

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



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of Military and
Veterans' Affairs**

Office of Veterans' Affairs

4600 Debarr Road, Suite 180
Anchorage, AK 99508
Main: 907.334.0874
Fax: 907.334.0869

April 2, 2025

Re: Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery
Request for Scoping Comments

Dear Agency Representative:

The State of Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) to assess potential environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of a Veterans cemetery 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, USGS quad Big Delta C-6 (Figure 1).

The EA is being prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 US Code [USC] §4321 *et seq.*); the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508); 38 CFR part 26 (*Environmental Analysis of VA Actions*); and the VA Interim Guidance for Projects (September 2010). To assist in the early identification of any potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project, we request comments from federal, state, and local resource agencies with particular knowledge of, or jurisdiction over the affected environment.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide a veterans cemetery sited within Interior Alaska. The need for the Proposed Action is:

- 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 Fairbanks North Star Borough.
- The VA has a goal to locate a cemetery within 75 miles of 95% of the country's Veterans.
- At this time, the nearest dedicated Veterans cemetery to the Interior is Fort Richardson National Cemetery (350 miles), followed by the Sitka National Cemetery (750 miles).

Project Description

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. Project activities include construction of parking areas, pathways, installation of 600 columbarium niches (two walls) 350 pre-placed crypts, and space for 250 in-ground



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cremains (Figure 2). Westerlund Street will be widened and paved and a new access road from the end of Westerlund Street would be constructed to provide primary access to the cemetery from Johnson Road. Other project elements include construction of a shared administration / maintenance building with garage, entry monument and gate, committal shelter, memorial wall, flag assembly area, cremated remains scattering garden, and public information center (Figure 2). Utilities, including onsite water and wastewater, will be installed along with fencing, gate(s), lights, fuel storage, signage, and drainage structures as appropriate. Operation of the Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery (IAVC) would likely include administration, landscaping, and custodial services as well as associated maintenance of the facility appearance and associated physical infrastructure (e.g. roads, buildings).

Existing Site Conditions

The project area had been used as a residential homestead and consists of a cabin, workshop, barn, greenhouse, dog kennel, garden area, orchard, and two cleared agricultural fields. The existing structures will be relocated offsite. The parcel is just south of Johnson Road with residential properties to the northeast and west, with largely undisturbed land directly to the south. A master plan is being developed for the site, however only elements shown in Phase I have been funded and are shown on Figure 2. The Proposed Action being evaluated in the EA includes construction of Phase I design which will result in a fully operational cemetery, and the long-term operation of the facility. Future phases identified in the master plan will be assessed as potential cumulative impacts in the EA.

Environmental Considerations

The DMVA does not anticipate significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed project. An ASTM E-1527 Phase I Site Assessment was prepared for the property in October 2022 to support the real property transaction and no evidence of Recognized Environmental Conditions on the property was determined. A wetland delineation and functional assessment of the site was completed in March 2024. The Proposed Action will limit all development and land disturbance to upland areas, therefore no U.S. Army Corps of Engineers wetland permit is planned. No adverse impacts to land use or right-of-way are anticipated. No federally listed threatened or endangered species or critical habitat are located within the project area. Minor and/or temporary impacts to air quality, water quality, and other resource categories may be incurred during construction and beyond but are not expected to be significant.

National Historic Preservation Act Consultation

A cultural resources survey of the site was conducted in June 2024, and a determination of No Historic Properties Affected has been made in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office. DMVA has also consulted with the FNSB and is



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currently in consultation with the Tanana Chiefs Conference and the federally recognized tribes of Healy Lake and Tanacross Village.

To ensure that all factors are considered in the development of this proposed project, please provide your written comments within 30 days from the date of this correspondence to Kristi McLean with R&M Consultants, Inc. at 907-646-9689 or kmclean@rmconsult.com.

Sincerely,

Verdie A. Bowen Sr.

Verdie A. Bowen, Sr.
Director

Enclosures:

Figure 1: Location and Vicinity Map

Figure 2: Project Area – Phase I Development



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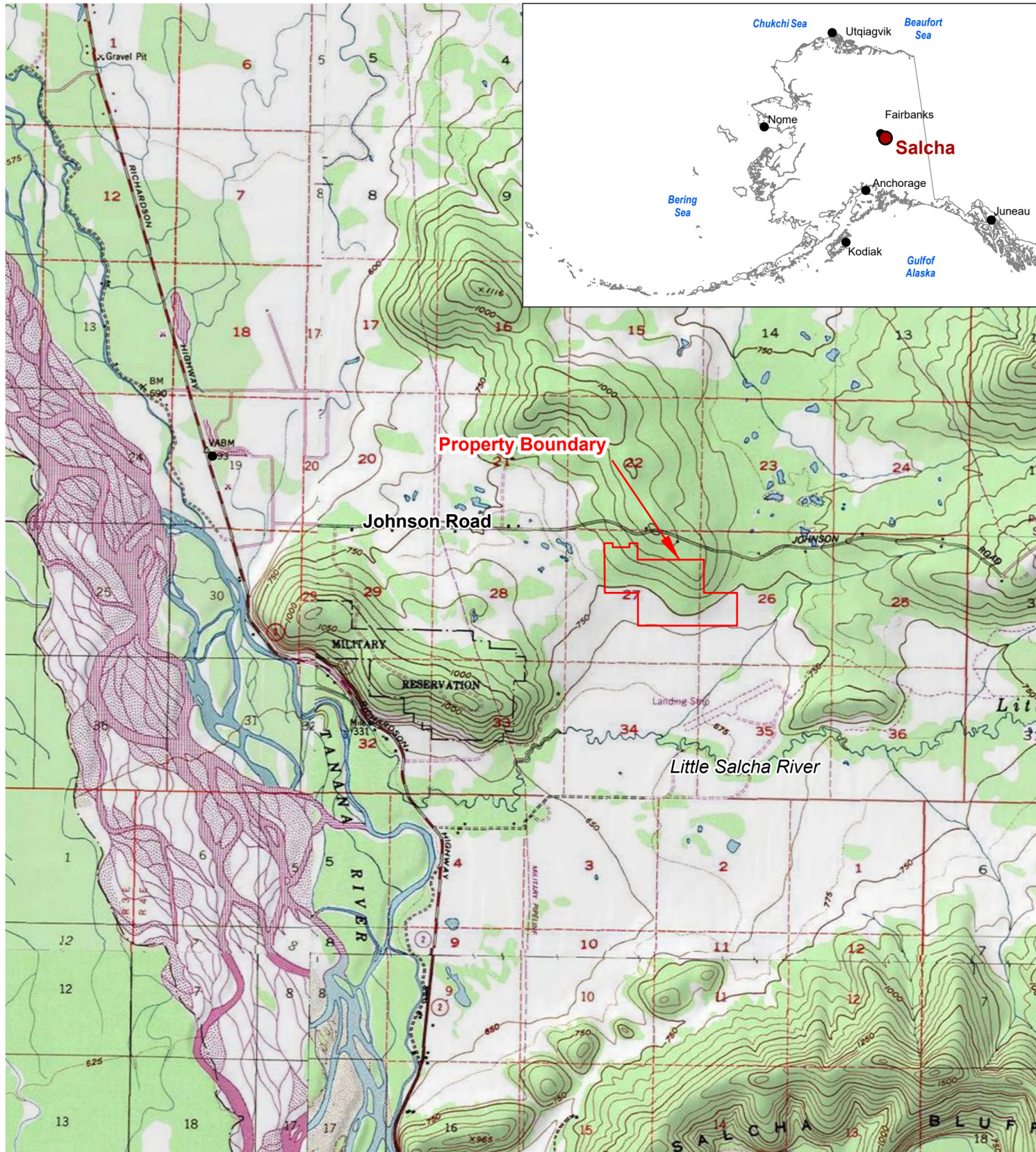
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Distribution List:

