

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

INTERIOR ALASKA VETERANS CEMETERY

Salcha, Alaska

AK-09-01

IRIS PROGRAM NO. Z800330000

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA), as delegated by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in accordance with Alaska Statute (AS) 44.35.035, proposes to construct and operate an Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery (IAVC) in Salcha, Alaska. The proposed project is located on a parcel of land recently acquired by the State of Alaska. The property, 7229 De Halden Lane, is located in the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) in Sections 26 and 27, Range 4 East, Township 4 South, Fairbanks Meridian; United States Geological Society (USGS) quad Big Delta C-6 (**Figure 1**). R&M Consultants, Inc. (R&M) has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 as amended (42 United States Code [USC] § 4321 *et seq.*), the VA's NEPA regulations, *Environmental Effects of the Department of Veterans Affairs Actions* (38 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 26), the VA's *NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects* (VA 2010), and VA Directive 0067 - NEPA Implementation (VA 2013). These federal regulations establish the administrative process and substantive scope of the environmental impact evaluation. The goal of this EA is to identify potential environmental consequences of the proposed project.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The DMVA has been searching for an appropriate location for the IAVC since 2005. In 2009, the Alaska Legislature approved funding for planning and design of a state Veterans cemetery in the Fairbanks area. The project received additional funding via the VA Veterans Cemetery Grant Program (VCGP), designed to assist states, territories and tribal governments in establishing, expanding or improving Veterans cemeteries. The VA program can provide up to 100% of the cost of developing a state cemetery, but places responsibility for the costs of land acquisition, operations and maintenance on the grant recipient, in this case the State of Alaska. The purpose of this project is development of a State Veterans Cemetery in the Fairbanks area. The Fairbanks area has the second densest population of veterans in Alaska, with an estimated 11,000 veterans residing within a 75-mile radius of the FNSB.

The DMVA first considered a 108-acre State-owned parcel off Gold Mine Trail, along the Steese Highway near Fox, Alaska. Geotechnical investigations at this location discovered significant subsurface permafrost conditions that did not support development of a cemetery. As a result, this location was not continued forward as a viable project site.

The next potential site was located within an undeveloped, mixed forested and cleared area along Goldstream Road near Fox, Alaska. Three proposed sites and three alternative access points were evaluated for feasibility. Due to a gully feature associated with the Davidson Ditch (documented historic site) that travels through a portion of the site, this location was eliminated from further consideration. Additionally, access to the cemetery would require construction of a cost-prohibitive access road thus making this location impracticable.

In coordination with appropriate state agencies, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) conducted planning level investigations for a proposed new IAVC site at Milepost (MP) 344 of Parks Highway near Fairbanks, Alaska. The site was approximately 234.4 acres in area and consisted of an inactive/closed material site and undisturbed woodland. The suitable development area consisted of the uplands and ridgetop portion of the wider project site.

Geotechnical and environmental investigations indicated that the property had been substantially impacted by fuel, lead, antimony, and arsenic contamination from past site use. As a result, this location was eliminated from consideration.

The currently proposed location off De Halden Lane in Salcha, Alaska was selected for further investigation in 2021 after it was listed for private sale. Site investigations conducted prior to the purchase of the property included well tests and a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA). After those investigations did not identify any issues with the site, the State purchased the property as the potential site of the IAVC. After purchase, a detailed site survey, wetland delineation, geotechnical investigation, and cultural resources survey were performed in support of the IAVC project.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide an appropriate place of interment for United States military Veterans and their eligible family members in Interior Alaska. The VA has a goal to locate a cemetery within 75 miles of 95% of the country's Veterans. The Fairbanks area has the second densest population of Veterans in Alaska, with an estimated 11,000 Veterans residing within a 75-mile radius of the FNSB. There are currently two national cemeteries in Alaska, the Fort Richardson National Cemetery (located 350 miles away from Fairbanks) and the Sitka National Cemetery (located 680 miles from Fairbanks). Developing the Proposed Action would provide a cemetery for Alaska's military Veterans within 35 miles of Fairbanks and within the 75-mile VA goal for the majority of Veterans within Interior Alaska. Although the limits of the area identified as Interior Alaska varies somewhat between agency and organization depending on whether political or geographic boundaries are considered, the general area is shown in **Figure 2** and includes the Fairbanks North Star and Denali Boroughs as well as portions of the Unorganized Borough, particularly the Yukon-Koyukuk census area and the southeast Fairbanks census area. Geographic boundaries include Canada to the east, the Yukon River to the north and west, and the Alaska Range mountains to the south. Communities located within 75 miles of the proposed IAVC site include Fairbanks, North Pole, Salcha, Delta Junction, Nenana, Anderson, Two Rivers, and Fox as well as Eielson Air Force Base, Fort Wainwright, and Fort Greely military installations.

Figure 1. Location and Vicinity Map

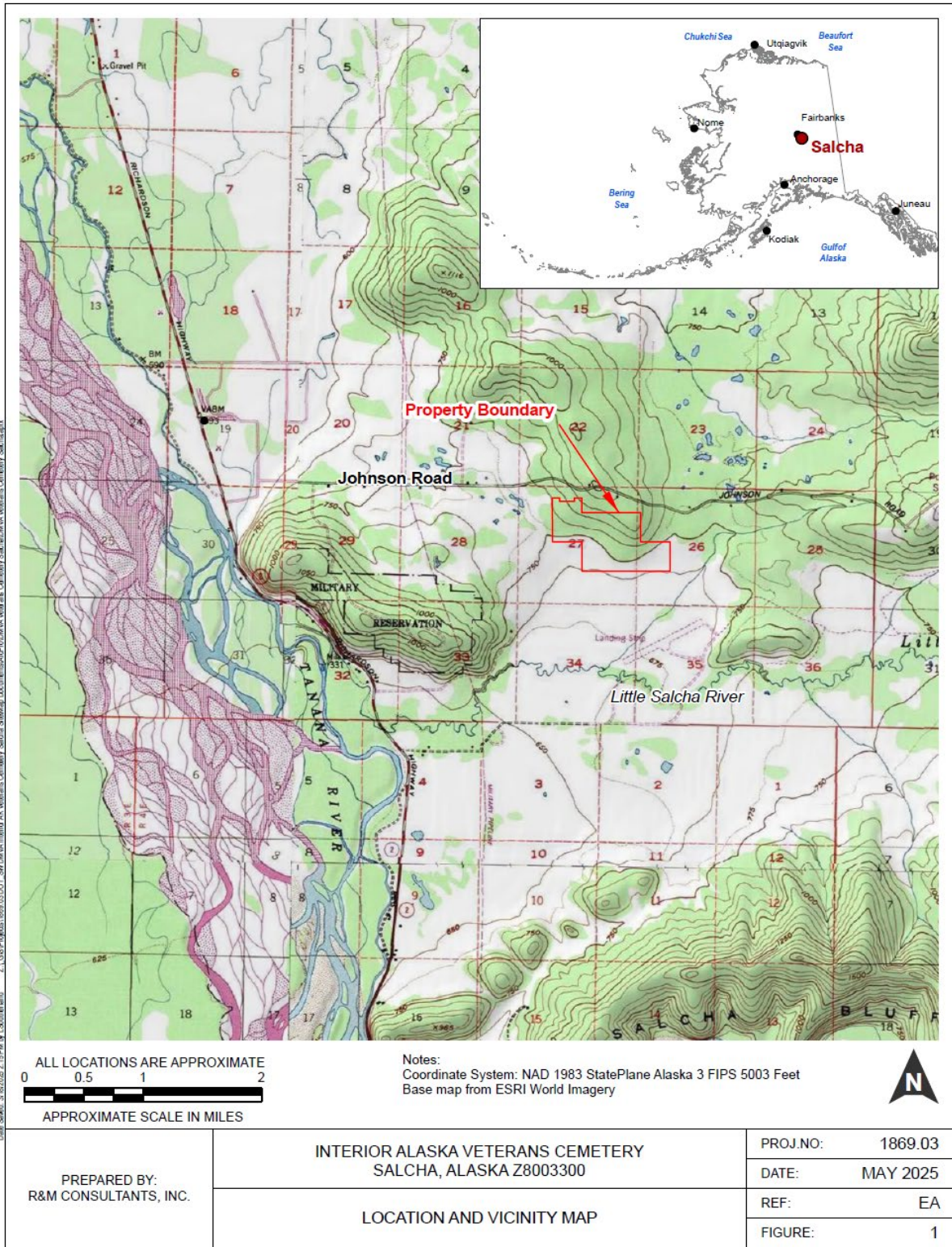
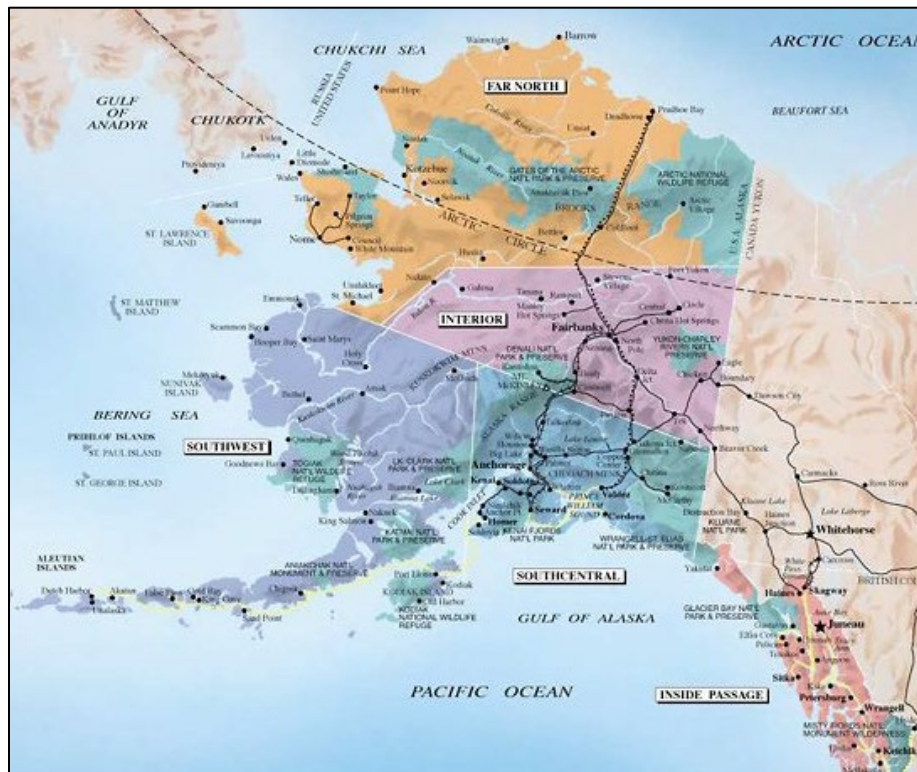


