

Draft Environmental Assessment

Alaska Peninsula and Becharof National Wildlife Refuges Headquarters Complex Improvement Plan

April 2024

Prepared by

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Table of Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	4
PROPOSED ACTION	5
BACKGROUND	6
PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION	8
ALTERNATIVES	9
ALTERNATIVE A – CURRENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES (NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE)	9
ALTERNATIVE B – IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPLEX MASTER PLAN – PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE	10
ALTERNATIVE(S) CONSIDERED, BUT DISMISSED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION	12
AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES	12
PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION	12
NATURAL RESOURCES	14
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE AND AQUATIC SPECIES	14
HABITAT AND VEGETATION	16
THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES, AND OTHER SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES	17
GEOLOGY AND SOILS	19
AIR AND NOISE QUALITY	20
WATER QUALITY	20
FLOODPLAINS	21
WILDERNESS OR OTHER SPECIAL DESIGNATION	22
VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE	23
CULTURAL RESOURCES	24
REFUGE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS	25
ADMINISTRATION	26
SOCIOECONOMICS	27
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE	28
MONITORING	28
SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS	29
ALTERNATIVE A – CURRENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES (NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE)	29
ALTERNATIVE B – IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HEADQUARTERS COMPLEX MASTER PLAN (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	29
LIST OF SOURCES, AGENCIES AND PERSONS CONSULTED	30
LIST OF PREPARERS	30
STATE COORDINATION	30
TRIBAL CONSULTATION	31
PUBLIC OUTREACH	32
DETERMINATION	33

<u>SIGNATURES</u>	<u>33</u>
<u>REFERENCES</u>	<u>35</u>
<u>REFERENCES</u>	<u>35</u>
<u>APPENDIX A- APPLICABLE STATUTES, REGULATIONS, AND EXECUTIVE ORDERS ADDRESSED IN EA</u>	<u>38</u>
<u>APPENDIX B – U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE KING SALMON CAMPUS MASTER PLAN, 2020</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>APPENDIX C - U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE KING SALMON CAMPUS, MASTER PLAN UPDATE, 2021</u>	<u>41</u>
<u>APPENDIX D – MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WITH STATE OF ALASKA HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE</u>	<u>42</u>
<u>APPENDIX E – AGENCY NOTIFICATION LETTER</u>	<u>43</u>
<u>APPENDIX F – TRIBAL COORDINATION LETTER</u>	<u>44</u>

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
ADEC	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
AKEPIC	Alaska Exotic plants Information Clearinghouse
ANILCA	Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act
ARLIS	Alaska Resources Library and Information Services
BMP	Best Management Practices
CCP	Comprehensive Conservation Plan
DOT&PF	Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (Alaska)
EA	Environmental Assessment
KSAS	King Salmon Air Station
KSFO	King Salmon Field Office
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NADP	National Atmospheric Deposition Program
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NWRS	National Wildlife Refuge System
NWRSAA	National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act
OHW	Ordinary High Water
PFAS	Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office (Alaska)
SWPPP	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Environmental Assessment for Alaska Peninsula and Becharof Refuges Headquarters Complex Improvements

Date: April 26, 2024

This Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared to evaluate the effects associated with the proposed action and complies with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1509) and Department of the Interior (43 CFR 46; 516 DM 8) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (550 FW 3) regulations and policies. The National Environmental Policy Act requires examination of the effects of proposed actions on the natural and human environment.

Proposed Action

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is proposing to improve the headquarters complex in King Salmon, Alaska in accordance with the Alaska Peninsula and Becharof Refuges revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2006), King Salmon Administrative Site Facilities Plan (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1997), Design Alaska Master Plan (Design Alaska, Inc., 2020; Appendix B), and the PND Master Plan Update (PND Engineers, Inc, 2021; Appendix C). The headquarters complex, also called the King Salmon campus or administrative site, is located on the Alaska Peninsula 14 miles upriver from Naknek on the bank of the Naknek River. The overall footprint of the complex is approximately 6.3 acres and many of the buildings no longer serve the needs of the refuges due to their poor condition.

The proposed action includes the following:

- Demolition of the existing dock and boat ramp. The newly constructed dock will consist of a sheet pile bulkhead and pile supported gangway gantry. The new boat ramp will be similar to the old ramp. The new dock and ramp will be located upstream of the current site, but still within the headquarters complex.
- Demolish four existing storage buildings and fuel tanks. Construct three replacement buildings and an addition to the existing shop building, and relocate new fuel tanks, creating a more efficient configuration within the complex.
- Demolish existing bunkhouse and replace to a more desirable location within the headquarters complex.
- Construct a new classroom/multi-purpose building and adjoining viewing platform near riverfront.
- Construct covered parking for Service vehicles and equipment.

A proposed action may evolve during the NEPA process as the agency refines its proposal and gathers feedback from the public, tribes, and other agencies. Therefore, the final proposed action may be different from the original. The proposed action will be finalized at the conclusion of the public comment period for the EA.

Background

National wildlife refuges are guided by the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), the purposes of an individual refuge, Service policy, and laws and international treaties. Relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, and selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations and Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

On December 1, 1978, President Jimmy Carter established the 1.2-million-acre Becharof National Wildlife Monument by Proclamation No. 4613. Refuge headquarters were established in King Salmon on September 27, 1979.

The refuges were established pursuant to the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). ANILCA sets out additional purposes for each refuge in Alaska; the primary purposes of the Alaska Peninsula and Becharof Refuges are described in Section 302(1)(B) and Section 302(2)(B) of ANILCA. These purposes include the following (unless otherwise noted, the purposes apply to all units of the Refuges):

- [Alaska Maritime] to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity, marine mammals, marine birds, and other migratory birds, the marine resources upon which they rely, bears, caribou, and other mammals
- [Alaska Peninsula] to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity, including brown bears, the Alaska Peninsula caribou herd, moose, sea otters and other marine mammals, shorebirds and other migratory birds, raptors including bald eagles and peregrine falcons, and salmonids and other fish
- [Becharof] to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity, including brown bears, salmon, migratory birds, the Alaska Peninsula caribou herd, and marine mammals and birds
- to fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats
- to provide, in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in preceding paragraphs, the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents
- [Alaska Maritime] to provide, in a manner consistent with preceding paragraphs, a program of national and international scientific research on marine resources
- to ensure to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in preceding text, water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge
- [Becharof Wilderness Area] to secure an enduring resource of wilderness, to protect and preserve the wilderness character of areas within the National Wilderness Resource Preservation System, and to administer this wilderness for the use and enjoyment of the American people in a way that will leave it unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.

ANILCA also designated 400,000 acres (of the now 503,000 acres) as the Becharof Wilderness Area, to be managed as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. “The Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law 88- 577) created additional purposes for Becharof National Wildlife

Refuge. Section 2(a) of the Wilderness Act states in part that ‘... it is hereby declared to be the intent of Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness ...’ and designated wilderness areas are to be managed ‘... for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness.’

In addition, Section 4(3)(b) of the Wilderness Act provides that each agency administering wilderness areas ‘...shall be responsible for preserving the wilderness character of the area and shall so administer such area for such other purposes for which it may have been established as also to preserve its wilderness character. Except as otherwise noted in this Act, wilderness areas shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use.’ The Refuge’s Wilderness purposes apply to the approximately 503,000 acres of the Congressionally designated Becharof Wilderness.

The mission of the NWRS, as outlined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (NWRSA), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.), is

‘... to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.’

Additionally, the NWRSA mandates the Secretary of the Interior in administering the NWRS (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(4)) to

- Provide for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the NWRS;
- Ensure that the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the NWRS are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans;
- Ensure that the mission of the NWRS described at 16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(2) and the purposes of each refuge are carried out;
- Ensure effective coordination, interaction, and cooperation with owners of land adjoining refuges and the fish and wildlife agency of the states in which the units of the NWRS are located;
- Assist in the maintenance of adequate water quantity and water quality to fulfill the mission of the NWRS and the purposes of each refuge;
- Recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general public uses of the NWRS through which the American public can develop an appreciation for fish and wildlife;
- Ensure that opportunities are provided within the NWRS for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses; and
- Monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge.