Mike Salyer, Regulatory Division Deputy Chief, USACE
Judith Bittner, State Historic Preservation Officer, ADNR – OHA
Cindy Heil, Air Non-Point and Mobile Sources Program Manager, ADEC
Jim Rypkema, Storm Water and Wetlands Program Manager, ADEC
Sarah Durand, Contaminated Sites Program, ADEC
James Plosay, Air Permit Program Manager, ADEC
Stewart Cogswell, Field Supervisor, USFWS
Trent Liebich, Branch Chief, USFWS
Tim St. Germain, Alaska State Plant Health Director, USDA APHIS
David Bergman, Alaska Wildlife Services State Director, USDA APHIS
Emma Pokon, Regional Administrator, US EPA Region 10
Scott Crockett, Acting State Conservationist, USDA NRCS
Doug Vincent-Lang, State Commissioner, ADF&G
Mindy O'Neill, Presiding Officer of the FNSB Assembly
Scott Crass, Deputy Presiding Officer FNSB Assembly
Kayde Whiteside, Planning Department Superintendent, FNSB
Thomas A. Steinbrunner, Executive Director Alaska VA Healthcare System
Jeremy Douse, ADNR Division of Forestry and Fire Protection
Katherine Keith, Northern Region Director, DOT&PF
Frank Tomaszewski, House Representative, Alaska State Legislature
Robert Meyers, Senator, Alaska State Legislature
Grier Hopkins, FNSB Mayor
Ricky Holland, Fire Chief, Salcha Fire and Rescue
Bob Sattler, Environmental Quality, Tanana Chiefs Conference
Thomas Paquelet, Project Manager, VA - Veterans Cemetery Grants Program
James Earp, Director, VA - Veterans Cemetery Grants Program
Jerry Isaac, Tribal Administrator, Tanacross Village
Evelynn Combs, Tribal Council, Healy Lake

CC: Lauren Staft, Project Manager, Statewide Public Facilities
Patrick Geary, DMVA
Tom Woforth, DMVA
Donald Flournoy, DMVA
Jeffrey Slaikeu, DMVA
Forrest Powell, DMVA
Alyssa Murphy, DMVA
Donald Porter, R&M Consultants, Inc.
Kristi McLean, R&M Consultants, Inc.

Date Saved: 3/18/2025 2:15 PM by: J.Southerland Z:\GIS\Projects\1869.03 DOT_SW DMVA Interior AK Veterans Cemetery Salcha\DMVA Veterans Cemetery Salcha\DMVA Veterans Cemetery Salcha.aprx



ALL LOCATIONS ARE APPROXIMATE
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APPROXIMATE SCALE IN MILES

Notes:
Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane Alaska 3 FIPS 5003 Feet
Base map from ESRI World Imagery

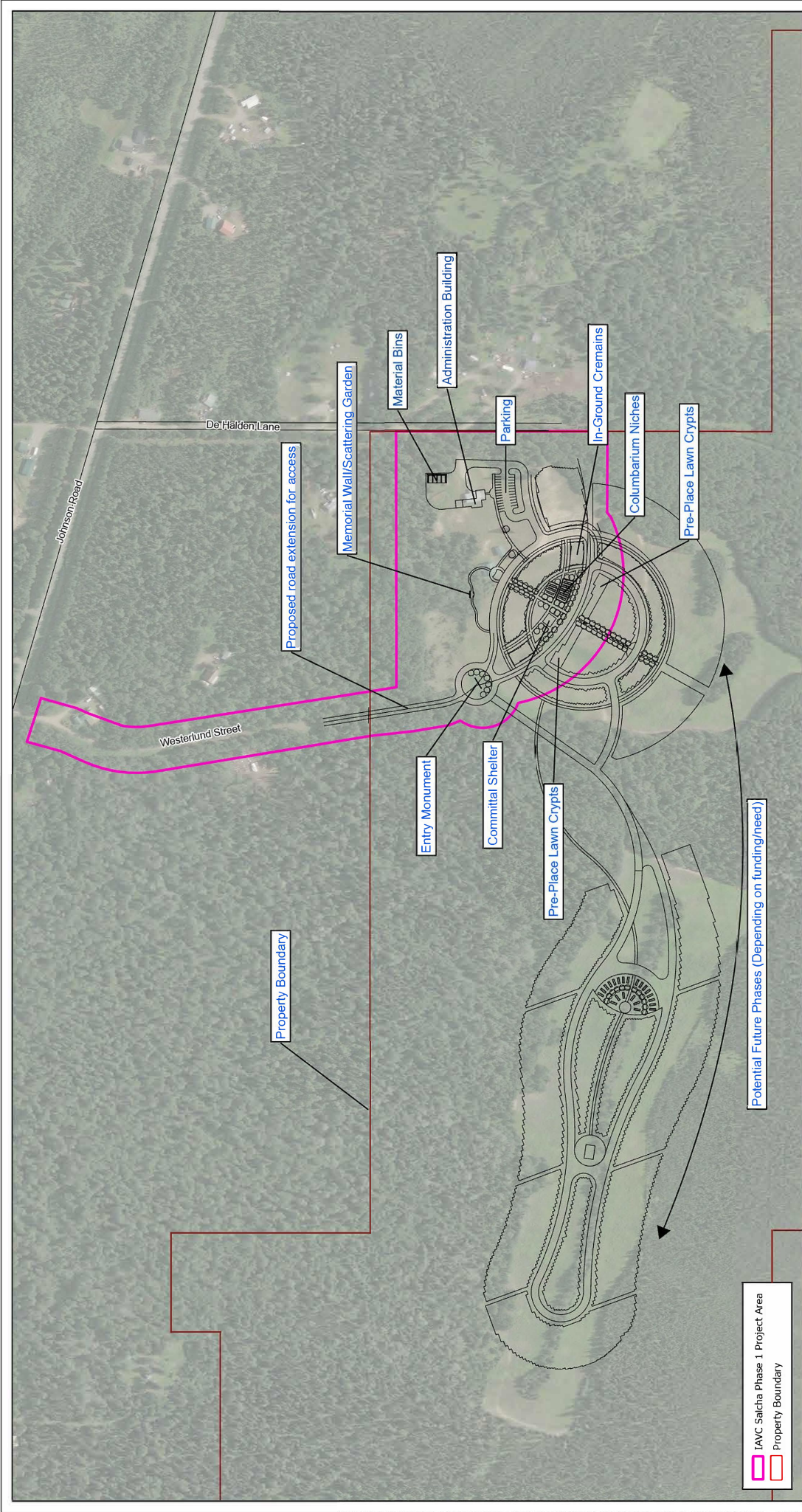


INTERIOR ALASKA VETERANS CEMETERY
SALCHA, ALASKA Z8003300

PREPARED BY:
R&M CONSULTANTS, INC.