Figure 2. Regions of Alaska



Source: Alaska Travel Industry Association (<https://fairbanks-alaska.com/images/lgalaskamap.jpg>)

1.3 FEDERAL DECISION TO BE MADE

The VA VCGP is the funding source for this project making VA the lead federal agency and the Proposed Action a major Federal Action. Cemeteries funded under the grant program must conform to the standards and guidelines pertaining to site selection, planning, environmental assessment, and construction prescribed by VA. The DMVA, as authorized by the VA, will carry out the NEPA evaluation of this project. The goal of this EA is to document the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and identify any mitigation measures to minimize impacts. Based on this environmental assessment, the DMVA will determine whether it is necessary to prepare an environmental impact statement, or to prepare a finding of no significant impact (38 CFR 26.6 (c)). The DMVA will issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), if no potentially significant adverse impacts are identified. The DMVA will carefully consider comments received from regulatory agencies, tribes, and the public in this decision-making process. The VA will issue a letter of concurrence after review of the DMVA's finding.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES

2.1 DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

VA NEPA regulations require that a range of reasonable alternatives be considered and evaluated. This EA evaluates the effects of two alternatives, the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

Alternative site locations for this project were explored as described in **Section 1.1**. Once the current project parcel was purchased, a Master Plan for the proposed IAVC was completed. The Master Plan represents the anticipated needs for the site for the next 50 years and includes Phase I and II. Phase I of the Master Plan is expected to satisfy anticipated use of the IAVC for the next 12 years and is proposed for construction in 2026. Phase II represents the remaining build out needed to meet the estimated 50-year needs of the IAVC and would be constructed in the future as need and funding dictate.

The other alternative presented in this EA is the No Action Alternative.

2.1.1 PROPOSED ACTION

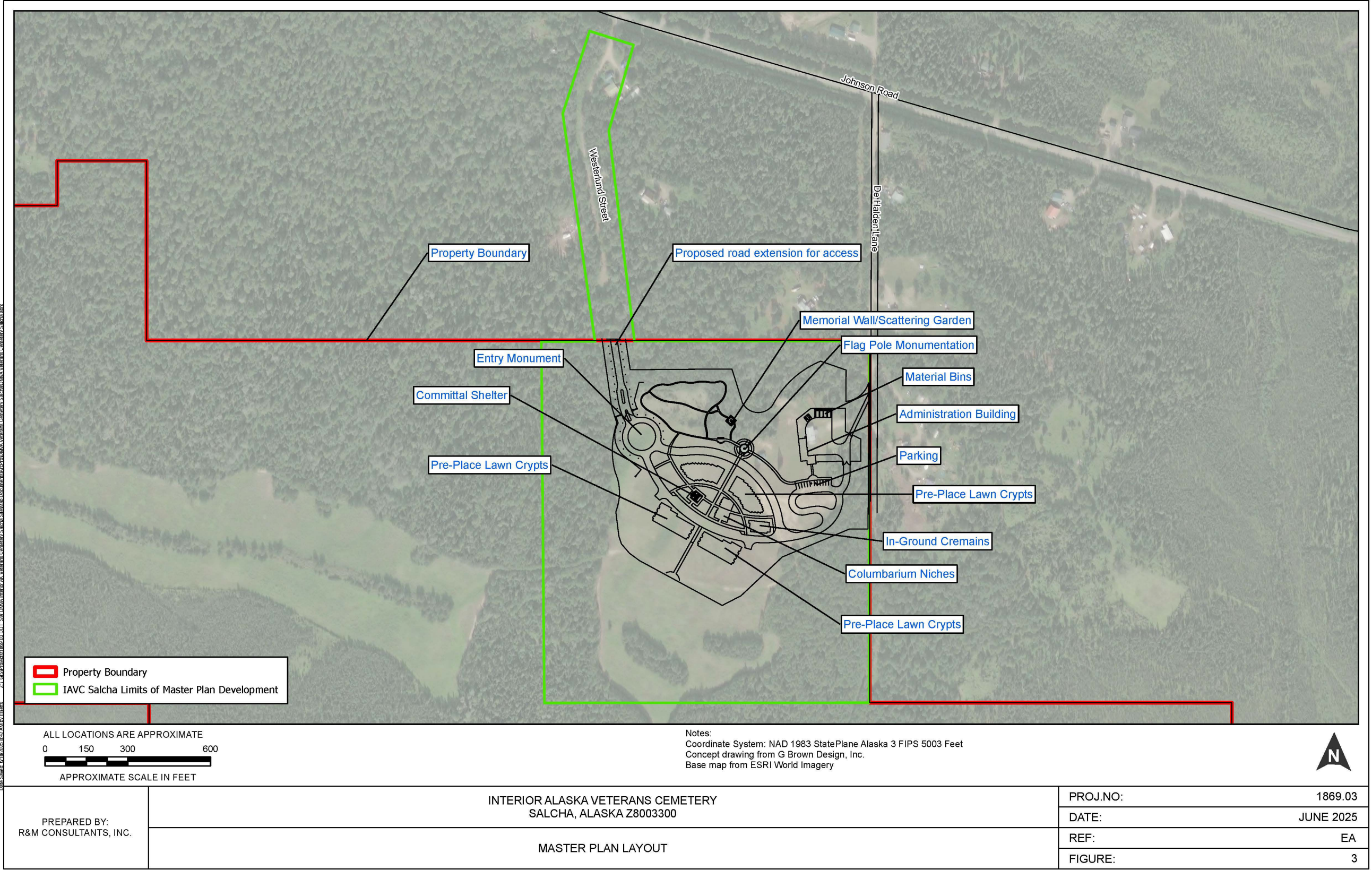
The Proposed Action would develop a cemetery for Veterans of Alaska as well as a place for memorial services and periodic visitations by friends and family members. The Proposed Action includes the full Master Plan developed for the IAVC and is comprised of two Phases (Figure 3). Phase I activities include the following items which would result in approximately 15 acres of disturbance to the 257.5-acre parcel:

- construction of entrance road, parking areas, and pathways,
- installation of 600 columbarium niches (two walls), 358 pre-placed crypts, and space for 294 in-ground cremains,
- widening and paving of Westerlund Street, within the existing right-of-way, to provide primary access to the cemetery from Johnson Road,
- grading and resurfacing De Halden Lane,
- construction of an administration / maintenance building with garage,
- construction of an entry monument and gate, committal shelter, memorial wall, flag assembly area, cremated remains scattering garden, and public information center,
- the existing well will be improved and a septic system will be installed along with fencing, gate(s), lights, fuel storage, signage, and drainage structures as appropriate.

Phase II components represent the remaining build out of the IAVC through 2076 based on anticipated internment needs. These components include the installation of 1,000 columbarium niches (five walls), 2,272 pre-placed crypts, and 798 in-ground cremain plots.

The Proposed Action also includes long term operation of the cemetery. Operations would include administration activities, custodial services, and regularly scheduled landscaping and maintenance to ensure the upkeep of the grounds and associated physical infrastructure such as roads and buildings.

Figure 3. Master Plan Layout



2.1.2 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, the DMVA would not construct a cemetery or any of the items associated with the Proposed Action. The No Action Alternative would not meet the purpose and need for the project but is kept for further analysis to provide a baseline with which to compare potential effects of the Proposed Action.

2.1.3 ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION

No major alternatives to the IAVC Master Plan were considered. Several small iterations of the design were made before finalizing the details of the Master Plan. The Proposed Action was designed to meet the purpose and need defined for this project while also working with the existing landscape to both limit unnecessary environmental impacts and highlight the existing natural beauty of the project location.

2.2 COMPARISON OF THE POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF THE ANALYZED ALTERNATIVES

A description of the environmental resources and potential impacts resulting from the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative are detailed in **Section 3. Table 1** provides a comparison of the results of this analysis.

Table. 1. Comparison of the Potential Effects of the Analyzed Alternatives

Resource Category	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
Aesthetics	Minor adverse impact to adjacent landowners	No Impact
Air Quality	Short-term minor impact from construction. No long-term impacts	No Impact
Cultural Resources	No impact expected	No Impact
Geology and Soils	Minor adverse impact from 15-acre ground disturbance	No Impact
Hydrology and Water Quality	Short term minor impact from construction. No long-term impact	No Impact
Wildlife and Habitat	Short term minor impact from construction. No long-term impact	No Impact
Noise	Short term minor impacts from construction and minor long-term impacts from rifle salutes.	No impact
Land Use	Minor negative impacts due to increased traffic offset by benefit of better road maintenance	No Impact
Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Zone Management	No impacts expected	No Impact
Socioeconomics	Beneficial impact from local employment opportunity	No Impact
Community Services and Utilities	No impacts expected	No Impact
Solid and Hazardous Materials	Minor negative impacts possible from storage of chemicals on-site	No Impact
Transportation and Parking	Minor negative impacts due to increased traffic offset by improved road maintenance	No Impact

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This section describes the existing conditions for the area that would be affected by the Proposed Action as well as the baseline condition of the resource categories. The section also provides the regulatory framework for assessing impacts to the identified resource categories. Under this framework, a description of potential impacts resulting from the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative are provided.

3.1 CRITERIA FOR THE ANALYSIS OF IMPACTS

The potential impacts of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative are analyzed in order to determine if any significant impacts to the quality of the human environment would occur. For the purposes of this analysis, the potential impacts are described in terms of the magnitude of the impact, duration (short-term or long-term), whether they are direct or indirect, and whether they are adverse or beneficial. The magnitude of an impact is based on its context and intensity. The context of an impact refers to the affected environment in which an action would occur and can be described as local, regional, national, or all three. The intensity of an impact refers to the severity of the impact, which may vary from negligible, to minor, to moderate, and then major or significant. Significant impacts are those that, due to their context and intensity, warrant heightened evaluation to fulfill the purposes and policies of NEPA. A finding of a reasonably foreseeable significant impact would require further evaluation, and a FONSI could not be issued. Other terms used in the analysis of impacts are the terms short-term or long-term. A short-term impact may be limited to the time it would take to construct a project while a long-term impact would continue for the life of the project. Direct or indirect impacts differ in that direct impacts are caused by an action and occur at the same time and place whereas indirect impacts may occur later or at a distant location and may result either from the action or from a direct impact of the action. Finally, it is important to note that an action can have either an adverse or a beneficial outcome, or a combination of both.

3.2 RESOURCES ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

Environmental Justice was not analyzed. The regulatory framework for including environmental justice came from Executive Order 12898 – Environmental Justice. This Executive Order, enacted in 1994, was revoked on January 21, 2025. Coastal Zone Management was also eliminated from further analysis both because the project site is several hundred miles from the coast and because the Alaska Coastal Management Program expired on July 1, 2011.

3.3 AESTHETICS

This section focuses on the visual setting of the Proposed Action area. The visual character of an area can be protected under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act, as well as through Federal, State, and local authorities such as zoning ordinances or management plans.

3.3.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project parcel is predominantly undisturbed woodland areas to the north and wetland areas to the south with approximately 30 acres cleared for agricultural use and previous homesteading activities. Buildings on the property include a cabin and barn dating to the mid-1980s. The surrounding land uses are residential and vacant land. The property has a gradual topographic change from north to south, with an elevation of 880 feet above sea level at the northeast corner down

to 690 feet along the southern boundary. Much of the site has views of the Alaska Range and the Tanana River to the southwest. The site is not near the coast and no Wild and Scenic Rivers are located nearby. Cultural resources will be discussed in further detail in **Section 3.6**. The project parcel is not subject to any zoning restrictions related to the visual character of the site. See **Section 3.4** for further discussion of local land use regulations.

3.3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

The existing cabin and barn will be removed as part of the Proposed Action. The structures are in good condition and the State has an agreement with the local American Legion to relocate the structures, if possible, rather than demolish them. Most of the development associated with the Proposed Action will be within areas of the project parcel already cleared for homestead/agricultural activities. The existing clearing for these activities took advantage of the site topography, clearing the flattest areas for planting crops and building structures. The topographic change from the top of the site to the bottom results in extended views to the southwest and includes part of the Alaska mountain range and views of the Tanana River. Site development will take advantage of these striking views, taking care to showcase the view, not obscure it. There will be a shift in the built environment as the cabin, barn, and other associated structures such as a greenhouse, and workshop are removed, and the cemetery features are constructed. Much of the disturbed cemetery area will be comprised of below ground crypts which are pre-cast cement structures buried at least two feet below ground. Standard burial headstones or markers will accompany each gravesite. Other features of the cemetery, in addition to a one-story administration building, are a committal shelter, memorial wall, and columbariums. The columbariums are wall-like structures where cremains can be interred. All of the features of the cemetery will be designed to maintain the cemetery:

“as a place of honor and memory that declares to the visitor or family member who views it that, within its majestic setting, each and every Veteran may find a sense of serenity, historic sacrifice and nobility of purpose. Each visitor should depart feeling that the grounds, the gravesites, and the environs of the national cemetery are a beautiful and awe-inspiring tribute to those who gave much to preserve our Nation’s freedom and way of life” (NCA 2009).