Location

The Alaska Peninsula and Becharof Headquarters Complex is in King Salmon, Alaska. In 2019, the population was approximately 361 people. The site is approximately six acres and is located between the King Salmon Airport and the Naknek River. The east side is bordered by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game with private property bordering the west side. Other nearby use is primarily commercial with some seasonal and permanent National Park Service housing.

Site History

The King Salmon complex site was established in 1939 as the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries headquarters. Buildings included in the original complex included the bunkhouse, mess hall, residence, and three cabins. In the 1950's, an office, warehouse, mechanical shop, and storage building were built. In 1957, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) assumed management of the site after the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries was incorporated into the Department of Commerce (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1997).

On December 1, 1978, the Becharof National Wildlife Monument was established with the headquarters located in King Salmon a year later. The residence was leased from the NMFS and functioned as the headquarters building. On December 2, 1980, ANILCA established the Alaska Peninsula and Becharof National Wildlife Refuges and, in 1981, the joint headquarters for the two refuges was established on the site. In 1983, the two refuges were administratively named a complex. Management of the King Salmon Administrative Site was transferred from the Department of Commerce to the Department of the Interior on April 5, 1988, (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1997).

A Section 106 review under the National Historical Preservation Act (NHPA) was completed in September 2023 with the completion of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Alaska State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO). Approximately half of the headquarters complex is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. The opinion of the SHPO is that any further demolition of contributing buildings will degrade the integrity of the site so it will no longer be eligible. Contributing buildings include two of the three large storage buildings and the bunkhouse.

The SHPO and the Service agreed on mitigation actions, the details of which can be viewed in the MOA. The mitigations measures include:

1. Develop an Interpretive Panel for the King Salmon Headquarters and a traveling display.
2. Compile an archive of existing documentation on the King Salmon Field Office.

Purpose and Need for the Action

The purpose of this proposed action is to improve the headquarters complex in King Salmon, Alaska in accordance with the following goal from the Refuges' Comprehensive Conservation Plan (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2006):

Goal 10: Provide and maintain the facilities and equipment necessary to ensure a safe and secure environment for the visiting public and Service personnel.

The need for this proposed action is to address the poor condition of the existing buildings, protect Refuge property (dock and vehicles) from future damage, and resolve a community need for a classroom and viewing platform.

- Dock and Boat Ramp - The existing dock and boat ramp are old and in poor condition. The dock bulkhead is inadequate to resist the forces of river current on the floating dock in the summer and ice in the winter, and has been deformed as a result, compromising the structural integrity. The master plan analysis recommended relocating the dock further upstream, away from an advancing shoal in the river. The boat ramp may need to be moved for similar reasons to keep the ramp near the dock. Co-locating the dock and boat ramp is beneficial because the dock is used to place and remove the floating dock sections in spring and fall.
- Storage Buildings: Facilities are old, in poor condition and do not meet current needs. The proposed work would also include a rehab and small expansion of the existing shop building, which is poorly designed and includes numerous other deficiencies.
- Bunkhouse: The existing bunkhouse is old and in such poor condition that it has not been usable for over a decade.
- Covered Parking Canopy - Harsh Alaska winters take a toll on the condition of vehicles and heavy equipment if parked in an unprotected area. This covered parking (with partial sides) would protect vehicles and equipment and prolong its useful life.
- Classroom/Viewing Platform: A need has been identified by a group of community partners for improved visitor infrastructure in King Salmon, including a classroom building and viewing platform on the Naknek River.
 - Construction of these facilities is supported by multiple local partners as part of a larger plan for the core of King Salmon.
 - The FWS riverfront is one of a very few places within walking distance of airport/downtown where these facilities could be placed on public land. Of those sites, this one is preferable based on proximity and the fact that the site is already cleared.

Alternatives

The alternatives were considered and based on addressing the purpose and need of the Proposed Action in accordance with NEPA (40 CFR 1502.14). This chapter provides a description of the considered alternatives.

Alternative A – Current Management Strategies (No Action Alternative)

Under the No Action Alternative, the Refuge headquarters complex would remain unchanged (Figure 1). Refuge facilities that have reached the end of their useful life (in red) would not be demolished and replaced with functional equivalents and no new facilities would be constructed. Refuge operations would be continued out of the existing buildings for as long as they were deemed safe. Decreases in operational capacity and management capability would result from decreasing facility availability and functionality.

Many of the buildings would have to undergo major renovations to meet Refuge needs, improve functionality, and address safety concerns. Estimates for these repairs were not calculated but

costs would be substantial given the age of the structures (60+ years) and the need to address seismic stability concerns.

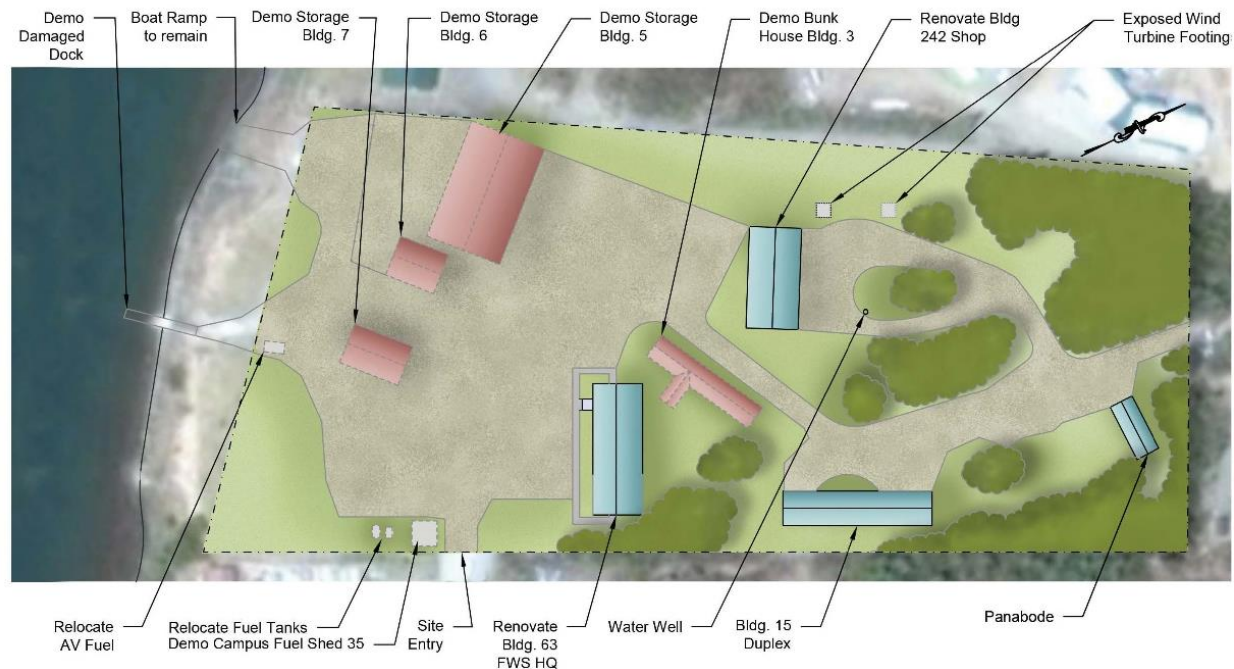


Figure 1. Existing headquarters complex layout.

Alternative B – Implementation of the Complex Master Plan – Preferred Alternative

Under the Preferred Alternative, facilities that have reached the end of their useful life would be demolished and replaced with functional equivalents as indicated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) King Salmon Campus Master Plan (Design Alaska, Inc., 2020) and the King Salmon Campus Master Plan update (PND Engineers, Inc, 2021). Many of these buildings were recommended for replacement in the 2006 revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and associated Environmental Impact Statement (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2006). The Headquarters Complex Master Plan also includes the construction of a new dock, classroom/conference building, covered parking areas, a bunkhouse, new fuel tanks, additional parking, and an addition to the existing maintenance building (Figure 2; Design Alaska, Inc., 2020, PND Engineers, Inc, 2021). Facilities would be located to maximize usefulness and minimize site disturbance.

Specific actions include:

- o Demolish and replace existing dock and boat ramp at a location within the headquarters compound. Prospective locations may entail construction at a site upstream of the current location.

- o Demolish four existing storage buildings and fuel tanks. Construct three replacement buildings and an addition to the existing shop building, and relocate new fuel tanks, creating a more efficient configuration within the complex.
- o Demolish existing bunkhouse and replace at a more desirable location within the headquarters complex.
- o Construct new classroom/multi-purpose building and adjoining viewing platform near riverfront.
- o Construct covered parking for vehicles and heavy equipment.