LOCATION AND VICINITY MAP

PROJ.NO:	1869.03
DATE:	APRIL 2025
REF:	NEPA
FIGURE:	1



Notes:
Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane Alaska 3 FIPS 5003 Feet
Concept drawing from G Brown Design, Inc.
Base map from ESRI World Imagery



IAVC Salcha Phase 1 Project Area
Property Boundary

INTERIOR ALASKA VETERANS CEMETERY SALCHA, ALASKA Z8003300		PROJ.NO:	1869.03
		DATE:	APRIL 2025
		REF:	NEPA
MASTER PLAN LAYOUT - PHASE I		FIGURE:	2

PREPARED BY:
R&M CONSULTANTS, INC.



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April 14, 2025

Re: Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery
Request for Scoping Comments – Change in Scope

Dear Agency Representative:

The State of Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) to assess potential environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of a Veterans cemetery 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, USGS quad Big Delta C-6 (Figure 1).

This letter is being sent as a follow up to our previous communication on April 2, 2025 as a result of a change in scope for the project.

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for the project is unchanged.

Project Description

The Proposed Action now consists of the full Master Plan for the project which includes the anticipated build out to support 50-year internment capacity (Figure 2). Phase I of this Master Plan is proposed for construction in summer 2026 and is anticipated to provide capacity for approximately 12 years. Phase I activities (as described previously) include:

- construction of entrance road, parking areas, 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 existing right-of-way, to provide primary access to the cemetery from Johnson Road,
- 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.

Components of the Master Plan (Phase II) not described in the previous letter provide the remaining build-out of the cemetery through 2076 based on anticipated internment



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needs. These include the installation of 1,000 columbarium niches (five walls), 2,272 pre-placed crypts, and 798 in-ground cremains plots. This future build-out will occur within the Master Plan development limits shown in Figure 2.

Long-term operation of the Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery (IAVC) would include administration, landscaping, and custodial services as well as associated maintenance of the facility appearance and associated physical infrastructure (e.g. roads, buildings).

Existing Site Conditions

No changes to existing site conditions have been identified. The State plans to facilitate removal of the existing structures offsite, but if some structures cannot be moved, they will be demolished and disposed of.

Environmental Considerations

No changes to environmental considerations.

National Historic Preservation Act Consultation

No changes to Section 106 consultation. Communication with other consulting parties is ongoing.

To ensure that all factors are considered in the development of this proposed project, please provide your written comments within 30 days from the date of this correspondence to Kristi McLean with R&M Consultants, Inc. at 907-646-9689 or kmclean@rmconsult.com.

Sincerely,

Verdie A. Bowen Sr.

Verdie A. Bowen, Sr.
Director

Enclosures:

Figure 1: Location and Vicinity Map

Figure 2: Project Area – Phase I Development



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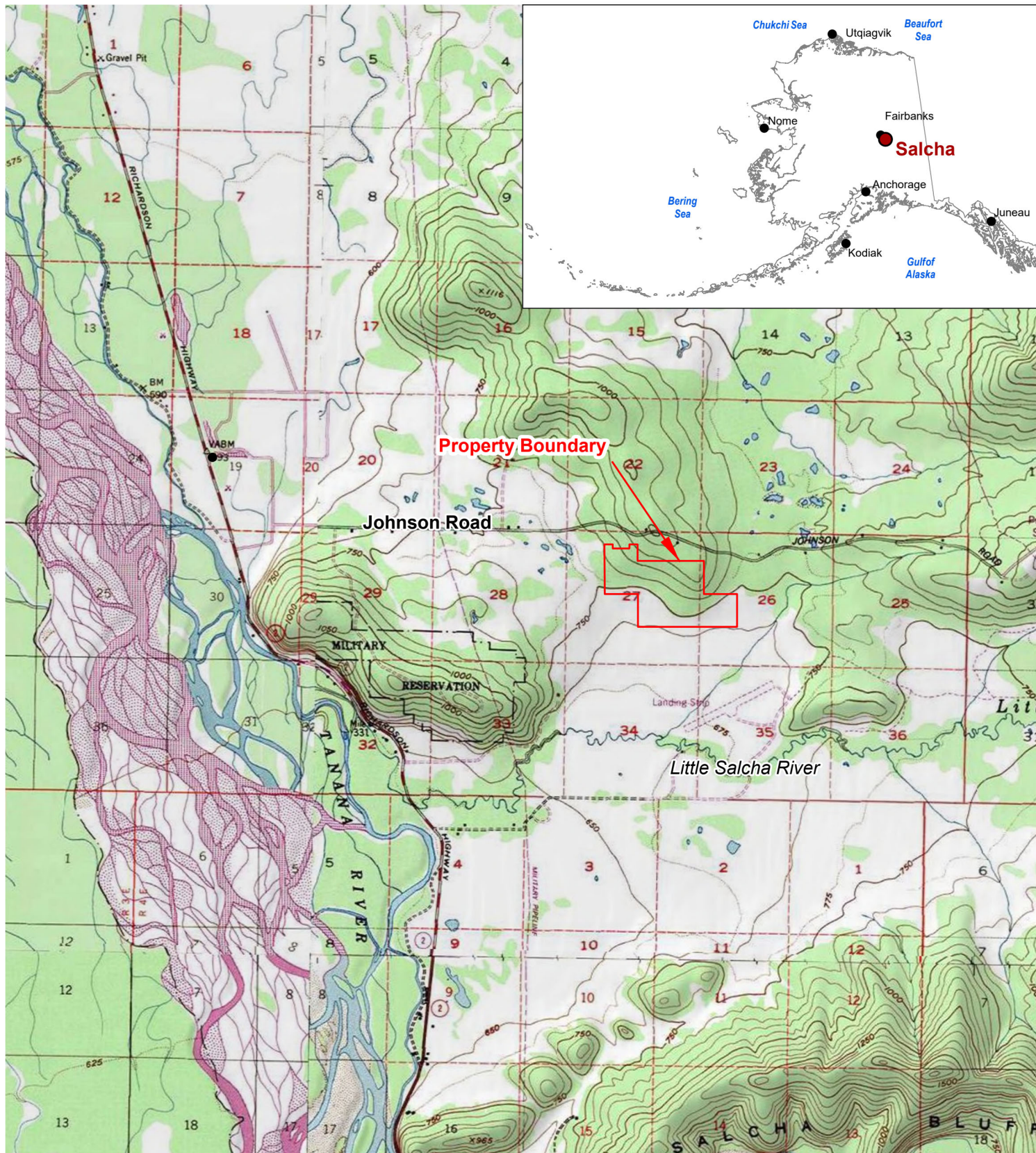
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Sarah Durand, Contaminated Sites Program, ADEC
James Plosay, Air Permit Program Manager, ADEC
Matthew Sprau Branch Manager Ecological Services, USFWS
Trent Liebich, Branch Chief, USFWS
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Robert Meyers, Senator, Alaska State Legislature
Grier Hopkins, FNSB Mayor
Ricky Holland, Fire Chief, Salcha Fire and Rescue
Bob Sattler, Environmental Quality, Tanana Chiefs Conference
Thomas Paquelet, Project Manager, VA - Veterans Cemetery Grants Program
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CC: Lauren Staff, Project Manager, Statewide Public Facilities
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Alyssa Murphy, DMVA
Donald Porter, R&M Consultants, Inc.
Kristi McLean, R&M Consultants, Inc.