A woodland buffer will remain around the site which should prevent a change in the visual landscape for adjacent property owners. The exception to this is the improvement to Westerlund Street. Tree clearing within the Westerlund Street right-of-way (ROW) will likely be needed which may impact the visual separation from the road and some adjacent landowners. The State has been in contact with local landowners as described in **Section 4.0**. Construction activities temporarily affecting aesthetics may include parked construction equipment, excavation/grading, mud after rain events, heavy equipment and contractor vehicles using the adjoining roads, and perimeter controls such as fiber rolls or silt fences surrounding the disturbance areas. There are no identified cultural resources within or adjacent to the site that would be affected by the Proposed Action (see **Section 3.6** for more details). There are also no protected waterways or coastal areas within or adjacent to the site. Given that the Proposed Action will seek to work with the natural beauty of the site, the design of the cemetery is planned to work with the existing scenery promoting development in areas that have already been cleared and will maintain forested and wetland areas, the Proposed Action is not expected to result in an adverse impact to the aesthetics of the site. Only a minor adverse impact is expected for adjacent property owners.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no changes to the visual character of the project parcel would occur.

3.4 LAND USE

Relevant national land use policies are largely limited to the Farmland Protection Policy Act which regulates federal actions with the potential to convert important farmland to non-agricultural uses. Otherwise, land use is generally subject to State and local regulations. The project parcel is located within the FNSB which has a Borough Code of Ordinances including Title 18, Zoning Code, administered by the FNSB Planning and Zoning Division. At the State level, Alaska State Code (AS 29.40.030) requires that all Second Class Boroughs, like the FNSB, maintain a comprehensive plan.

3.4.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project parcel is zoned GU-1, General Use District. This district is intended for rural areas where community sewer and water systems are unavailable. Permitted uses include outdoor shooting ranges and any use except for correctional facilities. The project parcel also falls within an area designated as Outlying Area within the Salcha-Badger Road Area Plan. According to the Area Plan, this land use category is defined as very rural areas where land use conflicts are less likely to occur due to remoteness (FNSB 2019). A primary land use goal as stated in the Salcha-Badger Road Area Plan (FNSB 2019) is to maintain a balance between the area's predominantly small town and rural character with ready access to open space as well as vital community commercial areas in population centers while protecting private property rights and providing for freedom to enjoy public and private properties without creating land use conflicts. There is evidence of trails crisscrossing the southern portion of the project property. There is no development from the southern portion of the property down to the Little Salcha River. This area is wetlands in the summer but is accessible by snowmachine in the winter. According to the FNSB Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan (FNSB 2023) the Little Salcha River trail runs from Johnson Road down to, and then adjacent to, the Little Salcha River approximately a quarter mile east of the project property. The topic of farmland conversion is discussed in **Section 3.7**.

3.4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would result in the project parcel being converted from use as a homestead to a cemetery. This change in the use of the property is not prohibited by local zoning regulations nor does it conflict with the goals of the local land use plan. The minimally adverse impact experienced by adjacent property owners due to the slight decrease in the rural nature of the area as a result of road upgrades and increased vehicular traffic are believed to be offset by the beneficial impact of having this local area of natural beauty available to the public.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in no development of the site by the DMVA although land use would not continue as a homestead unless the parcel were sold by the State.

3.5 AIR QUALITY

Air Quality is regulated under the Clean Air Act (CAA) by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) is responsible for implementing general conformity with the national standards through a State Implementation Plan (SIP). The SIP establishes limits and work standards to limit emissions of six criteria air pollutants for which the EPA has established National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The air quality in each region or area of the country is classified as being an attainment area, nonattainment area, or a maintenance area based on NAAQS compliance.

3.5.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Portions of the FNSB are designated as a maintenance area for carbon monoxide and nonattainment for particulate matter (PM_{2.5}). Neither of these designations applies to Salcha or the project parcel. Local emissions from wood stoves, burning distillate oil, industrial sources, and mobile emissions contribute to the particulate pollution. Areas with higher concentrations of industrial areas and homes with wood stove heating are where higher concentrations of PM_{2.5} are found within the FNSB, particularly in winter.

3.5.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

The administration building will be heated with a boiler that runs on heating oil. The committal shelter will be heated using electric heating units, as needed. The administration building will include wiring for a backup generator should funding allow for one to be added. It is expected that the generator would only be used when power to the building was lost and therefore not anticipated to result in sufficient emissions so as to require an air quality permit. Traffic will increase with visitations to the cemetery and maintenance crews utilizing equipment to upkeep the grounds, however, these impacts are expected to remain minor in nature.

Construction activities may result in a temporary impact to air quality due to the exposure of soils to wind erosion. To reduce fugitive dust emissions, the construction contractor will implement simple measures such as watering of unpaved and disturbed areas, limiting the extent of ground disturbing activities at any one time, and stabilizing inactive areas and soil stockpiles. Construction equipment will be regularly maintained and kept in good operating condition and shut down when not in use to reduce emissions and limit air quality impacts. Excess soil should be removed from vehicles prior to leaving the construction site to prevent off-site transport. Proactive dust control measures will effectively eliminate and or minimize dust during construction activities to the extent possible.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no emissions would result which would affect air quality.

3.6 CULTURAL RESOURCES

The NHPA established the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertaking (or action) on properties listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP.

Other regulations relevant to the evaluation of cultural resources include Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

3.6.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the Proposed Action was defined as the entire 257.5-acre project parcel as well as the right-of-way along Westerlund Street from the project parcel to Johnson Road. A preliminary desktop review of the APE, including a search of the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS) database was conducted by True North Sustainable Development Solutions in September 2023, followed by a field investigation in June 2024. No previously documented cultural resources were identified, and no evidence of existing cultural resources were found. Buildings on the site were constructed in the mid-1980s and not considered old enough for evaluation for inclusion in the NRHP.

3.6.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

The DMVA has followed the Section 106 process in the determination of potential impacts to cultural resources resulting from the Proposed Action. The NCA of the VA delegated authority for NHPA Section 106 Consultation to the DMVA. In addition to the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the DMVA initiated consultation with the Tanana Chiefs Conference, the FNSB Historical Commission, the Healy Lake Tribe, and Tanacross Village. The results of the cultural resources investigation led to a determination that there are no cultural resources within the APE and a finding of No Historic Properties Affected was made by DMVA. SHPO concurred with this determination on March 21, 2025. The FNSB Historical Commission concurred with the determination on March 16, 2025. Communication with the Healy Lake Tribe and Tanacross Village resulted in some concerns for the presence of cultural resources within the project area. DMVA proposed the creation of an Inadvertent Discovery Plan (IDP) which outlines mitigation measures such as training for the Contractor about what to look for when excavating in order to identify potential artifacts. The IDP would also identify actions to be taken should such artifacts be encountered during construction. Section 106 correspondence is included in **Appendix B** and the Cultural Resource Investigation Report is in **Appendix C**. Please note, these documents have been redacted as necessary due to the sensitive nature of the content.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in no impact to cultural resources.

3.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

The Farmland Protection Policy Act attempts to limit federal actions that diminish, reduce, or convert farmland from agricultural use to non-agricultural use. No other federal regulations specifically pertain to the protection of geology and soils.

3.7.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey provides soil classification information including whether a location is considered prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, farmland of local importance, or unique

farmland. Although portions of the project parcel were used for agriculture from the mid-1990s to 2021, the area is not listed as prime farmland or given any other designation of state or local importance.