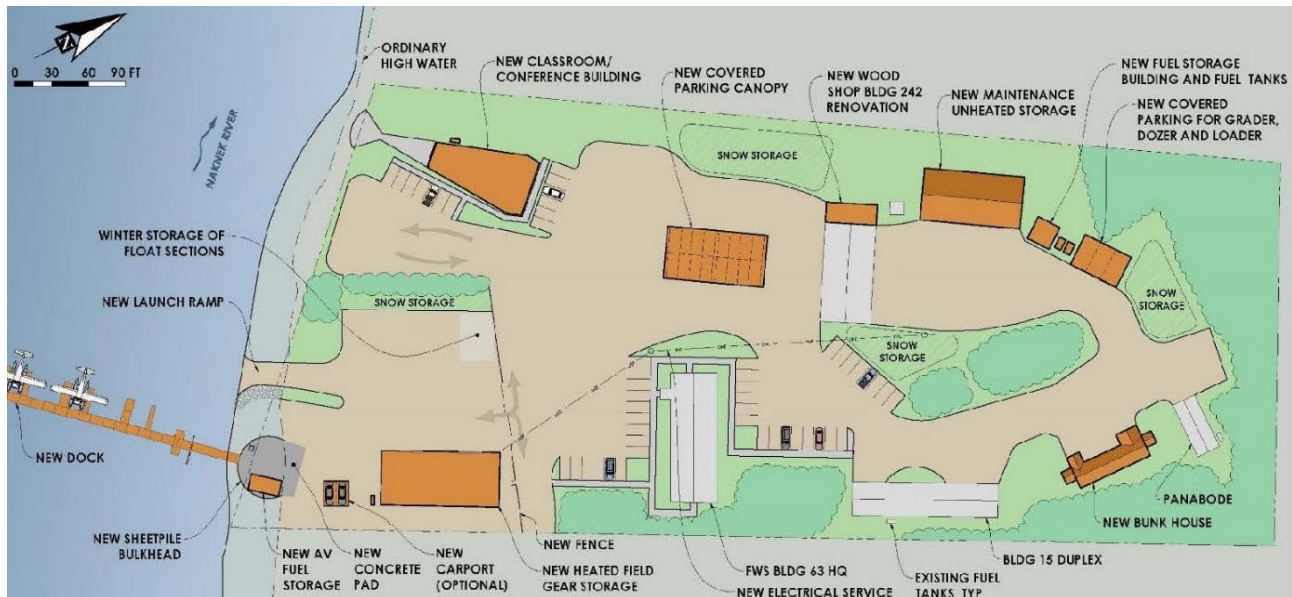


Figure 2. Proposed layout of the headquarters complex (PND Engineers, Inc, 2021).

Activities would be confined to the headquarters complex in King Salmon. Demolition and construction would occur as funding allows, take place primarily in the April – October season, and would occur over several years. The building placement and design would follow the recommendations in the revised Compound Master Plan (PND Engineers, Inc, 2021).

Demolition would be accomplished with heavy machinery and demolition debris would be disposed of at a waste site authorized to handle the types of material removed. Site preparation would be conducted in accordance with a grading plan developed for the entire compound.

Best management practices (BMP) would be implemented during both the demolition and construction phases. Required environmental contamination control plans would be implemented to comply with any applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

This alternative fulfills the Service’s mandate under the NWRSA. The Service has determined that the actions described in the Campus Master Plan (PND Engineers, Inc, 2021; Alternative B) are compatible with the purposes of Alaska Peninsula and Becharof Refuges and the mission of the NWR.

Alternative(s) Considered, But Dismissed from Further Consideration

An additional alternative was considered but eliminated from further analysis. This alternative involved replacing the construction of new storage facilities with locally leased storage in the private sector or from the United States Air Force at the King Salmon Air Base.

Private sector storage of sufficient size was not available to meet the storage needs of the Refuge.

As the location is off-site, leasing of storage facilities at the King Salmon Air Base would increase field preparation and maintenance project time. Additionally, this leased space would not be reliable in the long-term. Leased space from this facility allows the Air Force to evict any tenant within 30 days as need allows. This storage option does not meet the long-term storage needs of the Refuge.

Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

This section is organized by affected resource categories and for each affected resource discusses both (1) the existing environmental and socioeconomic baseline in the action area for each resource and (2) the effects and impacts of the proposed action and any alternatives on each resource. The effects and impacts of the proposed action considered here are changes to the human environment, whether adverse or beneficial, that are reasonably foreseeable and have a reasonably close causal relationship to the proposed action or alternatives. This EA includes the written analyses of the environmental consequences on a resource only when the impacts on that resource could be more than negligible and therefore considered an “affected resource.” Any resources that will not be more than negligibly impacted by the action have been dismissed from further analyses.

The refuge consists of approximately 6500 square miles in Lake and Peninsula, Aleutians East, and Kodiak Island Boroughs in Southwest Alaska.

Alaska Peninsula and Becharof Refuges are comprised primarily of the Bristol Bay lowlands, several large freshwater lakes, subarctic tundra, coastal mountains, and Pacific coastal meadows.

For more information regarding the general characteristics of the refuge’s environment, please see Section 1.5 of the Refuges’ Comprehensive Conservation Plan (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2006).

Project Area Description

The headquarters complex borders the Naknek River. The Naknek River is classified as a tidal influenced, permanently flooded riverine habitat according to the National Wetlands Inventory (USFWS National Wetlands Inventory, 2021). No other wetlands are documented within the project area.

Small and fragmented areas of spruce and alder occur on the margins of the project area and would be minimally impacted by the proposed action. Other vegetated areas within the headquarters complex are a mix of native and introduced species, primarily managed lawn.

The remaining area is occupied by existing facilities and associated gravel roads and parking.

Use of the surrounding area is primarily commercial in nature with airport operations dominating. The project area is located between the King Salmon Airport and the Naknek River which has high floatplane traffic. This entire area is within controlled air space managed by the air traffic controllers at King Salmon Tower. Aircraft operations in this zone averaged 26,554 per year for the 2014 – 2019 period (Federal Aviation Administration, 2021). Aircraft operations were down significantly (19,932) in 2020 because of COVID-19 related travel restrictions (Figure 3).

Table 1. King Salmon Airport aircraft operations by year and operational type (Federal Aviation Administration, 2021).

Calendar Year	Itinerant					Local			Total Operations
	Air Carrier	Air Taxi	General Aviation	Military	Total	Civil	Military	Total	
2014	686	18,528	5,708	231	25,153	640	607	1,247	26,400
2015	893	18,403	5,333	240	24,869	922	486	1,408	26,277
2016	861	18,071	4,611	153	23,696	708	306	1,014	24,710
2017	835	17,799	4,682	164	23,480	1,630	456	2,086	25,566
2018	952	19,715	5,096	113	25,876	1,591	344	1,935	27,811
2019	865	20,508	5,647	124	27,144	1,065	350	1,415	28,559
2020	1,189	13,357	3,775	166	18,487	1,130	315	1,445	19,932
Total:	6,281	126,381	34,852	1,191	168,705	7,686	2,864	10,550	179,255

Aircraft operations are not evenly distributed throughout the year. Most operations occur during the summer months as illustrated in figure 3 (Federal Aviation Administration, 2021). The increase in aircraft operations would coincide with much of the proposed demolition and construction activities.



Figure 3. Monthly average (2014-2019) aircraft operations within King Salmon Airport controlled air space (Federal Aviation Administration, 2021).

The Naknek River is also utilized by a substantial number of people for recreational and commercial fishing activities during the summer.

All species in King Salmon are currently subject to high levels of aircraft operations and human activity. No other large projects are currently being planned in the vicinity.

The following resources either (1) do not exist within the project area or (2) would either not be affected or only negligibly affected by the proposed action:

- Subsistence was dismissed from additional review. ANILCA Section 810 requires an evaluation of the effects on subsistence uses for any action to withdraw, reserve, lease, or otherwise permit the use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands. The headquarters complex is not eligible for subsistence under Federal regulations.

Natural Resources

Terrestrial Wildlife and Aquatic Species

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

The project area has been heavily impacted over the last 80 years. It currently consists of several buildings, associated gravel roads and parking, areas of managed lawn, fragmented alder, spruce, and willow patches, and the adjacent Naknek River.