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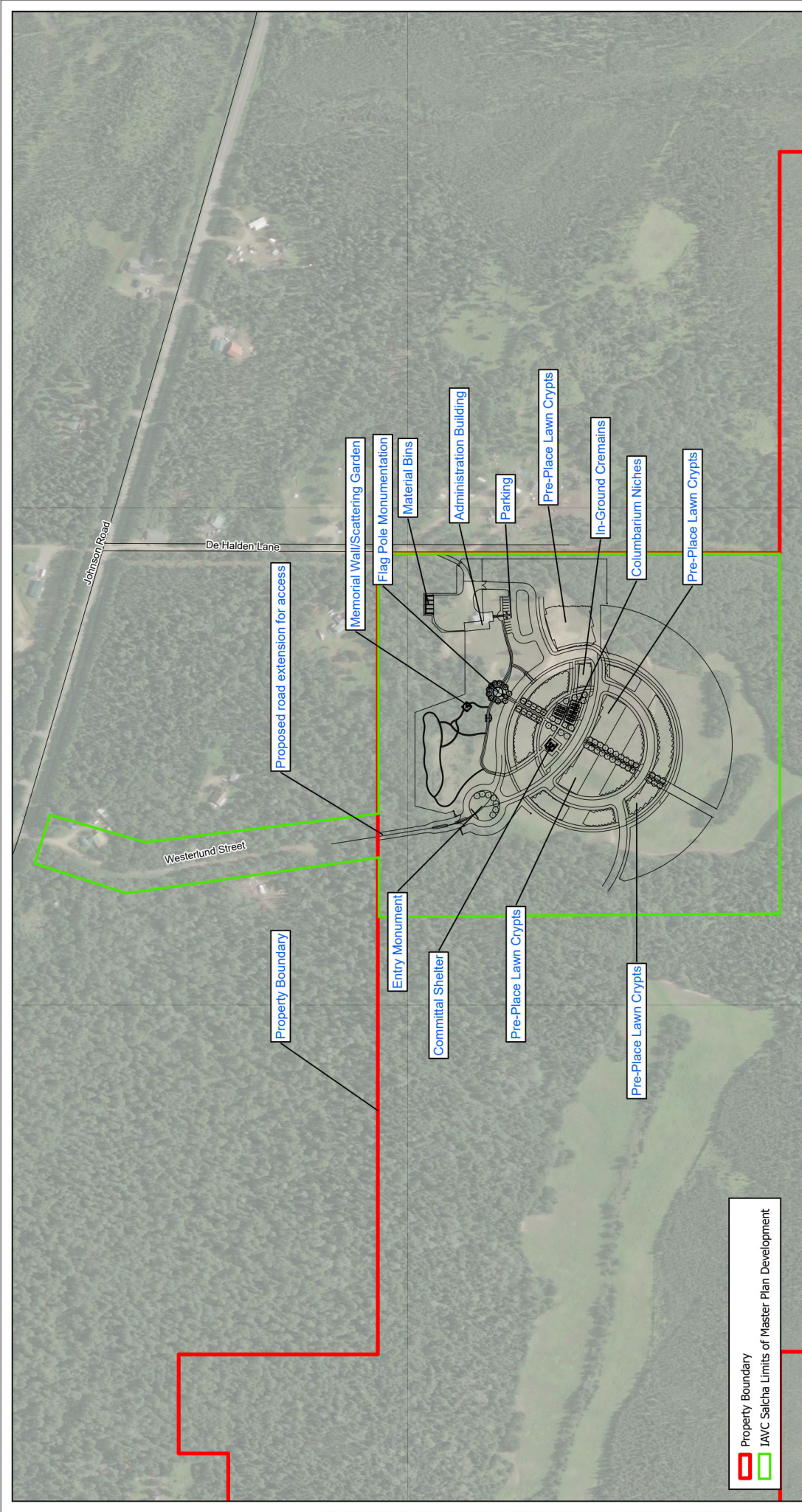
LOCATION AND VICINITY MAP

PROJ.NO: 1869.03

DATE: APRIL 2025

REF: SCOPING

FIGURE: 1



Notes:
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Concept drawing from G Brown Design, Inc.
Base map from ESRI World Imagery



INTERIOR ALASKA VETERANS CEMETERY SALCHA, ALASKA Z8003300		PROJ.NO:	1869.03
MASTER PLAN LAYOUT		DATE:	APRIL 2025
		REF:	SCOPING
		FIGURE:	2

PREPARED BY:
R&M CONSULTANTS, INC.

From: [Durand, Sarah J. \(DEC\)](#)
To: [Kristi McLean](#)
Subject: RE: Proposed Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery, Agency Scoping Correspondence
Date: Friday, April 4, 2025 12:30:08 PM

Hi Kristi,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the IVAC project scoping materials. The DEC Contaminated Sites Program 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. Let me know if you have any additional questions.

Thanks,

Sarah

Sarah Durand

Environmental Program Specialist
Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation
43335 K-Beach Rd. Ste 11, Soldotna AK 99669
Phone: (907) 262-8223
Email: sarah.durand@alaska.gov

From: Kristi McLean <KMclean@rmconsult.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 2, 2025 4:13 PM
To: Kristi McLean <kmclean@rmconsult.com>
Cc: Staft, Lauren A (DOT) <lauren.staft@alaska.gov>; Geary, Patrick S (MVA) <patrick.geary@alaska.gov>; Wolforth, Tom R (MVA) <tom.wolforth@alaska.gov>; Flournoy, Donald B (MVA) <donald.flournoy@alaska.gov>; Slaikeu, Jeffrey A (MVA) <jeffrey.slaikeu@alaska.gov>; Powell, Forrest E (MVA) <forrest.powell@alaska.gov>; Murphy, Alyssa R (MVA) <alyssa.murphy@alaska.gov>; Don Porter <dporter@rmconsult.com>; Kristi McLean <kmclean@rmconsult.com>
Subject: Proposed Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery, Agency Scoping Correspondence

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Dear Agency Representative:

The State of Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), is soliciting agency comments and information on a proposed project which would develop a Veterans cemetery within Interior Alaska. An environmental assessment (EA) is being preparing to assess potential environmental impacts associated with construction and operation of the proposed cemetery. Attached please find a summary of the Proposed Action including project figures.

