Quality and Noise

Air quality may be affected during the project period due to the use of heavy equipment, vehicles, and generators. The Corps believes any poor air quality conditions caused by the project would be transient and highly localized and would dissipate entirely at the end of the project.

The planned activities at the site and the movement of trucks and equipment into and out of the project along local roads would increase the levels of noise in the local area during several weeks of the working season. The remedial activities would be timed to minimize the level of interference with the lives of the local residents.

4.5 Effects on Topography, Soils, and Hydrology

The small areas of excavation would not significantly alter the topography or patterns of overland water flow in the area. The backfilled excavations would be contoured to match the original grade to the extent practical.

4.6 Effects on Biological Resources

The planned activities would be highly localized in their impacts and affect areas already heavily altered by the former military facilities, past cleanup efforts, and current day usage. A small amount of brush may need to be cleared to access specific features. The activities would have little effect on local wildlife and no long-term negative impact on their habitat. The project site is surrounded by large 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.

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 1 May through 15 July should be considered the nesting window for forest- or shrub-nesting birds in Interior Alaska (USFWS 2009). The project activities may overlap this nesting window. One means of avoiding a "taking" of nesting birds under the MBTA would be to perform the necessary brush and tree removal before the start of the nesting window.

4.7 Effects on Wetlands

The backfilling of completed excavations with clean material may constitute a discharge to waters of the United States, if wetlands are present, and be subject to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. However, any such incidental discharge would be authorized under Nationwide Permit No. 38, "Cleanup of Hazardous and Toxic Waste." Best management practices, such as covering soil stockpiles, would be employed as appropriate to limit the migration of sediment from the work site to adjacent wetlands or water bodies.

4.7 Effects on Endangered and Threatened Species

The Corps determines that the planned activities would have no adverse effect on any species listed under the Endangered Species Act or their critical habitat.

4.8 Effects on Essential Fish Habitat and Anadromous Streams

The project would not require crossing or altering any anadromous streams and so would not have any effect on essential fish habitat.

4.9 Effects on Cultural Resources

In 2007 Gate Valve 49 was determined eligible under Criteria A and C of the NHPA as a contributing component to the Haines-Fairbanks pipeline. Removal of this valve would alter the essential physical features that allow the gate valve to convey its historic significance. According to 800.5(a)(2)(i), this constitutes an adverse effect to historic properties. Therefore, following the process outlined in 800.6(a-c), the Corps will construct a draft Memorandum of Agreement for review by the SHPO and all other interested parties prior to the planned remediation (Salyer & Laughlin 2013).

As described in section 3.10, Gate Valves 45 and 48 are not eligible for the National Register; thus, there will be no historic properties affected by removal of the valves and soils. No other historic properties or cultural resources are at the proposed project site that would be affected by the action (Salyer & Laughlin 2013).

4.10 Effects on Coastal Zone Management

The project sites are not within a coastal management zone.

4.11 Effects on Environmental Justice

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 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 local human population.

4.12 Cumulative Effects

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 proposed project would have the ultimate net effect of removing chemical contamination from the environment. 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. Because of the small size of the project areas, the proposed project is unlikely to indirectly contribute to long-term changes in land use and environmental quality by encouraging use of the restored land.

5.0 Permits and Authorizations

This continuing project would require few resource permits or authorizations. The Corps will seek concurrence from the State Historical Preservation Officer on its effects determinations and will pursue a Memorandum of Understanding on adverse effects to Gate Valve 49 with the SHPO and other interested parties prior to any field work. Backfilling of the excavation at one or more of the sites may constitute a discharge to wetlands; however, any such incidental discharge would be authorized by Nationwide Permit No. 38, "Cleanup of Hazardous and Toxic Waste." This EA may be adopted as the NEPA compliance document for future similar actions along the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline; however, the regulatory needs of any such future actions, such as compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act, and Clean Water Act, would be reviewed and evaluated anew for each action.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The continued environmental cleanup efforts along the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline, 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 (FONSI) will be signed by the Corps.

7.0 PREPARERS OF THIS DOCUMENT

This environmental assessment was prepared by Chris Floyd, Erin Laughlin, and Diane Walters of the Environmental Resources Section, with contributions from project manager Beth Astley of the Environmental and Special Programs Branch, Alaska District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

8.0 REFERENCES

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