While limited, the area within and around the complex provides habitat for several species of waterfowl and landbirds. These include tundra swan, mallard, northern pintail, green-winged teal, greater scaup, black-billed magpie, tree swallow, black-capped chickadee, and several species of thrush, sparrow, and warblers.

The complex also provides habitat for small mammals, ermine, and snowshoe hare. Brown bears transit the area via the river corridor on occasion.

The Naknek River provides habitat for all five species of salmon, rainbow trout, rainbow smelt, and others. Additionally, beluga whale use the river in spring to feed on rainbow smelt and harbor seals fish during salmon runs in summer.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

The headquarters site and surrounding areas have significant levels of human activity throughout the year. This is especially true from spring through fall as indicated by the peak in airport operations discussed above. Additionally, this period coincides with the busy commercial fishing season. These activities are longstanding and stable. As such, all species near the project area are currently accustomed to the level and timing of existing human activity.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

The continuation of existing operations under alternative A would not have a discernable effect on wildlife. The area is degraded and already subject to high levels of disturbance from human activity. Birds and small mammals utilize the terrestrial component within the project area. However, the habitat value is low because it is limited in size, fragmented, and subject to high levels of disturbance.

Alternative B

Because the area is already highly developed, additional impacts to wildlife from the proposed activities would be minimal and short-term. The project footprint is within an already disturbed and developed area and will not result in a loss of habitat.

Construction of the dock and boat ramp will require work below the ordinary highwater mark. This work would involve driving several pilings. Pile driving activities are of specific concern for their potential impact to marine mammals via aquatic transmission of high intensity sound (Castellote, et al., 2019). Beluga whale and harbor seals can be sensitive to anthropogenic noise and high intensity aquatic noise has the potential to alter their behavior and may cause acoustic injury at close range (Castellote, et al., 2019). Beluga whale forage in the Naknek River for rainbow smelt after spring breakup while harbor seals remain to fish for salmon during summer. Mitigation of noise impacts could be accomplished by timing construction activities to avoid overlap with in-river beluga presence. Below water excavation will occur to facilitate installation but is expected to occur during low water conditions to further mitigate impacts. All in-water work will occur during daylight hours.

Construction of a new boat ramp may occur on a steeper bank than the existing ramp. This construction may therefore require additional cut, fill, and revetment. Potential impacts related to this work would be mitigated with the implementation of a grading plan and BMPs (erosion control mats, silt fencing, etc.) to mitigate soil erosion. All Federal, State, and local permits will be secured, and mitigation measures detailed before work begins.

Habitat and Vegetation

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

Vegetation within the complex is predominantly managed lawn with patches of mixed spruce, alder, and willow species. Managed lawn covers approximately 30% of the project area while mixed brush/spruce covers approximately 20%. The spruce and alder habitat are concentrated along the eastern boundary and northern end of the project area. Managed lawn is dispersed throughout. A narrow strip of unmanaged mixed grass/herbaceous habitat occurs along the river.

Eleven species of non-native plants have been documented at the headquarters site and are listed in table 2 (Alaska Natural Heritage Program, 2021). These eleven species are all widespread throughout Alaska, mostly the Southeast, Southwest, and Southcentral portions of the state (Alaska Natural Heritage Program, 2021). Local distribution may be limited to the King Salmon area but may also include areas in Naknek and along the road corridors. It is important to note that the local distribution is likely an underestimate as survey effort is limited and usually occurs along roads or on public lands associated with the various land management agencies based in King Salmon. The most recent survey conducted at the administrative site, completed in July 2021, focused on highly invasive species. No new invasive species were discovered during this effort (personal communication Ben Wishnek, 24 November 2021; USFWS, Alaska Region Invasive Species Program).

Table 2. Non-native plant species documented within the project area (AKEPIC).

Species	Invasive Ranking	Local and Regional Distribution
creeping buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>)	72	Localized King Salmon, widespread regionally
foxtail barley (<i>Hordeum jubatum</i>)	63	Localized King Salmon, widespread regionally
white clover (<i>Trifolium repens</i>)	59	Widespread King Salmon and regionally
common dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>)	58	Widespread King Salmon and regionally
alsike clover (<i>Trifolium hybridum</i>)	57	Widespread King Salmon and regionally
narrowleaf hawkbeard (<i>Crepis tectorum</i>)	56	Widespread King Salmon and regionally
red clover (<i>Trifolium pratense</i>)	53	Widespread King Salmon and regionally
curly dock (<i>Rumex crispus</i>)	48	Localized King Salmon, widespread regionally
common plantain (<i>Plantago major</i>)	44	Widespread King Salmon and regionally
common chickweed (<i>Stellaria media</i>)	42	Localized King Salmon, widespread regionally
pineapple weed (<i>Matricaria discoidea</i>)	32	Widespread King Salmon and regionally

An additional twenty-four species have been documented within the greater King Salmon area.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

Much of the habitat and vegetation was converted by human activities decades ago. The remaining habitat is limited, fragmented, and of low quality for most wildlife. Significant changes to the type, availability, and quality of habitat are unlikely to occur as most habitat has been previously converted. No other large projects are currently being planned in the vicinity.

The planned actions would not remove or convert significant areas of alder, spruce, or willow habitat. The demolition and construction of new facilities (including roads) would alter the existing locations of managed lawn and would reduce total coverage of managed lawn slightly.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

The continuation of existing operations under alternative A would not have a discernable effect on existing habitat or vegetation. Existing managed lawn and areas of gravel would be maintained.

Alternative B

Because the area is already highly developed, impacts to vegetation and habitat from the proposed activities would be minimal and short-term. The project footprint is within an already disturbed and developed area where habitat is of limited quality. Proposed activities will not result in a significant loss of spruce/alder habitat. A slight decrease in managed lawn is expected.

The potential for non-native species introduction exists. Best management practices will be employed to minimize this potential. These actions could include equipment cleaning prior to arrival on site, the utilization of local fill for any construction activities, and monitoring to identify and control any potential introductions. Relocation of most field prep activities to a newly constructed storage area adjacent to the dock will reduce the likelihood of non-native species transmission to the Refuge via aircraft. Additionally, the implementation of a new grading plan will decrease runoff and may decrease the spread of non-native species via the river corridor.

Threatened and Endangered Species, and Other Special Status Species

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

Steller's Eider: Alaska provides wintering habitat for large portions of the Pacific population of Steller's eider (Bird Life International, 2021). Steller's eiders primarily utilize the Alaska Peninsula's northern coast at Izembek Lagoon, Nelson Lagoon, and Seal Islands to molt and over-winter (Williams, Bowman, & Shults, 2016). Inland use of the Alaska Peninsula is rare.

Bald Eagle: A single bald eagle nest is located across the Naknek River at approximately 58.67726, -156.67653. This nest was active in 2021 and Refuge staff indicate the nest has been active since at least 2015. The nest is visible from the project area. The distance between the project area and the nest is approximately 1,150 feet. A new nest was built and utilized approximately 600 feet downstream for the 2022 nesting season. The new nest is similarly situated and is approximately 1,200 feet from the project area.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

Steller's Eider: Wintering Steller's eider population counts along the Alaska Peninsula decreased from 137,900 individuals in 1992 to an estimated 74,400 individuals in 2012 (Larned, 2012). Steller's eider, a threatened species, has been documented in the King Salmon area only once since 1992 (unpublished USFWS data; eBird, 2021). An additional sighting of a single bird in Naknek was recorded in 2017 (eBird, 2021). The nearest critical habitat occurs southwest of Port Heiden at Seal Islands, a distance of 165 miles (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, n.d.). Recent surveys have documented several thousand individuals utilizing the habitat near Port Heiden and Seal Islands (Williams, Bowman, & Shults, 2016).

Bald Eagle: Bald eagles are neither threatened nor endangered in Alaska. However, bald eagles do have special status under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Existing levels of human disturbance, especially aircraft use of the river, have not prevented utilization of the existing nest site. The level, location, and timing of human use is likely to continue.