After reviewing the scoping materials, please reply with the following information:

- Further analysis needed to evaluate sensitive resources potentially impacted by the proposed project.
- Regulatory permits and/or clearances required from your agency.
- Any concerns or issues your agency or organization might have with the proposed project.

Please reply to this email with your comments by May 5, 2025. If you feel that someone else in your organization should receive this notification, please forward this email to them (and cc: me) so they may comment. Please also let me know if you are no longer the right contact person so I can update our contact list as needed.

Thank you,

Kristi M. McLean, LEED AP *Group Manager – Environmental Services*

R&M CONSULTANTS, INC. | 9101 Vanguard Drive | Anchorage, Alaska 99507
907.646.9689 direct

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Innovating Today for Alaska's Tomorrow

From: [Plosay, James R \(DEC\)](#)
To: [Kristi McLean](#)
Subject: RE: UPDATE - Proposed Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery, Agency Scoping Correspondence
Date: Tuesday, April 15, 2025 7:04:45 AM

Kristi –

NO Alaska Air Permit is needed for the proposed scope of this activity.

Jim Plosay

Program Manager/Air Permits Program/Division of Air Quality

[907] 465-5561

Jim.plosay@alaska.gov

From: Kristi McLean <KMclean@rmconsult.com>
Sent: Monday, April 14, 2025 15:47
To: Kristi McLean <kmclean@rmconsult.com>
Subject: UPDATE - Proposed Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery, Agency Scoping Correspondence

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CAUTION: This email originated from outside the State of Alaska mail system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good Afternoon,

The attached correspondence is being sent as a follow up to our previous letter from April 2, 2025 as a result of a change in project scope. Please reply to this email with your comments by May 16, 2025. Thank you!

Kristi M. McLean, LEED AP Group Manager – Environmental Services

R&M CONSULTANTS, INC. | 907.646.9689 direct

From: Kristi McLean
Sent: Wednesday, April 2, 2025 4:13 PM
To: Kristi McLean <KMclean@rmconsult.com>
Cc: Staft, Lauren A (DOT) <lauren.staft@alaska.gov>; Geary, Patrick S (MVA) <patrick.geary@alaska.gov>; Wolforth, Tom R (MVA) <tom.wolforth@alaska.gov>; Flournoy, Donald B (MVA) <donald.flournoy@alaska.gov>; Slaikeu, Jeffrey A (MVA) <jeffrey.slaikeu@alaska.gov>; MVA - Forrest Powell <forrest.powell@alaska.gov>; Murphy, Alyssa R (MVA) <alyssa.murphy@alaska.gov>; Don Porter <dporter@rmconsult.com>; Kristi

McLean <KMclean@rmconsult.com>

Subject: Proposed Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery, Agency Scoping Correspondence

Dear Agency Representative:

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- Any concerns or issues your agency or organization might have with the proposed project.

Please reply to this email with your comments by May 5, 2025. If you feel that someone else in your organization should receive this notification, please forward this email to them (and cc: me) so they may comment. Please also let me know if you are no longer the right contact person so I can update our contact list as needed.

Thank you,

Kristi M. McLean, LEED AP *Group Manager – Environmental Services*

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907.646.9689 direct

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Fairbanks North Star Borough

Community Planning

planning@fnsb.gov
Main: (907) 459-1260
Fax: (907) 459-1255

May 2, 2025

State of Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs
Office of Veterans' Affairs
4600 Debarr Road
Suite 180
Anchorage, AK 99508

Sent via email to kmclean@rmconsult.com

Re: Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery Request for Scoping Comments – Change in Scope

Dear Office of Veterans' Affairs,

Please accept these comments from FNSB Community Planning Department regarding the Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery.

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."

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.

FNSB Community Planning appreciates the opportunity to comment. Please let us know if you have any questions, need additional information, or would like to discuss any further actions.