The project parcel is characterized by steeper, wooded terrain along the top two thirds of the site transitioning to flatter wetlands along the southern border of the project. The property is located in the Yukon-Tanana Uplands (Wahrhaftig, 1965). The Yukon-Tanana Upland is a mountainous region between the Yukon and Tanana Rivers comprised of Precambrian and early Paleozoic aged sedimentary and volcanic rocks containing limestone units and Precambrian schist, gneiss, and quartzite bedrock (USGS 1974). The Yukon-Tanana Uplands are blanketed by a layer of windblown silt (loess) stemming from the proglacial floodplains of streams beginning in the Alaska Range many miles south of the Tanana River. This loess covers portions of the middle and upper slopes and lower ridge tops and is generally absent from the highest ridges and thickens downslope. Loess on the lower slopes and valley bottoms is mixed with varying amounts of organics and schist fragments. Nearby well logs indicate bedrock was encountered at 13 and 195 feet below ground surface (bgs). Soils across the site are characterized as silt loam underlain by frozen silt loam, and overlain by mucky silt loam, decomposed plant material, and peat.

3.7.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would result in up to 15 acres of ground disturbance. Construction activities would remove vegetative cover and soils to a maximum depth of 20 feet in certain areas as warranted by site topography. The project will require coverage under the Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (APDES) Construction General Permit (CGP). This coverage will require the Contractor to develop a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) which will include best management practices (BMPs) for the minimization of soil erosion both from wind and water. These BMPs will include construction phasing to limit the amount of disturbed soil at any given time, applying water or dust palliative, if needed, to prevent wind erosion, and maintaining soil stockpiles to prevent erosion. No extensive excavation, cut slopes, or demolition are proposed which would impact the overall topography and subsurface features of the site. The Proposed Action would have a minor adverse effect on local geology and soils. Because the area is not considered unique or prime farmland, there is no impact to farmland associated with the Proposed Action.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in no on-site excavation or soil disturbance and therefore no impact on local geology or soils. Even under the No Action Alternative, the project parcel would not continue to be used for farming.

3.8 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

The Clean Water Act (CWA) and the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) are the primary federal regulations relevant to the assessment of hydrology and water quality. The SDWA allows the EPA to set standards for drinking water quality and prohibits federal agencies from funding actions that would contaminate drinking water sources. Sections 303(d), 401, 402 and 404 of the CWA establish a structure for regulating the discharge of pollutants to waters of the United States.

3.8.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The nearest public water system is over three miles northwest of the project parcel. The designated drinking water protection areas defined by ADEC for this system (Salcha Community Water Point) do not overlap the project parcel. The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) maintains a Well Log Tracking System database which shows two private wells within 1,600 feet of the project parcel. The existing water well on the property is approximately 185 feet deep based on the water rights recorded with DNR under Land Administration System (LAS) File Number 19526. A well yield test performed in 2022 indicates the source could handle a pump rate greater than the 8 gallons per minute (gpm) used for the test, although upgrades to the well would be needed. A sample of the water from the well yield test was sent for testing and meets drinking water quality standards. Existing water rights for the well were transferred to the State after the property was purchased. The permitted water usage is for 500 gpd for year-round residential use and an additional 1,000 gpd for seasonal (summer) land and garden use. The analytes and parameters tested came back below clean up levels and the mineral content did not raise to a level of concern. The nearest surface water body to the project parcel is an unnamed stream located approximately 980 feet downslope of the southeast property corner. The stream flows southwest into the Little Salcha River which flows west to the Tanana River. Neither the Little Salcha River or the Tanana River is listed as an impaired water body by the State for not meeting Alaska's water quality standards.

3.8.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

The results of the well yield test indicate that pumping, even at an increased rate, would not cause significant drawdown that may affect adjacent wells. The current well may need to be improved if pumping rates greater than 8 gpm will be needed in the future. The only current change proposed for the well is a replacement of the existing water pump. Currently the project intends to utilize water trucks to provide irrigation during the growing season as irrigation systems in Alaska are prone to damage during the winter. Additional water rights are not expected to be needed at this time. The State may apply for additional water rights if more water is needed as part of future development. There are currently no nearby water rights holders so a request for additional water rights should not be a difficulty. Existing drainage patterns across the site will be maintained using vegetated drainage swales and culverts. Impervious surfaces will drain to swales or vegetated surfaces well before reaching any wetlands onsite. Given the distance to the nearest waterbody, and the continuous vegetation present from the limits of disturbance to these waterbodies, no surface water impacts are expected as part of this project. Despite BMPs being utilized to prevent stormwater runoff from transporting sediment from exposed soils during construction, there may be some temporary impacts directly adjacent to disturbed areas. The vegetated areas directly adjacent to the disturbance limits identified for the Proposed Action are not expected to be permanently altered should sediment transport occur. The project site is far enough from any public water systems so that impacts are not anticipated. The limits of disturbance area also far enough from identified wetlands that no negative impacts to wetlands are anticipated. See **Section 3.11** for a discussion of wetlands. No significant long-term groundwater impacts are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Action. Design of the IAVC includes concrete crypts. These crypts are buried two feet deep and overlain with two feet of soil. Caskets will be placed within these concrete crypts as per current NCA design standards. In addition, modern embalming fluids no longer use arsenic as a primary active ingredient and are commonly biodegradable. Based on these modern burial practices, it is unlikely that toxic embalming fluid or other decomposition byproducts will be released into the soil and/or

groundwater. The on-site well is located upgradient of the burial field and therefore should not be at risk of contamination should other containment measures fail. A new septic system will be installed to accommodate the administration building and the existing septic system will be decommissioned according to ADEC standards.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in no changes to local hydrology or water resources.

3.9 WILDLIFE AND HABITAT

Regulations governing the assessment of wildlife and habitat include the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species.

3.9.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project area is located in Interior Alaska, well away from any coastlines or marine mammal involvement. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) database identified no federally listed or candidate species or critical habitat within or adjacent to the project area. According to the IPaC report, included in Appendix C, Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) may be present within the project area, with the greatest probability of presence occurring in April, during the breeding season. No other migratory birds are listed in the IPaC report as being likely to occur within the project area. The Little Salcha River is listed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) as an Anadromous Water (AWC Code: 334-40-11000-2490-3325) with chum salmon found to be present. A search of the University of Alaska Anchorage Exotic Plants Information Clearinghouse Invasive Plants Mapper indicated no locations where invasive plant species have been identified within the proposed project area. Given the limited development of the site and maintenance of the disturbed areas for agricultural use, there is not a high expectation for finding invasive species on the site. Common wildlife found in the area include moose, grizzly and black bears, caribou, and wolves with smaller mammals such as wolverine, marten, mink, muskrat, beaver, fox, coyote, and lynx found in varying abundance.

3.9.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action will focus development on the portion of the project parcel that has already been cleared for homestead activities. The remaining wooded and wetland areas across the property will be left as they are. The other cleared portions of the property, not to be developed as part of current Master Plan for the IAVC, will not be maintained, although occasional mowing and brush clearing for fire prevention will occur. The impact to wildlife habitat is expected to be indirect and minor. Construction activities that include heavy machinery and loud noise may result in direct, temporary impacts to nearby wildlife disturbed by the noise. All on-site revegetation and landscaping will require the use of native plant species and organic fertilizer. Where native species are not feasible, there will be a requirement that no noxious weeds or other invasive species are used. No pesticides or fungicides are proposed as part of regular operations and may only be utilized should an infestation occur. Any use would follow NCA guidance and require approval of the cemetery manager.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in no changes to the existing vegetation at the site and would therefore have no impact on local wildlife and habitat.

3.10 NOISE

With the exception of the Noise Control Act passed in 1972 and amended by the Quiet Communities Act of 1978, much of the consideration of noise impacts stems from local land use rules and regulations which typically set zoning codes and ordinances to prevent noise pollution or restrict it to certain areas and/or times of day.