Other birds of Conservation Concern: Aleutian terns, bar-tailed and Hudsonian godwits, and short-billed dowitcher are seasonally present near the project area and of specific conservation concern. The number of records near the project area is limited for all species. Aleutian terns are marine foragers and usually nest within a few miles of the coast. Both godwit species migrate through the area, are more frequently documented foraging on tidally exposed flats near Kvichak Bay, and do not breed locally. Short-billed dowitcher is a wide-spread breeder in Alaska but appropriate habitat does not occur within the project area. As such, adverse impacts to these species are not likely to occur under either alternative.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

The continuation of existing operations under alternative A would not have a discernable impact on threatened, endangered, or special status species.

Alternative B

Steller's eider has been sighted near the project area once in the last 29 years and the nearest designated critical habitat is approximately 165 miles away. Given the existing lack of use and distance from critical habitat, it is unlikely that the proposed action would impact Steller's eiders near the project area.

Transportation of construction equipment and supplies is likely to involve barge transport. This transportation will likely occur between May and September and will almost certainly use already scheduled barge service to the Port of Naknek. Steller's eider concentrate along the northern coast of the Alaska Peninsula at Seal Islands, Nelson Lagoon, and Izembek Lagoon from late August to early May (Rosenberg, et al., 2016) (Williams, Bowman, & Shults, 2016). Site specific use tends to be in protected bays on the leeward side of islands or spits (Williams, Bowman, & Shults, 2016). As such, project impacts to Steller's eider from already scheduled barge traffic is highly unlikely as transiting barges avoid nearshore shallow waters.

Impacts to the nearby bald eagle nest will be mitigated in accordance with the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (USFWS, 2007). The proposed action is classified a category B activity because it involves the construction of 1 or 2 story structures and will have a project footprint of more than ½ acre. As such, the activity should occur at least 660 feet from the nest (USFWS 2007). The existing nest is approximately 1,150 feet from the project area and already experiences significant seasonal disturbance from aircraft and boat operations along the Naknek River. As the existing level of activity is well tolerated it is unlikely that additional disturbance from the project will have a detectable impact (Megan Boldenow, Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, personal communication 10/26/21). One potential exception is the driving of sheet and pipe pile for the dock relocation and construction (Megan Boldenow, Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, personal communication 10/26/21). Discussions with PND engineers indicated that pile driving activities outside the bald eagle breeding season would

not be feasible as soil and river freeze-up would not allow proper installation. The use of a vibratory hammer, when possible, would mitigate the high intensity noise associated with the use of impact drivers.

The U.S. FWS Ecological Services office concurred with a “not likely to adversely affect” determination regarding Steller’s eider. No listed marine mammals or critical habitat occur at the project site. As such, the Service has concluded that the proposed action will not affect listed marine mammals or critical habitat.

Geology and Soils

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

King Salmon is located on a thick layer of outwash deposits from Brooks Lake that consists of sand, silty sand, and some gravel deposited by glacial meltwater (Detterman, 1986). Below this layer lies minor amounts of glacial-fluvial sand and gravel deposited during the Mak Hill glacial period (Waythomas, 1994). In October 2020, Site specific sampling was done by PND Engineers Inc. And Discovery Drilling Inc. This sampling supported the general soil types described above. More detailed information on the soil characteristics at the dock site can be found in the 2021 Campus Master Plan update.

Unknown source soil contamination near building 5 was discovered in 2002. The contaminated soil was subsequently removed in the same year. Reporting indicated that more site characterization was needed to delineate the plume as it may have spread under the building (Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, 2021). A hazardous materials survey has been planned in conjunction with the proposed demolition and construction. Soil contamination, if discovered, will be appropriately addressed in consultation with guidance from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC).

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

As discussed above, the area is highly developed. Near surface disturbance of soil has occurred throughout the property during previous construction and maintenance activities. The Service is not aware of any additional planned actions that would impact the geology and soils of the area.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

The continuation of operations under alternative A would not have a discernable effect on existing geology and soils. Soil testing and potential soil remediation under building 5 would not occur.

Alternative B

Near surface disturbance of soils would occur during the demolition and construction of facilities. These activities would generally occur in previously disturbed areas. The implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) in accordance with ADEC regulations is required. Implementation of a grading plan and best management practices (erosion control mats, silt fencing, etc.) to mitigate soil erosion associated with the proposed activities would occur. Impacts to the geology and soils from the proposed activities would be short-term.

The removal of building 5 would allow a full investigation into any potentially remaining soil contaminants. If found, contaminated soil issues would be addressed as appropriate and consistent with local, State, and Federal laws.

Air and Noise Quality

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

Many of the secondary roads in King Salmon are gravel. This can result in vehicle caused fugitive dust during dry periods. The parking areas and roads within the campus are also gravel surfaced. Fugitive dust may also increase during periods of high wind. The area also experiences significant levels of small aircraft traffic on the Naknek River and some boat and vehicle traffic which contribute to the high noise profile of the area.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

The National Park Service maintains a wet deposition station, part of the National Atmospheric Deposition Program's (NADP) National Trends Network (NTN), which records precipitation deposited nitrate and sulfate in King Salmon. Data from the King Salmon NTN site shows nitrate deposition comparable to levels at other Alaska sites while sulfate concentrations are higher (National Park Service, 2020). Both nitrate and sulphate levels at King Salmon are lower than averages elsewhere on the continent (National Park Service, 2020). Much of the collected data was outside the NADP's data completeness standards (National Atmospheric Deposition Program, 2021). As such, trend analysis was not conducted but no obvious trends were detected. No noise monitoring at the site or adjacent areas is known. However, the level of aircraft traffic at the airport and on the Naknek River is consistent and not expected to decline substantially.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

The continuation of existing operations under alternative A would not have a discernable effect on air or noise quality.

Alternative B

The presence of heavy equipment and increase in emissions from their operation will be short term and temporary. Fugitive dust will be produced during the demolition and construction phases of the proposed action. Dust and noise produced from construction activities will be short term and temporary. Appropriate mitigation measures will be employed to minimize dust emissions. High intensity noise emissions from pile driving activities will be minimized with the use of a vibratory hammer when feasible. The noise of other construction activities will be similar in type and magnitude to existing noise from regularly occurring activities in the area.

Water Quality

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

The Naknek River is a large tidally influenced river which drains many of the large lakes in Katmai National Park and the areas surrounding King Salmon and Naknek. The Naknek system supports large runs of sockeye salmon along with runs of rainbow smelt, silver, pink, chum, and king salmon. Rainbow trout are also present. These fish populations support seasonal use by

beluga whale, brown bears, and others. Human use includes subsistence, recreational, and commercial fishing.

Ground water levels were eight feet below ground surface during investigative drilling operations near the proposed new dock site (PND Engineers, Inc, 2021). Ground water levels are expected to correspond to tidal changes in the Naknek River. All residential and commercial operations in the area obtain drinking water from nearby private wells (personal communication, Marion Burgraff). Recent well water sampling by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) has documented concentrations of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) that exceed the state action level for drinking water (DOT & PF, 2021). The investigation is ongoing.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

Water quality in the Naknek River has improved since the late 1990's. Petroleum and chemical seeps from contaminated soil and ground water polluted several waterbodies flowing through King Salmon Air Station (KSAS). In 1996 the State of Alaska placed the Naknek River on the Clean Water Act section 303(d) list for impairment from contaminants associated with operations on KSAS. Subsequent action by the U.S. Air Force resulted in water quality improvements sufficient to remove the Naknek River from the impaired waters list in 2004 (Environmental Protection Agency, 2009).

The recent sampling of wells, as described above, shows that some wells have concentrations of PFAS that exceed the state action level for drinking water. Environmental trends and planned actions relative to this contamination are unknown as the investigation began recently and is ongoing.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

The continuation of existing operations under alternative A would not have a discernable effect on current water quality. Poor surface water control at the existing site does deposit limited amounts of sand and gravel into the Naknek River. The status of potential contaminants under building 5 may contribute to decreased water quality.

Alternative B

Impacts to surface water are expected to be minimal and short term. The implementation of a (SWPPP) in accordance with ADEC regulations is required. A grading plan and best management practices (erosion control mats, silt fencing, etc.) to mitigate soil erosion associated with the proposed activities would be implemented. Cleanup of potential contamination under building 5 could increase local ground water quality. All activities would be conducted as permitted and would be consistent with local, State, and Federal laws.

Floodplains

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

The Naknek River, adjacent to the project area, does not have a history of large flooding events. Some localized flooding, primarily in the Naknek area, has occurred because of unseasonable

rainfall events, high storm surge, and ice jams in Naknek River tributaries (LeMay Engineering & Consulting, Inc., 2017). Floodplain maps have not been produced for the area.