Kind regards,

Kellen D. Spillman
Director

KDS/kw

cc: Grier Hopkins, Mayor
Kuba Grzeda, Chief of Staff

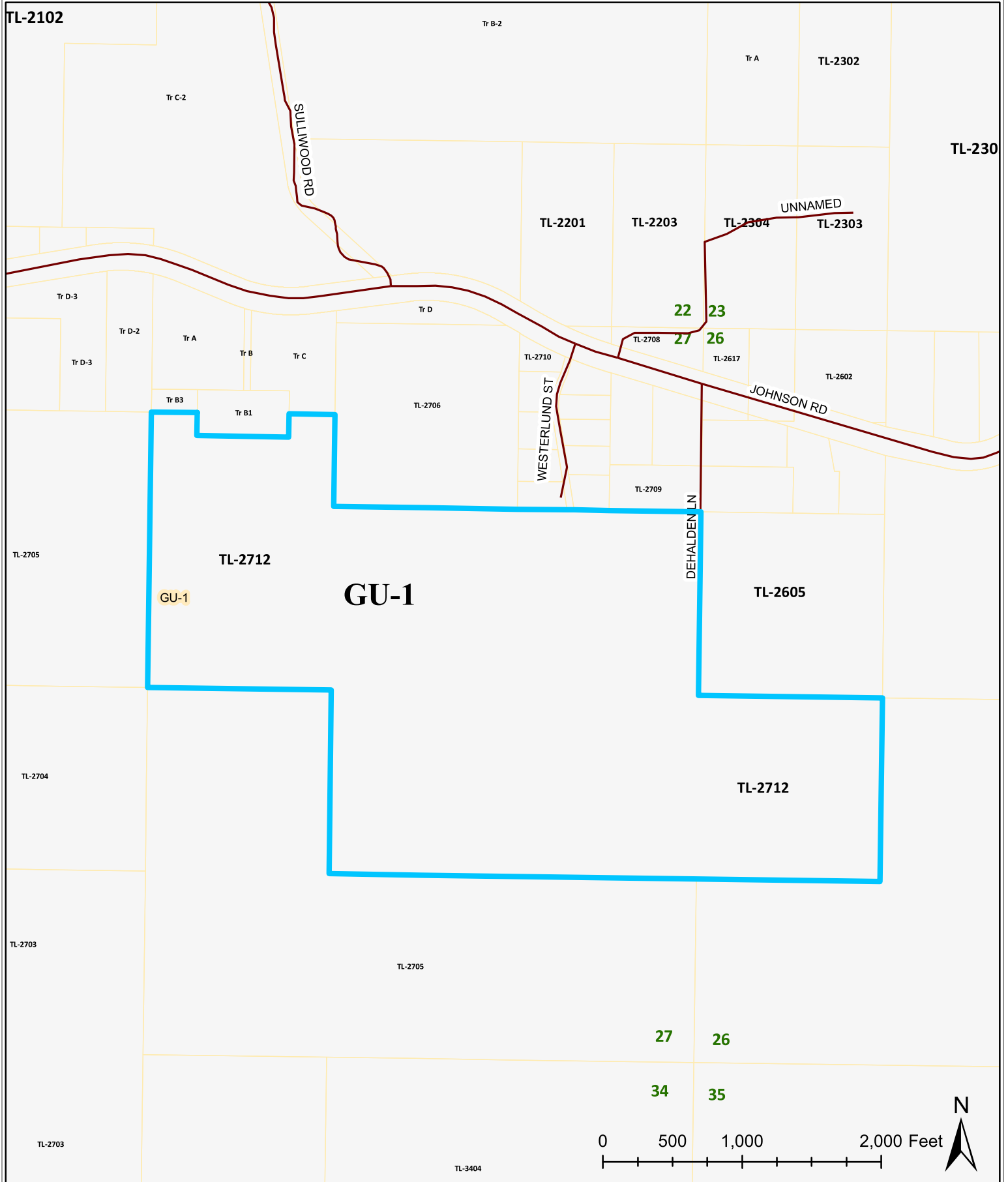




Fairbanks North Star Borough

Zoning

Attachment 1

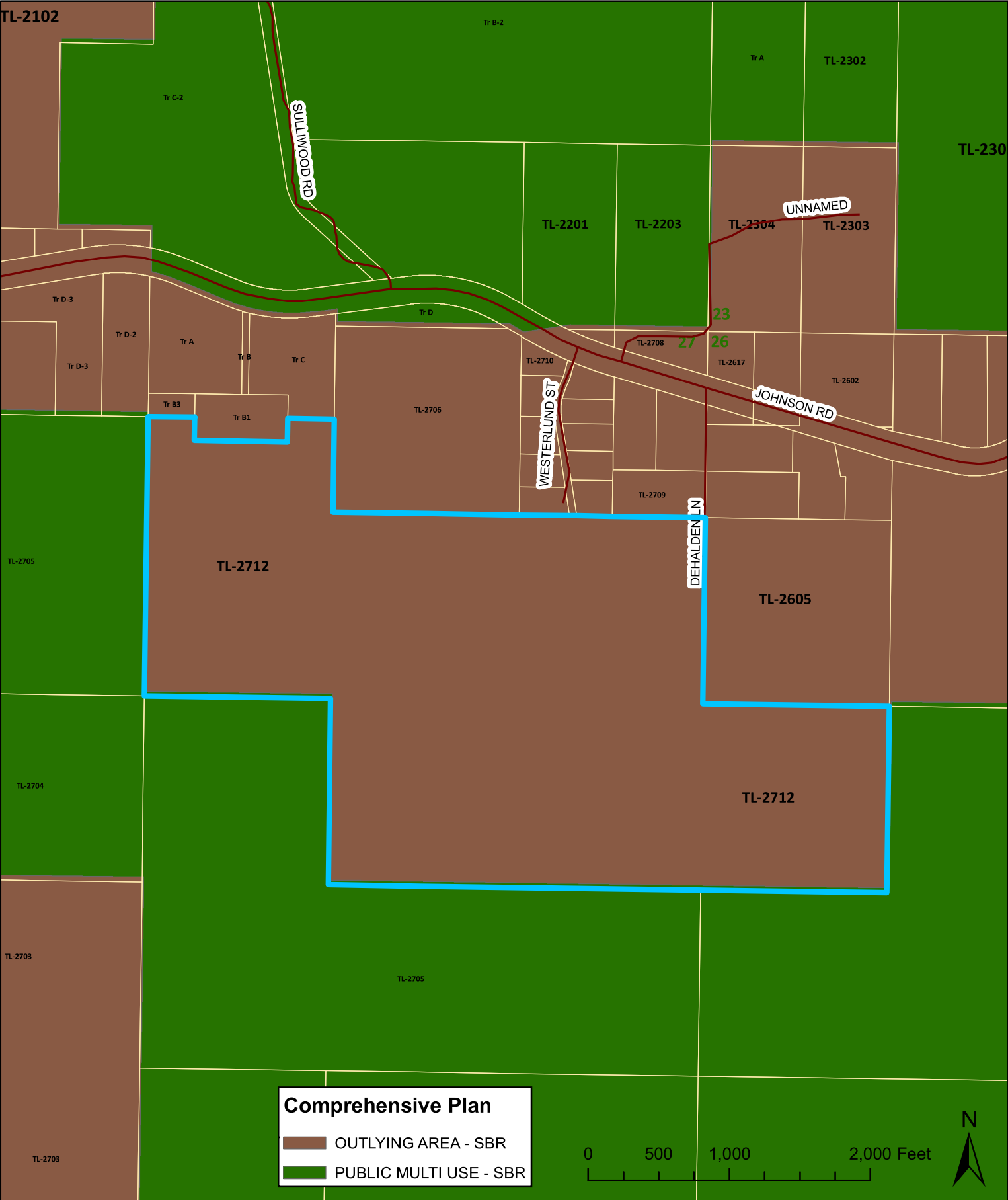




Fairbanks North Star Borough

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation

Attachment 2



The Fairbanks North Star Borough does not warrant the accuracy of maps or data provided, nor their suitability for any particular application. There may be errors in the data.

From: [Ajmi, Amal R](#)
To: [Kristi McLean](#)
Cc: [Sprau, Matthew H](#)
Subject: IAVC Salcha Project
Date: Tuesday, May 6, 2025 9:00:57 AM

Morning again Kristi and Lauren,

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss possible ideas for this amazing project. As agreed, here are some things we briefly discussed.

- We discussed USFWS providing assistance with developing pollinator gardens and fun fact sheets on possible species visiting such sites in the interior. Gentle humming and buzzing (other than mosquitoes) around flower beds can help with instilling calm and peace at such a location. We can help develop native flower plans and designs to ensure the plot is flowering throughout the spring, summer and early fall seasons when pollinators are active.
- We discussed how USFWS may provide proactive advice on how to design facilities so as not to attract bird species that could be problematic in the future. Often times, without meaning, we develop facilities and birds find them exactly what they would like to use for nesting. While this may be simple and delightful for one to two individuals, accidentally attracting colony nesters like cliff swallows, may not be what the project is hoping for. We can help with initial designs so this is not an issue in the future.
- We discussed how USFWS may provide assistance with inviting bird species to certain areas of the project, and providing fun fact sheets on possible species visiting the project. We can help with designs to attract certain species to the area, using things like water baths, or nest boxes. We have loads of ideas.

As stated, we find this an amazing project and would very much like to contribute. Please let us know at any point what you would like, and how we may help. Again, thank you.

Respectfully,

Amal Ajmi
Fish & Wildlife Biologist
Conservation Planning Assistance
Northern Alaska Fish and Wildlife Field Office
US Fish & Wildlife Service
101 12th Ave, Room 110
Fairbanks, AK 99701
907-456-0324 (Office)
907-456-0208 (Fax)
amal_ajmi@fws.gov

"You haven't seen a tree until you've seen it's shadow from the sky". Amelia Earhart

From: [Hellmich, Amy S \(DNR\)](#)
To: [Kristi McLean](#)
Cc: [Wolforth, Tom R \(MVA\)](#)
Subject: RE: UPDATE - Proposed Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery, Agency Scoping Correspondence
Date: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 3:24:47 PM

You don't often get email from amy.hellmich@alaska.gov. [Learn why this is important](#)

3130-1R DMVA / 2025-00146

Good afternoon,

The Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (AK SHPO) 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.