3.10.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project parcel was used as a homestead from the mid-1990s to approximately 2021. Farm equipment, all-terrain vehicles, and snow machines may have been common noises. The parcel is currently vacant and no noise generating activities occur on the site. The rural nature of the area tends toward larger parcels, typically several acres in size.

3.10.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

As mentioned in the Land Use **Section 3.4** the Salcha-Badger Road Area Plan designates the project area as an Outlying Area which is defined as very rural areas where land use conflicts are less likely to occur due to remoteness. The northeast corner of the project parcel is where the Proposed Action is focused. This portion of the property is closest to adjacent neighbors. Construction activities are likely to result in noise levels noticeable by the closest neighbors. Work hours may be limited to 7am to 7pm in order to mitigate impacts to these neighbors. Regular mowing and groundskeeping would be similar in sound to regular residential activities and likely not louder than previous noise levels associated with homestead activities at the site. Rifle salutes may accompany some burial ceremonies. These would be limited to cemetery business hours which are 8am to 4pm Monday through Friday and notice will be provided to adjacent landowners prior to each ceremony in which a rifle salute will occur. The administration building will be equipped to handle a generator which would be utilized if power to the building was disrupted. The use of a generator could affect nearby landowners although the increased noise would be temporary. Noise impacts are therefore considered minor due to their short duration. A minor noise impact to adjacent landowners is expected due to the limited nature of the rifle salutes as well.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in no man-made noise producing activities which would be result in no noise impacts.

3.11 FLOODPLAINS AND WETLANDS

The protection of wetlands is established under Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands. Floodplain impacts are regulated under the National Flood Insurance Act, Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management.

3.11.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A wetland delineation of the project parcel was performed following the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) three parameter approach for defining wetlands defined in the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual (USACE 1987) and the methodology described in the Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Alaska Region (Regional Supplement; USACE 2007). The results largely confirm the wetland areas shown on the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory mapper with some refining of the actual boundaries. **Figure 4** shows the wetland areas within and adjacent to the project parcel. With the exception of a small area at the northwest corner of the property, wetlands are limited to the southern half of the project parcel and continue down to the Little Salcha River. Wetland types included forested wetlands at the northern extents of the wetlands changing to more saturated wetlands with less woody vegetation. The wetland report is included in **Appendix C**.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map number 02090C6450J, effective date March 17, 2014, covers the project area. There is a Zone A Special Flood Hazard Area defined for the Little Salcha River and the southern portion of the unnamed stream that runs adjacent to the southeast corner of the project parcel. The Special Flood Hazard Area stops several hundred feet south of the project parcel.

3.11.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

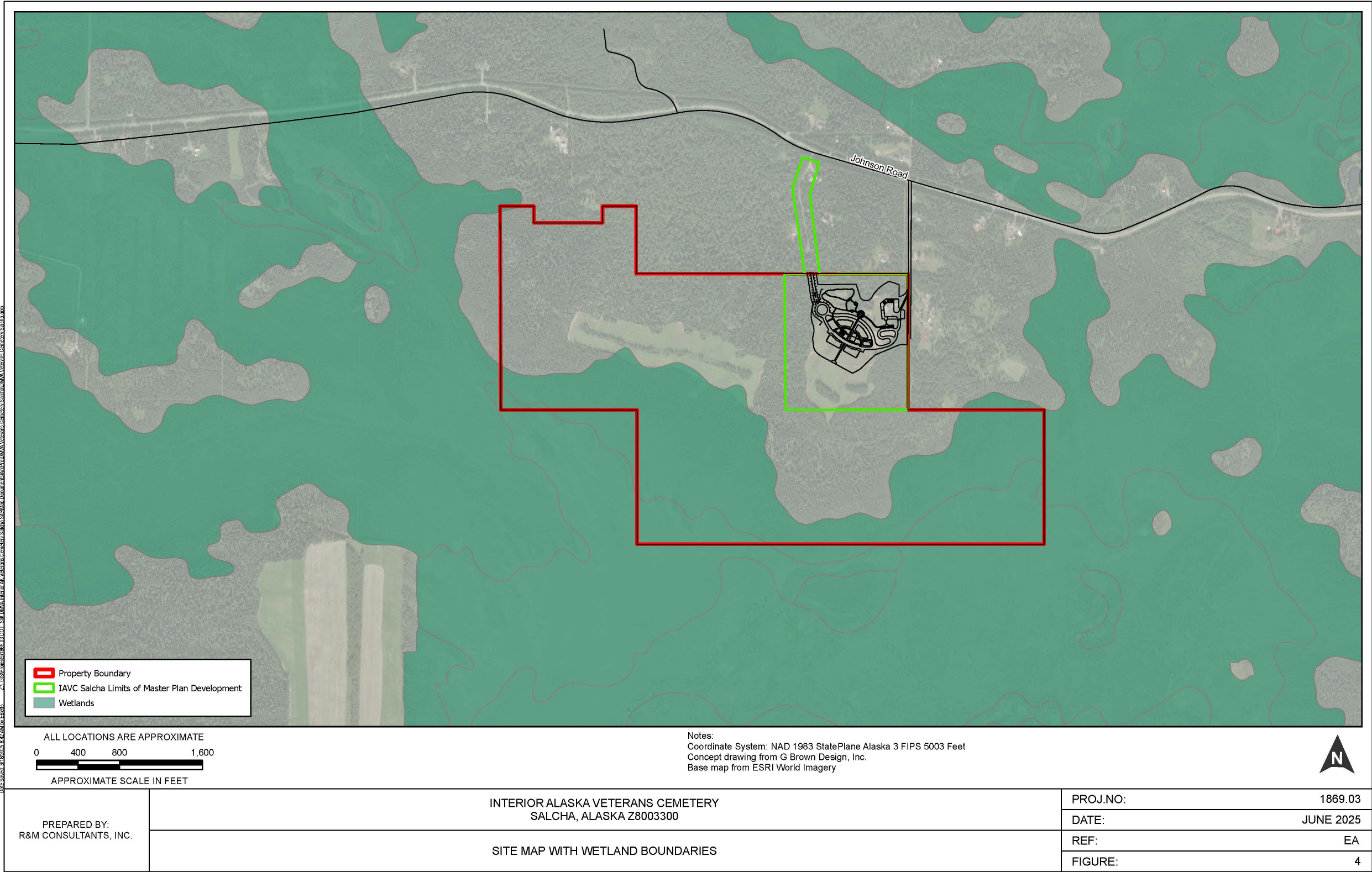
The Proposed Action will avoid development beyond the upland areas confirmed by the wetland delineation therefore no long-term wetland impacts are proposed as part of the Proposed Action. Although stormwater BMPs will be utilized during construction to prevent the transport of sediment-laden water beyond the construction limits, minor, temporary impacts to wetlands directly adjacent to the construction area could occur.

No long-term or short-term impacts to floodplains are likely to occur as a result of the Proposed Action due to the distance of the nearest flood hazard area from the project parcel. Because the project parcel is higher in elevation than the Little Salcha River and the nearby tributary stream, the project parcel and therefore the Proposed Action are not likely to experience any flooding from these waterbodies.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative will not result in any development on the project parcel therefore there would be no impact to wetlands or floodplains resulting from this alternative.

Figure 4 Site Map with Wetland Boundaries



3.12 SOCIOECONOMICS

The economic or social effects of an action are not themselves given a significance determination. The significance of an action's impacts is dependent on whether the socioeconomic impacts are interrelated with or inseparable from a physical or natural environmental effect.

3.12.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

According to the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, Salcha has a population of 1,012 people (in 2023), is predominantly white (80%), and has a median household income of \$72,083 (2019-2023 average) (DCCED 2025). Local employment options are typically small businesses. Salcha is also located between two military bases. Eielson Air Force Base is 7.5 miles to the north and U.S. Army Garrison Alaska, Fort Greely is 65 miles to the south.