River levels are tidally influenced, and discharge varies by season. Recent hydrologic investigations estimated an Ordinary High Water (OHW) level of 13.0 feet and mid-to-late summer OHW level of 14.7 feet (PND Engineers, Inc, 2021). Water levels could top out at 18.3 feet during periods of high winds and wave action, high tidal influence, and increasing discharge volumes (PND Engineers, Inc, 2021). Survey maps depicting the elevation of the project area are included in the revised compound master plan (PND Engineers, Inc, 2021).

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

Climate change models indicate significant temperature and precipitation increases for Katmai National Park and other areas of southwest Alaska (Winfrey, et al., 2014). Additionally, sea level for Bristol Bay is expected to increase by an average of .19 to .5 meters in the next 80 years under a medium confidence and emissions scenario (NASA, 2021). These changes are likely to raise the OHW level.

The Service is not aware of any additional planned actions that would impact floodplains in the area.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

The continuation of existing activities under this Alternative would not impact floodplains.

Alternative B

The proposed action will not impact the natural and beneficial values served by floodplains. However, changes to the OHW caused by projected increases in sea level and precipitation must be addressed in the design phase of the proposed action. As such, the Service will design and locate facilities to reduce the risk of flood loss and minimize the impact of floods on human safety, health, and welfare in accordance with Executive Order 11988 and Service policy (613 FW 1).

Wilderness or Other Special Designation

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

Becharof Wilderness was established with the passage of ANILCA in 1980. Becharof Wilderness is comprised of approximately 503,000 acres within Becharof National Wildlife Refuge. Becharof Wilderness habitat includes areas of the Bristol Bay lowlands, Island Arm (part of Becharof Lake), subarctic tundra, coastal mountains, and Pacific coastal meadows.

Current use of Becharof Wilderness is primarily subsistence, recreational, and guided hunting, and fishing.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

Use of Becharof Wilderness is stable and not expected to change. Planned actions within Becharof Wilderness are highly regulated. Upcoming actions are not anticipated.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

Wilderness use and activities would remain the same under the no action alternative.

Alternative B

Wilderness use and activities would remain the same. The proposed action is not in the Wilderness area of the refuge.

Visitor Use and Experience

Subsistence, guided fishing and hunting, and recreational hunting and fishing comprise most of the refuge use. Current estimates place Refuge engagement and visitation at 14,000 people per year. This includes environmental education, interpretive programs, special event attendees, and visitor center visits. Approximately 5,500-6,000 visitors utilize the Refuges for a variety of activities each year. Subsistence and non-guided recreational use of the Refuges is not tracked but is substantial. Most non-local visitors are transported to the Refuges via small aircraft. Local subsistence users may use personal aircraft, boats, snowmachines, and small utility vehicles.

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

The project area is in King Salmon, a short walk from the airport and interagency Visitors Center. This walk is often suggested to visitors because it is short and offers a good view of the Naknek River. Visitor infrastructure (viewing area, interpretive signage, etc.) does not currently exist within the project area.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

Visitation to Bristol Bay via King Salmon is increasing (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2021 unpublished data; National Park Service, 2021; Federal Aviation Administration, 2021). Most visitors arrive for work during the commercial fishing season or for the wildlife viewing, fishing, and hunting opportunities. Dwell time near the project area and airport is limited to recent arrivals and pending departures although some lodging and services are located nearby. There are no other planned actions that may impact visitation or visitor experience.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

Impacts to wildlife-dependent recreation and visitor use would not occur under the “no action” alternative.

Alternative B

Noise and dust emissions would increase during the active phases of the proposed activities. Noise and dust emissions would be intermittent, minor, and short term. Pile driving activities for the dock relocation will produce some high intensity noise. If feasible, pile driving should be conducted during periods when visitor use is low to minimize impact. For safety, visitor access to active construction areas would be restricted. These restrictions would be temporary and short term. The addition of visitor use facilities would result in increased visitation to the administrative complex. The increase in foot traffic would cause rare, minor, and short-term

disruption to other Service activities. Containing most field related activities within the planned fenced area adjacent to the dock should minimize operational interruptions.

Installing visitor infrastructure should increase visitor use and have a positive impact on visitor experience. The classroom would facilitate active outreach efforts including environmental education programs, the hosting of local school classes, other special programs, and could function as a contact station during peak visitation. Visitor facilities would provide Refuge staff with more opportunity for direct interactions with members of the public. The associated viewing platform would allow year-round access and the opportunity to view many of the natural values associated with the Bristol Bay region. The proposed visitor infrastructure would also facilitate passive outreach and education using interpretive signage.

These interactions would provide Refuge staff the chance to discuss the goals and mission, natural and cultural resources, visitor opportunities, and work being completed by the National Wildlife Refuge System, and particularly the Refuges managed out of King Salmon.

Cultural Resources

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

The King Salmon administrative site, also called the King Salmon Field Office, is a National Register of Historic Places eligible historic district (NAK- 00231), with three Contributing Buildings and four Non-Contributing buildings. The field office was established in 1939 as the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries headquarters for the area. Buildings included in the original complex were a bunkhouse, mess hall, residence, and three cabins. In the 1950's, an office, warehouse, mechanical shop, and storage building were built, and NMFS assumed management of the site (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1997). Management of the site was transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1988 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1997).

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

The King Salmon Field Office has a rich history as the headquarters for the Bureau of Commercial fisheries and for the Alaska Peninsula and Becharof National Wildlife Refuges. Three of the buildings constructed between 1939 and 1959 remain and contribute to district eligibility. At least seven structures built in the same era have already been removed. These structures included two residences, one large metal warehouse, and four cabins.

The Service and SHPO agree that the removal of any of the remaining contributing buildings will result in the District losing its National Register of Historic Places eligibility. The contributing buildings include #5, Machine Shop (NAK-00192), #7 Warehouse and Headquarters Building (NAK-00194), and #3, Bunk House (NAK-00196).

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

Under Alternative A, there would be no immediate impact to cultural resources. Ultimately, the contributing buildings would need significant upgrades and modification to maintain operational usefulness and meet existing safety standards. These upgrades may impact the historic character of the facilities and district eligibility.

Alternative B

It is likely that most of the land subject to disturbance will consist of fill or have been previously disturbed during past construction or maintenance activities. The possibility exists that evidence of prehistoric or historic use of the area could be encountered during activities under the proposed action. No degradation or destruction of significant archaeological resources would be permitted under this alternative. Discovery of archaeological resources would result in an immediate work stoppage and initiation of consultation with the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology (OHA). The discovery of new cultural resources would require additional Section 106 compliance and consultations.

In September 2023, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office signed a Memorandum of Agreement regarding the mitigation of impacts associated with the proposed action (Appendix D). Under the MOA, the Service and SHPO have agreed that the removal of one or more Contributing Buildings will result in the District losing its National Register of Historic Places eligibility. In accordance with 36 CFR 800.6(a)(1), the Service notified the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) of its adverse effect determination. The ACHP has not responded, electing not to participate in the consultation pursuant to 36 CFR 800.6(a). Additional consultation occurred with the Bristol Bay Historical Society, King Salmon Tribe, Naknek Native Village Council, South Naknek Village Council, the Bristol Bay Borough, and interested members of the public in accordance with 36 CFR 800.6(a)(4).

The Service and SHPO have agreed to a set of mitigation activities outlined in the MOA. These activities fall into these two general areas:

1. Develop an Interpretive Panel for the King Salmon Headquarters and a traveling display.
2. Compile an archive of existing documentation on the King Salmon Field Office.

Refuge Management and Operations

Refuge lands are primarily used for Federal subsistence harvest, sport harvest, guided hunting, and fishing services (as permitted), and other recreational uses. The proposed action occurs entirely outside the Refuge boundaries.

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

The USFWS King Salmon Campus supports all management and operations that occur on the Refuges. Current facilities include office space, a maintenance shop, staff housing, storage buildings, fueling facilities, and a boat ramp and dock. Additional facility details can be found in the Campus Master Plan and subsequent revision (Design Alaska, Inc., 2020) (PND Engineers, Inc, 2021).

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

Use of the King Salmon Campus for administrative purposes would not change. Some additional use by visitors is expected with the addition of the classroom/conference building, viewing platform, and interpretive signage. No additional planned actions are expected.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

Use of the King Salmon Campus would not change.