As stipulated in 36 CFR 800.3, other consulting parties such as the local government and Tribes are required to be notified of the undertaking. Additional information provided by the local government, Tribes, or other consulting parties may cause our office to re-evaluate our comments and recommendations. Please note that our response does not end the 30-day review period provided to other consulting parties.

Should unidentified historical or archaeological resources be discovered in the course of the project, work must be interrupted until the resources have been evaluated in terms of the National Register of Historic Places eligibility criteria (36 CFR 60.4), in consultation with our office. Please note that some resources can be deeply buried or underwater, and that fossils are considered cultural resources subject to the Alaska Historic Preservation Act.

This email serves as our office's official correspondence for the purposes of Section 106. Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment. Please contact me at (907) 269-8724 or amy.hellmich@alaska.gov if you have any questions or we can be of further assistance.

Best regards,
Amy Hellmich

Amy Hellmich
Architectural Historian - Review and Compliance
Alaska State Historic Preservation Office
Office of History and Archaeology

From: DNR, Parks OHA Review Compliance (DNR sponsored) <oha.revcomp@alaska.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 7, 2025 1:44 PM
To: Hellmich, Amy S (DNR) <amy.hellmich@alaska.gov>
Subject: FW: UPDATE - Proposed Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery, Agency Scoping

Correspondence

2025-00146

From: Bittner, Judith E (DNR) <judy.bittner@alaska.gov>
Sent: Monday, April 14, 2025 3:49 PM
To: DNR, Parks OHA Review Compliance (DNR sponsored) <oha.revcomp@alaska.gov>
Subject: FW: UPDATE - Proposed Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery, Agency Scoping Correspondence

From: Kristi McLean <KMclean@rmconsult.com>
Sent: Monday, April 14, 2025 3:47 PM
To: Kristi McLean <kmclean@rmconsult.com>
Subject: UPDATE - Proposed Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery, Agency Scoping Correspondence

Some people who received this message don't often get email from kmclean@rmconsult.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the State of Alaska mail system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good Afternoon,

The attached correspondence is being sent as a follow up to our previous letter from April 2, 2025 as a result of a change in project scope. Please reply to this email with your comments by May 16, 2025. Thank you!

Kristi M. McLean, LEED AP Group Manager – Environmental Services

R&M CONSULTANTS, INC. | 907.646.9689 direct

From: Kristi McLean
Sent: Wednesday, April 2, 2025 4:13 PM
To: Kristi McLean <KMclean@rmconsult.com>
Cc: Staft, Lauren A (DOT) <lauren.staft@alaska.gov>; Geary, Patrick S (MVA) <patrick.geary@alaska.gov>; Wolforth, Tom R (MVA) <tom.wolforth@alaska.gov>; Flournoy, Donald B (MVA) <donald.flournoy@alaska.gov>; Slaikeu, Jeffrey A (MVA) <jeffrey.slaikeu@alaska.gov>; MVA - Forrest Powell <forrest.powell@alaska.gov>; Murphy, Alyssa R (MVA) <alyssa.murphy@alaska.gov>; Don Porter <dporter@rmconsult.com>; Kristi McLean <KMclean@rmconsult.com>
Subject: Proposed Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery, Agency Scoping Correspondence

Dear Agency Representative:

The State of Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), is soliciting agency comments and information on a proposed project which would develop a Veterans cemetery within Interior Alaska. An environmental assessment (EA) is being preparing to assess potential environmental impacts associated with construction and operation of the proposed cemetery. Attached please find a summary of the Proposed Action including project figures.

After reviewing the scoping materials, please reply with the following information:

- Further analysis needed to evaluate sensitive resources potentially impacted by the proposed project.
- Regulatory permits and/or clearances required from your agency.
- Any concerns or issues your agency or organization might have with the proposed project.

Please reply to this email with your comments by May 5, 2025. If you feel that someone else in your organization should receive this notification, please forward this email to them (and cc: me) so they may comment. Please also let me know if you are no longer the right contact person so I can update our contact list as needed.

Thank you,

Kristi M. McLean, LEED AP *Group Manager – Environmental Services*

R&M CONSULTANTS, INC. | 9101 Vanguard Drive | Anchorage, Alaska 99507
907.646.9689 direct

[Facebook](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | rmconsult.com

Innovating Today for Alaska's Tomorrow

Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery

Translate



Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery

Statewide Public Facilities are working together with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) to plan, design, and construct a cemetery in the interior region of Alaska to serve veterans across the State of Alaska, including the estimated 11,000 veterans who reside within 75 miles of the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

Location & Scope of Work

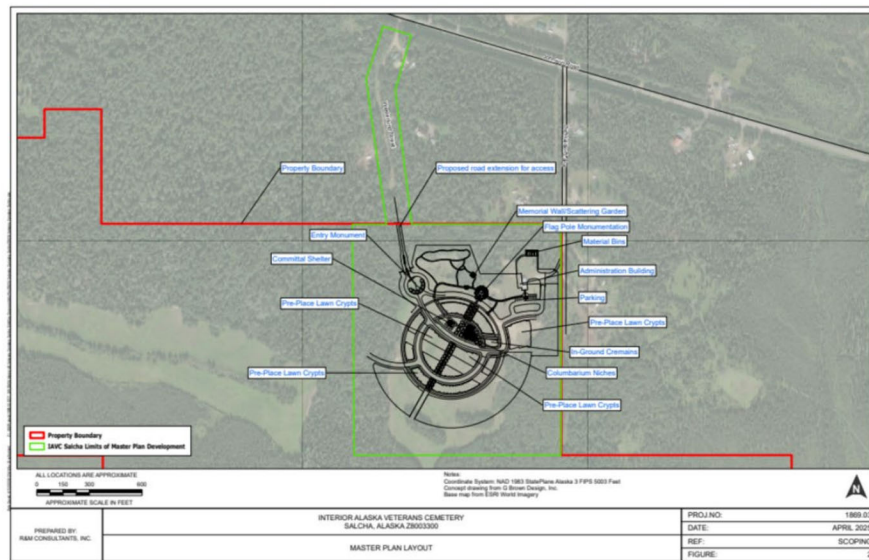
Location & Scope of Work



In 2022, the State identified and purchased a site in Salcha, Alaska about 30 miles south of Fairbanks off the Richardson Highway. The 257-acre hilltop site near Eielson Air Force Base was a former agricultural homestead and features sweeping views of the Tanana River Valley and the Alaska Range.

The cemetery will feature a maintenance and administration building with a public information center, a flag assembly area, memorial wall, 350 crypts, 250 in-ground burials, and 600 columbarium niches. Design of a committal shelter for use during funeral services is underway and will be constructed under the grant if funding allows or will be constructed during a future phase.

Project Timeline



The project is expected to be advertised in July of 2025, with construction completion in September 2027.