3.12.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would include an estimated three permanent employees as well as additional seasonal staff brought on in the summer. These employees would likely be local, Veteran hires. The influx of visitors to the IAVC would also increase traffic through Salcha and potentially result in more frequent visitors to local coffee shops, restaurants, etc.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in no change to the local economy or social conditions.

3.13 COMMUNITY SERVICES AND UTILITIES

Similar to the investigation of socioeconomic impacts, there are no direct federal regulations governing the assessment of impacts to community services or utilities, but impacts to a community can lead to public controversy.

3.13.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project parcel is currently served by a private well and septic system. No municipal public water or sewer systems are available in this area. A local transfer site serves as the local trash disposal site where containers are available for dumping of refuse and household hazardous waste. The FNSB then transfers material from the site to the local landfill on a regular basis. Electric service is available via an overhead power line running to the project property. Local fire and emergency medical services are provided by Salcha Fire and Rescue. Salcha Fire and Rescue operates as a volunteer fire department with no funding from the FNSB. They have one fire truck and 22-25 volunteers on their roster. They do receive funding from the Borough for emergency medical services support and have two ambulances on-site. The project site is not within an FNSB road service area which means that road maintenance such as regular plowing in the winter is the responsibility of local landowners. Law enforcement in the area falls under the jurisdiction of the Alaska State Troopers.

3.13.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action should not require significantly higher energy demands than the previous homestead use of the property. There is an existing power pole connection to the site so no change to the existing electric service is anticipated. The local electric utility, Golden Valley Electric Association, operates and maintains 3,261 miles of transmission and distribution lines as well as 9 generating facilities. Their system serves the Alaska Railbelt from Homer to Fairbanks. No other public utilities are available at the site. Any construction debris will be taken to the FNSB landfill which has capacity for local construction debris. A discussion with the local fire and emergency medical services provider, Salcha Fire and Rescue, confirmed that they anticipate a 7-minute response time to the site and do not feel the project is outside of their current capacity nor would create a burden to local services. The IAVC is a benefit to the community by providing a place for local veterans to be buried in a beautiful setting in recognition for their service. Family and friends have a place to visit, remember, and pay tribute. The IAVC will be a place where the military ideals of honor, pride, service, and freedom are preserved.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in no changes to community services or local utilities and therefore no impacts.

3.14 SOLID AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Federal regulations that govern solid and hazardous materials include the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act which focuses on existing hazardous waste sites, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act which regulates the generation, storage, transportation, and disposal of hazardous waste, the Emergency Planning and Right to Know Act which requires that state and local governments as well as the general public be informed of potential chemical hazards, the Oil Pollution Act which along with the Clean Water Act, provides authority for regulating oil spill prevention measures and the Toxic Substance Control Act which regulates chemical substances. There are also several regulations regarding pesticide use including the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, the Federal Environmental Pesticide Act, the Food Quality Protection Act, and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

3.14.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A Phase I ESA of the project property was completed in 2022 (included in **Appendix C**), prior to purchase by the State. Historical use of the site, current conditions on the site, and a records search of the surrounding area did not indicate any reason to expect contaminated materials, including soil or groundwater to be found on the property.

3.14.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

Based on the findings of the Phase I ESA, there is no expectation that contaminated soil or groundwater will be encountered during construction. The ADEC Contaminated Sites group was included in the Agency Scoping for this project and responded that the nearest contaminated site was located 1.6 miles southwest of the project site (see **Appendix A** for agency scoping correspondence). A 500-gallon home heating oil tank will be used to heat the administrative building constructed as part of the Proposed Action. An additional 250-gallon diesel and 250-gallon fuel above ground storage tanks (ASTs) will be located near the maintenance facilities to provide fuel for equipment. The use of above ground tanks allows for easy evaluation of the tanks including identification of leaks. There may also be limited pesticide use also associated with groundskeeping. All materials will be labeled and handled according to State and Federal guidelines to prevent against any accidental spills. With

regular inspections of the above ground tanks and proper storage and handling of all petroleum products, oils and lubricants and pesticides, the Proposed Action should not result in more than a minor impact.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would not result in the generation of solid or hazardous waste.

3.15 TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

While there are federal regulations governing the effect of transportation projects on local parks, historic sites, and wildlife refuges (U.S. Department of Transportation Act and Land and Water Conservation Fund Act), the impact to transportation and parking facilities is delegated to the state and local agencies that manage these resources.

3.15.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project parcel is located approximately 1,000 feet back from Johnson Road, a paved two-lane road. Access to the IAVC site is approximately 3.4 miles down Johnson Road from the Richardson Highway. The site can currently be accessed via De Halden Lane, which is an unimproved dirt road with limited ROW, meaning adjacent parcels directly abut the road with existing structures in close proximity. Westerlund Street extends from Johnson Road but ends just before the northern edge of the project parcel. Westerlund Street has a wider ROW than De Halden Lane. De Halden Lane and Westerlund Street are not within a local road service area which means that road maintenance such as plowing is not provided by the FNSB. Johnson Road is maintained by the DOT&PF. No gravel roads or parking areas are located on the project parcel. Routes of travel and places for parking are evident but these have not been paved or otherwise improved by the placement of gravel.

3.15.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action will require improvements to Westerlund Street, but these can all be achieved within the existing ROW. The increase in traffic resulting in the change from a private homestead to a public cemetery would not exceed the capacity of Johnson Road, or Westerlund Street once the improvements are made. An estimated 14 visitors per day is expected apart from holidays such as Memorial Day when this number will be exceeded. Sufficient parking will be included in the project design to accommodate regular visitor traffic. Parking on holidays will extend to shoulders along the paved routes within the cemetery and along Westerlund Street. Operating procedures will include provisions for parking support during those high traffic holidays to ensure that neighbor access along Westerlund Street is not impeded. Impacts from increased traffic to the site will be offset by improvements to Westerlund Street. DOT&PF has also expressed a desire to improve Johnson Road and the increased use resulting from the IAVC may help to secure funding for future improvements.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in no changes to the local transportation system and therefore would cause no impacts.

3.16 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts are those impacts which result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such actions. The Proposed Action consists of the design components proposed for both Phase I and II of the Master Plan for the site even though only Phase I is to be constructed in the short-term. Because the Master Plan includes the likely 50-year needs of the cemetery, any activities for the site beyond this time frame are outside of the realm of reasonably foreseeable future actions. Other actions that may occur in the area within this time frame include potential land use changes to adjacent properties and future upgrades to Johnson Road. Improvements to Johnson Road would likely have a positive impact on the project in that access to and from the cemetery would be improved. The zoning for adjacent properties is the same General Use District (GU-1) as the project parcel, which allows for a variety of land uses. Many land uses which could have a negative impact on the cemetery require conditional use permits from the FNSB. These include large scale developments, landfills, residential cluster development, marijuana cultivation or manufacturing, and outdoor shooting range. The State would have an opportunity to provide comment on any development which requires a conditional use permit.

3.17 POTENTIAL FOR GENERATING SUBSTANTIAL CONTROVERSY

The DMVA has solicited input from various federal, State, and local government agencies as well as the general public concerning the Proposed Action. None of the agencies or persons have expressed concerns with the Proposed Action that have the potential for generating substantial controversy. at this time. Input from the agencies and the public is summarized in **Section 4.O**.

4.0 AGENCY AND TRIBAL COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This section describes the agency, tribal and public outreach efforts conducted for the project.

4.1 AGENCY COORDINATION

Agency Coordination for this project began with the Section 106 consultation carried out in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA. The SHPO was provided with the Cultural Resources Investigation Report and correspondence indicating a Finding of No Historic Properties Affected on February 10, 2025. Refer to **Section 3.6** for additional discussion regarding Section 106 consultation. SHPO provided concurrence to the project finding on March 21, 2025. A copy of Section 106 correspondence is included in **Appendix B**.