Alternative B

The addition of a classroom/conference building, viewing platform, and interpretive signage will increase visitor use of the King Salmon Campus. This use may have minor impacts on daily operations but is mitigated by containing most management activities to publicly inaccessible portions of the campus.

The addition of visitor facilities will have positive impacts on public outreach and engagement. The new facilities and reorganization of the complex will increase operational efficiency, building longevity, and operational capacity.

Administration

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

Staffing at the Refuges varies by season and year. Refuge staffing includes a Refuge Manager, Deputy Refuge Manager, Budget Technician, Visitor Services Manager, Supervisory Wildlife Biologist, two Wildlife Biologists, Pilot/Biologist, Federal Wildlife Officer, and one Maintenance Worker. Additional seasonal staff is needed during the summer months.

Station budget also varies by year but is sufficient to address future needs. The increasing age and decreasing functionality and safety of existing facilities creates an operational and maintenance burden that is expected to increase. This burden may reduce the Service's ability to address management needs.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

The current level and type of management activities at the King Salmon Campus would remain the same. No other projects in the area surrounding the campus are known or anticipated.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

Increasing negative impacts on operations from degrading capacity and operational usefulness are expected. Many of the existing buildings are past their useful life, lack appropriate seismic stability characteristics, and will require significant increases in maintenance time and costs.

Alternative B

The proposed new headquarters layout and purpose-built facilities will increase usefulness, longevity, and efficiency of movement during daily operations. Initial maintenance costs for new facilities will decrease substantially while operational capacity and structural lifespan increase.

The addition of a new conference/classroom and the associated viewing platform will allow additional public and partner engagement. Currently, facilities designed for public engagement do not exist on the campus. The addition of facilities will enable the Refuge to engage the public more actively through organized programs. Passive engagement through interpretive signs will increase public awareness of the history of the area and the goals and mission of the Refuges and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Heated facilities will increase under the proposed action. Heated non-residential square footage will increase by approximately 50% with the inclusion of a new conference/classroom, shop addition, new bunkhouse, and replacement and expansion of heated storage. The increase in cost to heat facilities will be offset by increased building efficiency and reduced long-term maintenance costs. Increasing heated square footage will also increase greenhouse gas emissions. The incorporation of energy efficiency features, like programmable thermostats, high efficiency heating and lighting, and an energy efficient building design, will minimize the increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

Socioeconomics

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

Commercial fishing, subsistence, and tourism are the backbone of the local economy. In 2021, the commercial harvest of salmon totaled approximately 40.8 million fish with an ex-vessel value of approximately \$247.7 million (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2021). Sockeye salmon are the most harvested salmon and comprise greater than 99% of the fish harvested and total ex-vessel value (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2021). Twenty-year averages for salmon caught and ex-vessel value are significantly lower at 29.2 million fish and \$150.9 million (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2021). The commercial fishery supports thousands of seasonal jobs and provides local tax revenue through a “fish tax.”

Subsistence use of natural resources in the King Salmon area is substantial. The latest survey data (2007) indicates that 95 percent of King Salmon residents utilized subsistence resources (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2021). The most important resources, totaling approximately 72,500 pounds, includes salmon, berries, caribou, moose, and migratory birds (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2021).

Sport fishing, wildlife viewing, and hunting are the focus for most tourist visits. Many visitors utilize air taxi operations or registered guides to facilitate access to the many remote destinations. Commercially assisted visitation to the Refuge and Katmai National Park are increasing (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2021; National Park Service, 2021). Visitor Use Days on the Refuge are currently estimated at 6000 and do not include subsistence or local recreational use (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2021). The economic impact of sport fishing alone is significant. An estimated \$48 million was spent in Alaska by non-residents to fish within the greater Bristol Bay region in 2005 (Duffield, Neher, Patterson, & Goldsmith, 2007).

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

Overall commercial salmon harvest in the Bristol Bay fisheries region has increased from 1979-2020 (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2021). However, chinook, chum, coho, and pink salmon harvest has declined over the same period (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2021).

Tourism to the region is increasing but is focused on wildlife dependent experiences away from King Salmon. No other projects in the area surrounding the campus are known or anticipated.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

This alternative would not affect the socioeconomics of the region.

Alternative B

Minor and short-term positive changes to the local economic landscape are expected through the potential increase in job opportunities associated with the proposed action. Some of the work will occur outside the high employment period of commercial fishing season and provide additional earnings potential in Bristol Bay. Expanded visitor use opportunities via the viewing platform, interpretive signage, and occasional special programs could increase visitor satisfaction, dwell time, and economic expenditures in King Salmon.

Environmental Justice

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires all federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their missions by identifying and addressing disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs and policies on minorities and low-income populations and communities.

Bristol Bay Borough, with a population of 875 people, is comprised of approximately 52.7% white, 34.2% Alaska Native or American Indian, and 10.5% of people identifying with two or more races (Headwaters Economics', 2021). Median household income in Bristol Bay was \$79,808 in 2019, above the national average of \$62,834 (Headwaters Economics', 2021).

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

Per capita income and average earnings per job have increased since 2008 (Headwaters Economics', 2021). Many local jobs are dependent on the commercial fishing industry. As such, local income levels fluctuate in tandem with the success of the salmon harvest.

The Service is not aware of any planned actions that would have environmental justice impacts.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

No environmental justice concerns were identified.

Alternative B

No environmental justice concerns were identified. Minority or low-income communities will not be disproportionately affected by any impacts from this proposed action.

Monitoring

The Service would continue to implement standard monitoring measures. These include inspection and best management practices and impact avoidance and minimization requirements that are implemented during construction and demolition.

The lead agency for monitoring contaminated sites is ADEC. The Service will work with ADEC to monitor and mitigate contamination if it is discovered.

Mitigation Measures

Avoidance

- Reduce impacts to water resources during design to the extent possible.
- Delineate work and staging areas and clearly mark boundaries.
- Fill material will be locally sourced and remain within the project area as appropriate.
- Demolition debris will be disposed of as appropriate.
- BAEA breeding and in-river Beluga presence will be monitored to avoid/minimize impacts from the proposed activities.
- Demolition activities may be conducted during the winter months.
- Periodic monitoring for non-native plant species is conducted on site and will continue.

Minimization

- Clearing or habitat conversion will be selective. Clearing is only allowed to meet project and safety objectives.
- Implement all BMPs and conditions identified in the permits.
- Reduce erosion and dust with stabilization methods.
- Erosion control measures will be left in place until no longer needed.
- Do not store fuel, fuel vehicles, or perform maintenance near water bodies.
- Stabilize and revegetate disturbed areas after work is complete.
- Implement all regulatory permit mitigation requirements to avoid significant potential impacts.

Summary of Analysis

Alternative A – Current Management Strategies (No Action Alternative)

As described above, Alternative A would not meet the purpose and need of the project. Existing conditions and facilities would remain, and the Service would have increasingly limited capacity to conduct management operations in the future. Deteriorating conditions and operational inefficiencies will continue to impact daily operations. The condition of existing facilities would continue to impact staff safety and mission readiness. Minor soil erosion caused by poor surface water control will continue to be an issue under this alternative.

Positively, eligibility as a cultural district would be initially maintained. However, the contributing buildings would continue to deteriorate and need eventual replacement or significant modification to address safety and operational needs.

Alternative B – Implementation of the Headquarters Complex Master Plan (Preferred Alternative)

As described above, the Preferred Alternative would have limited negative impacts to terrestrial and aquatic wildlife, vegetation, and habitat. These impacts would primarily result from increased noise, dust, and vehicle emissions at the project site. However, best management practices, avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures would ensure that negative impacts were short-term and minimal. Additionally, the level and types of noise, dust, and emissions are consistent with existing background levels in this highly developed area. Measures include the implementation of best management practices and other avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to protect natural resources. The removal of any contributing buildings will negatively

impact historic district eligibility under this alternative. However, as described above, the Service and the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office have agreed, via a MOA, to a set of specific actions to mitigate adverse effects.

The Preferred Alternative would meet the purpose and need of the project by improving the headquarters complex to provide the facilities and equipment necessary to ensure a safe and secure environment for the visiting public and Service personnel while increasing operational efficiency and long-term reliability. Other positive impacts include better control of surface water drainage, moving vehicle fueling operations further from the river, increased structural resilience against quakes and flooding events, and increasing opportunity and capacity for visitor services and environmental education. Additionally, the consolidation of field related activities and storage will minimize the opportunity for inadvertent transportation of non-native species to other Service managed lands and waters.