Agency Scoping letters were sent to relevant resource agencies on April 2, 2025, and again on April 14, 2025. The second letter provided an update to the project scope which combined Phases I and II of the Master Plan into the current Proposed Action. A copy of these letters, distribution list, and all responses are included in **Appendix A**. A summary of comments and responses is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Agency Scoping Comments Received

Agency	Date	Comment
ADEC Contaminated Sites Program	4/4/2025	The DEC Contaminated Sites Program (CSP) has not identified any impacts from the project on the contaminated sites located approximately 1.6 miles southwest of the project site and there is no documented contamination within the project boundary.
ADEC Air Quality	4/15/2025	No Alaska Air Permit is needed for the proposed scope of this activity.
FNSB Community Planning	5/2/2025	<p>The subject property is zoned General Use (GU-1) (Attachment 1). GU-1 is a very permissive zone where cemeteries are permitted. Zoning Permits are recommended in this zone. The Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation (Attachment 2) for the subject property is “Outlying Area” in the Salcha-Badger Road Area Plan (2019) – which is for “Rural Areas. Land use conflicts are less likely due to remoteness. Few restrictions on use; certain high impact uses require additional conditional use review and/or larger minimum lot sizes.”</p> <p>It is recommended to contact a surveyor to ensure that any upgrades to the existing road or new construction is centered within the 50-foot-wide right-of-way for Westerlund Street.</p>
US Fish and Wildlife Service	5/9/2025	Project support communicated as well as opportunities to incorporate natural elements into the facility. Refer to Appendix A .

Agency	Date	Comment
AK SHPO	5/13/2025	The Alaska State Historic Preservation Office received your correspondence (dated April 14, 2025) concerning the subject project on May 7, 2025. Following our review of the documentation provided, we continue to concur with the finding of No Historic Properties Affected. Thank you for updating our office with the changes in the scope of work.

4.2 TRIBAL COORDINATION

Tribal coordination began in February 2025 when the DMVA began coordinating with the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), Healy Lake Tribe, Tanacross Village as part of the Section 106 consultation described in Section 3.6. TCC was sent an invitation to consult on February 11, 2025 and Healy Lake Tribe and Tanacross Village were sent invitation letters on March 4, 2025. These letters are included in **Appendix B**. In communication documented by DMVA Cultural Resources Manager Thomas Wolforth in the Section 106 communication summary provided in **Appendix B**, the Healy Lake Tribe and Tanacross Village expressed concern that previously unidentified cultural resources could be found in the area. Letters were sent to the Healy Lake Tribe, Tanacross Village, and Tanana Chiefs Conference on June 13, 2025 describing the components of the IDP. The Healy Lake Tribe responded on June 16, 2025 that the IDP addressed their concerns and requested to attend the prescribed training when it occurs. This communication is included in **Appendix B**. TCC, Tanacross Village and Healy Lake Tribe were also sent Agency Scoping Letters on April 2, 2025, and again on April 14, 2025. No responses were received.

4.3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The State implemented a public input webpage for the project hosted on DOT&PF's Engagement Hub. The website (<https://publicinput.com/x63182>) provides an overview of the project location, scope, timeline and opportunity to provide public feedback via the following project specific email address: dot.salchacemetery@alaska.gov. Most comments received were in general support of the project with a few exceptions. Public comments, and responses where necessary, are included in **Appendix A**. DMVA also hosted a public meeting May 29, 2025 in Fairbanks. A meeting summary is provided in **Appendix A**.

A Notice of Availability of the Draft EA and Draft FONSI was published on the State public notice website and in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner newspaper and both documents were made available for public review and comment from June 23 through July 25, 2025 via the State's public input and public notice websites. Hard copies were made available upon request.

5.0 MITIGATION

Mitigation measures include those actions taken to reduce, avoid, mitigate, or compensate for potential adverse effects. Based on the findings of this Draft EA, the following mitigation measures are proposed:

- Air Quality – The following measures will be implemented during construction: watering of unpaved and disturbed areas to reduce fugitive dust emissions, limiting extent of ground disturbing activities at any one time, stabilizing inactive areas and soil stockpiles, and regular equipment maintenance.
- Cultural Resources – The Inadvertent Discovery Plan developed for this project requires mandatory training and details procedures should any resources be identified during construction.
- Geology and Soils – The following measures will be implemented during construction: limiting the amount of soil disturbed at any given time, applying water or dust palliative, and maintaining soil stockpiles to prevent erosion.
- Hydrology and Water Quality – CGP coverage requires development of a SWPPP and appropriate BMPs to prevent the runoff of sediment-laden water.
- Wildlife and Habitat – All on-site revegetation and landscaping will require the use of native plant species and organic fertilizer.
- Noise – Work hours may be limited to 7 am to 7 pm in order to mitigate impacts from construction noise. Neighbors will be notified prior to burials accompanied by rifle salutes.
- Floodplains and Wetlands – Stormwater BMPs will be utilized during construction to prevent the transport of sediment-laden water beyond construction limits.
- Solid and Hazardous Materials – All materials used onsite will be labeled and handled according to State and Federal guidelines to prevent against any accidental spills. Above ground fuel storage tanks will be inspected regularly.
- Transportation and Parking – Proposed mitigation measures include improvements to Westerlund Street and De Halden Lane as well as regular road maintenance when the cemetery is in operation.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

This Draft EA evaluates the DMVA's Proposed Action to construct and operate a Veterans cemetery in Interior Alaska. This EA analyzed the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. This Draft EA concludes there would be no significant impact or cumulative adverse impact to the quality of the human and natural environment associated with the Proposed Action provided the DMVA implements routine management measures, regulatory compliance measures, BMPs and other mitigation measures as specified in this EA.

7.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

Name	Agency/Organization	Role
Kristi McLean	R&M Consultants, Inc.	Environmental Manager
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Donald B. Flournoy	DMVA	Reviewer
Patrick Geary	DMVA	Reviewer
Lauren Staft, PE	DOT&PF	Reviewer
Jeffrey Slaikeu	DMVA	Reviewer
Forrest Powell	DMVA	Reviewer
Verdie Bowen	DMVA	Reviewer/Signatory
Tom Paquelet	VA – VCGP	Reviewer/Concurrence Signatory

8.0 REFERENCES

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9.0 ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADEC	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ADNR	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
APDES	Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
APE	Area of Potential Effect
bgs	below ground surface
BMPs	Best Management Practices
CAA	Clean Air Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CGP	Construction General Permit
CSP	[ADEC] Contaminated Sites Program
CWA	Clean Water Act
DMVA	Alaska Department of Military Veterans Affairs
DOT&PF	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
EA	Environmental Assessment
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FNSB	Fairbanks North Star Borough
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
gpm	gallons per minute
IAVC	Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery
IDP	Inadvertent Discovery Plan
LAS	Land Administration System
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MP	Milepost
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NCA	National Cemetery Administration
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NRCS	National Resource Conservation Service
R&M	R&M Consultants, Inc.
ROW	right-of-way
SDWA	Safe Drinking Water Act
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SWPPP	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

USC	United States Code
USGS	United States Geological Society
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
VA	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VCGP	Veterans Cemetery Grants Program

Appendix A – Agency Scoping and Public Involvement

1. Agency Scoping Letter
2. Agency Responses
3. DOT&PF Project Website
4. Public Comments on Website and Responses
5. Public Meeting Summary (5/29/2025)
6. Draft EA Notice of Availability
7. Comments Received on Draft EA

Appendix B – Section 106 Consultation

1. Delegation of Authority Letter
2. SHPO Findings Letter
3. SHPO Concurrence
4. DMVA to VA Status of Consultation
5. Letters to Consulting Parties and Responses Received

Appendix C – Supporting Materials

1. Cultural Resources Investigation
2. Wetland Delineation and Functional Assessment
3. Phase I Environmental Site Assessment
4. IPaC Report