Under this alternative the project is not anticipated to lead to a long-term or permanent loss of plant or wildlife species or cause adverse effects to species or their habitats.

List of Sources, Agencies and Persons Consulted

Marion Burgraff – USFWS

Megan Boldenow – FWS Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

Jennifer Spegon – FWS Ecological Services

Sarah Lang – FWS APB Visitor Services Manager

PND Engineers Inc.

Greg Balogh

ESA Section 7 Coordinator

Branch Chief

NOAA Fisheries

List of Preparers

This EA was prepared by Kevin Payne (contractor), Alaska Peninsula NWR staff, and personnel from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Alaska Regional Planning office.

State Coordination

Willow Weimer, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Wastewater Discharge Authorization Program, Division of Water, 555 Cordova Street, Anchorage, AK 99501

James Rypkema, Program Manager, Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Water, , Storm Water and Wetlands, Cordova Street, Anchorage, AK 99501

Water Quality Certificate -In accordance with Section 401 of the Federal Clean Water Act of 1977 and provisions of the Alaska Water Quality Standards, the Department of Environmental

Conservation (DEC) is issued a water quality certification stating that the discharge from the proposed project will comply with water quality requirements for the placement of dredged and/or fill material in waters of the U.S., including wetlands and streams, associated with the proposed project: Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR Headquarters Dock.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game – Habitat Section, dfg.hab.infoanc@alaska.gov Fish Habitat Application

State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Office of History and Archaeology, 550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1301, Anchorage, AK 99501.

Determination of Eligibility for the King Salmon Field Office Historic District and evaluation for the demolition of Building 1 (NAK-00201) and Building 4 (NAK-00195)

State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land and Water, 550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1301, Anchorage, AK 99501.

FWS is currently coordinating with the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land and Water to obtain a submerged state lands lease agreement for the placement of the dock. The Division has developed a specific draft lease agreement along with additional stipulations that are specific to Federal entities. The Service will continue to coordinate with the Division to finalize the agreement.

Tribal Consultation

Tribes and tribal members were welcome to provide comment prior to and during the public comment period. A formal letter and this environmental assessment were provided to Refuge tribal partners prior inviting to inviting the public to provide comments (Appendix F). Any comments, concerns, suggestions, or other feedback will be included if substantive response is required.

Tribes and intertribal agencies contacted include:

- Chignik Bay Tribal Council
- Chignik Lagoon Village Council
- Chignik Lake Village Council
- Egegik Village Council
- Iliamna Village Council
- Igiugig Tribal Village Council
- Ivanof Bay Tribal Council
- King Salmon Tribal Council
- Kokhanok Village Council

- Levelock Village Council
- Naknek Native Village Council
- Newhalen Tribal Council
- Nondalton Tribal Council
- Native Village of Perryville
- Pedro Bay Village Council
- Pilot Point Tribal Council
- Port Heiden Village Council
- South Naknek Village Council
- Ugashik Traditional Council
- Bristol Bay Native Corporation
- Bristol Bay Native Association
- Alaska Peninsula Corporation
- Bay View Inc
- Becharof Corporation
- Chignik Lagoon Native Corporation
- Far West Inc.
- Igiugig Native Corporation
- Kijik Corporation
- Oceanside Corporation
- Paug-Vik Incorporated Limited
- Pedro Bay Corporation

Public Outreach

Members of the public and partner agencies were notified of the availability of the draft Environmental for public review and comment for 35 days from April 26 to May 31, 2024 through the refuge website and fliers posted in several locations in King Salmon and Naknek. The draft document will also be made available at the refuge office (4 Bear Road, King Salmon, AK 99613) and can be downloaded from the refuge website <https://www.fws.gov/APB-HQComplexDraftEA2024>.

A letter (Appendix E) was also provided to the following Refuge partners inviting them to provide comments.

- Bristol Bay Borough
- Lake and Peninsula Borough
- Katmai National Park & Preserve, Aniakchak National Monument, Alagnak Wild & Scenic River
- Bristol Bay Chamber
- Bristol Bay Historical Society
- Martin Monsen Regional Public Library
- Southwest Alaska Vocational & Education Center
- Alaska Department of Fish & Game
- Alaska Department of Fish & Game Wildlife Troopers
- Alaska DOT, Kodiak/Aleutian District

Determination

This section will be filled out upon completion of the public comment period and at the time of finalization of the Environmental Assessment.

- ☐ The Service's action will not result in a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. See the attached "**Finding of No Significant Impact.**"
- ☐ The Service's action **may significantly affect** the quality of the human environment and the Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

Signatures

Submitted By:

Project Leader Signature:

Date:

Concurrence:

Refuge Supervisor Signature:

Date:

Approved:

Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System Signature:

Date:

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Appendix A- Applicable statutes, regulations, and executive orders addressed in EA

Cultural Resources

The Service completed Section 106 consultation in September 2023 to ensure legislative and executive order compliance with the following

- American Indian Religious Freedom Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 1996 - 1996a; 43 CFR Part 7
- Antiquities Act of 1906, 16 U.S.C. 431-433; 43 CFR Part 3
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, 16 U.S.C. 470aa-470mm; 18 CFR Part 1312; 32 CFR Part 229; 36 CFR Part 296; 43 CFR Part 7
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470-470x-6; 36 CFR Parts 60, 63, 78, 79, 800, 801, and 810
- Paleontological Resources Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 470aaa-470aaa-11
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 25 U.S.C. 3001-3013; 43 CFR Part 10
- Executive Order 11593 – Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, 36 Fed. Reg. 8921 (1971)
- Executive Order 13007 – Indian Sacred Sites, 61 Fed. Reg. 26771 (1996)

Memorandum of Agreement

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and The Alaska State Historic Preservation Office signed a Memorandum of Agreement for the proposed construction and reorganization of the King Salmon administrative site (NAK- 00231) in King Salmon, Alaska in September 2023. The MOA negotiated between the Alaska SHPO and the Service details measures required to mitigate the impacts to historic district eligibility caused by the implementation of the Preferred Alternative.

Fish and Wildlife

- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 668-668c, 50 CFR 22
- Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1531-1544; 36 CFR Part 13; 50 CFR Parts 10, 17, 23, 81, 217, 222, 225, 402, 450
- Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, 16 U.S.C. 742a-m
- Lacey Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 3371 et seq.; 15 CFR Parts 10, 11, 12, 14, 300, and 904
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 703-712; 50 CFR Parts 10, 12, 20, and 21
- Executive Order 13186 – Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds, 66 Fed. Reg. 3853 (2001)

Impacts to nesting bald eagles will be mitigated as appropriate and consistent with the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (2007), and

recommendations from Anchorage Ecological Services. One federally listed Threatened or Endangered species, Steller's eider, may occur near the project area. The Refuge, in consultation with the Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, has determined that the Preferred Alternative is not likely to adversely affect Steller's eiders. A no effect determination was made for marine mammals. Critical habitat would not be affected.

Mitigation measures will be implemented to ensure minimal impact to migratory birds. Habitat loss is not expected.

Natural Resources

- Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 7401-7671q; 40 CFR Parts 23, 50, 51, 52, 58, 60, 61, 82, and 93; 48 CFR Part 23
- Wilderness Act, 16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.
- Alaska Native Interests Lands Conservation Act 94 Stat. 2371
- Section 401 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act)
- Section 404 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act)
- Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act

Mitigation measures will be implemented to ensure compliance with relevant laws and guidance regarding the protection of water and air resources. These include a variety of measures to mitigate dust emissions and surface erosion. The Service will apply for all relevant water resource permits and follow all permit stipulations.

Title VIII, Section 810 of ANILCA requires Federal agencies to evaluate the potential impacts of proposed actions on subsistence uses and needs. The Service has determined that the proposed action would not impact subsistence uses and needs as the action will not occur on subsistence eligible lands.

Appendix B – U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service King Salmon Campus Master Plan, 2020

Appendix C - U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service King Salmon Campus, Master Plan Update, 2021

**Appendix D – Memorandum of Agreement with State of Alaska
Historic Preservation Office**

Appendix E – Agency Notification Letter

Appendix F – Tribal Coordination Letter