Additional Information

The project masterplan and design are under development by R&M Consultants, Inc, in partnership with specialty cemetery development subconsultant, G Brown and Associates, and several other Alaskan-based design firms.

Development of the state cemetery will be through the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program, issued through the National Cemetery Administration. In preparation for receipt of the grant, the State conducted permafrost, cultural, land, and wetland studies, and in January 2025, the State accepted a \$15M grant opportunity, greenlighting design development.

Contact Information:

If you have questions, please email us at: dot.salchacemetery@alaska.gov for more information on this project.

Rita St. Louis: Interior Alaskan Veterans have waited "too long" for a veteran cemetery! Thanks for the schematic view/map. I agree with the comments regarding bathrooms and parking spaces.

However, to me, while it is important to have a master plan to follow, I suggest to "start small." Even if there are only a few grave sites and crypts to start with, at least a veteran who dies within the next 1–3 years will have a final resting spot. Parking, bathrooms, meeting places, and all of the "master plan" amenities will and can come in good time.

This is a beautiful spot! Kudos to the small, dedicated team of people who found it, and who stubbornly continue to push forward to see the reality of an Interior veterans' cemetery. Keep up the good work!

No email to respond to:

Thank you for your comments and suggestions. Per the Federal Grant regulations a Master Plan is required to be completed before we are granted the funding for the cemetery.

Phil Hokenson: This has been a project that the AK Dept. of Military and Veterans Affairs, the Alaska Veterans Advisory Council, and a number of Interior stakeholders have been trying to complete for probably around 20 years, so it's very exciting to see such substantial progress. That proposed road extension would be far better than the existing road into the property. Incorporating existing structures to preserve the charm and uniqueness of the site would also be great.

Response to phil.hokenson@gmail.com (5/19/25)

Thank you for your comments and suggestions. Unfortunately, due to the age and condition of the existing buildings we are not able to incorporate them into the new cemetery design and they will be donated to a local non-profit Veterans organization.

Warmly,
Alaska DOT&PF Team

Tammie Wilson: Could you please tell me where the current buildings are located in the plan, the house especially represents Interior/Northern Alaska? If a Vietnam Veteran did not want to be buried, what is his/her option within this plan? As the plan moves forward, I hope the design team keeps in mind that our Veterans always wanted to remain here within the beauty that only is seen here.

Response to tammie.wilson@alaska.gov (5/19/25)

Thank you for your comments and suggestions. Unfortunately, due to the age and condition of the existing buildings we are not able to incorporate them into the new cemetery design and they will be donated to a local non-profit Veterans organization.

Warmly,

Alaska DOT&PF Team

Concerned Salchan: 12 parking spots is not enough. This remote area requires adequate bathroom facilities. 2-3 stalls in a maintenance/admin building isn't sufficient for families visiting. An additional bathroom should be considered for the SW area of the cemetery. Please consider adding expanding the committal shelter and including two bathroom stalls.

No email to respond to:

Thank you for your comments and suggestions. We are following all Federal ADA (American Disabilities Act) requirements and guidelines in regards to the number of bathrooms and parking spaces required for the size of our cemetery projects.

Thanks,



Grace Keller

Northern Region Publication Specialist II

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public

Facilities

Office: [907.451.5231](tel:907.451.5231)

Cell: [907.255.4722](tel:907.255.4722) • grace.keller@alaska.gov

Keep Alaska Moving through service and infrastructure.



Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery Project

Public Open House

Date | Time: May 29, 2025 (2:00pm) |

Location: Board Room, 675 7th Avenue, Suite H5 (second floor); Fairbanks, Alaska |

Project Team

- Verdie Bowen, Director, State of Alaska, Office of Veterans Affairs
- Forrest E. Powell III, Deputy Director, State of Alaska, Office of Veterans Affairs (online)
- Jeff Slaikou Jr, Program Coordinator I, State of Alaska, Office of Veterans Affairs (online)
-

Attendees

Local landowners around the project, the Fairbanks cemetery group, local politicians.

- Emailed meeting flyer directly to landowners on 5/22/2025.
- Word of mouth from the Fairbanks Cemetery group is used to let people know.

Meeting Materials

The following materials were presented during the Open House (see attachments):

- Verdie brought the 65% design plan to show everyone.

Meeting Summary

Meeting was an open house format with people online also asking questions and participating.

Questions, Responses, Comments

Q1: Can service animals be buried with Veterans?

R: This question has been asked to National.

Q2: Road maintenance and upkeep for De Halden?

R: The State will put down gravel.

Q3: Culvert issue on De Halden?

R: Culvert work is not included with this project.

Q4: Pre-burial list?

R: No.

Q5: Width of road to accommodate motor homes?

R: Will ask about this?

Comments:

- There is a low hanging powerline on De Halden.

- Discussion of snow storage and runoff.
- There is general concern about lack of communication with adjacent property owners.

No photos taken

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



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON DC 20420

January 29, 2025

Verdie Bowen, Director
Alaska State Office of Veterans Affairs
4600 Debarr Road, Suite 180
Anchorage, AK 99508
Verdie.Bowen@alaska.gov

Subject: AK-09-01
Delegation of Authority for National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Consultation

Applicability: Applies Nationwide to State or Tribal Veterans Cemetery Undertakings Funded by the National Cemetery Administration of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Dear Mr. Bowen,

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) supplies grants to states, tribes, territories and counties to establish, expand or improve State or Tribal Veterans cemeteries.

Part of NCA's responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. § 470f, and its implementing regulations, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR § 800), NCA is authorizing its grant applicants to start consultation on NCA's behalf, following 36 CFR § 800.2(c)(4). NCA applicants and their authorized representatives shall consult with State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) to start the process set up under 36 CFR § 800. Specifically, this letter authorizes NCA applicants to indenture consulting parties, name historic properties and work with consulting parties to assess any adverse effects to historic properties.¹

Grant applicants must involve NCA in consultation whenever:

- Any consulting party, including the grant applicant, SHPO, THPO or Indian tribe, proposes that the undertaking may have an adverse effect on historic properties, as defined pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.5(a);
- There is disagreement between a grant applicant and the SHPO, THPO or Indian tribe about the scope of the area of potential effect, identification, and evaluation of historic properties, and/or the assessment of adverse effects;
- There is objection from a consulting party or the public about its involvement in the consultation process, recommended findings and determinations, or implementation of agreed upon terms; or
- There is potential for foreclosure or intentional adverse effects (such as anticipatory demolition), as defined pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.9(b) and (c).

NCA expects Veterans Cemetery Grants Program applicants to involve consulting parties in developing recommendations about Section 106 findings and determinations, and to carry out the exchange of documentation and information in a respectful, constructive, and predictable manner, within the timeframes provided within 36 CFR § 800.

For questions about this blanket authorization, please contact Thomas Paquelet, Veterans Cemetery Grants Program, at 304.820.9086 or Thomas.Paquelet@va.gov.

Sincerely,

James Earp
Director, Veterans Cemetery Grants Program

¹ See the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's [Section 106 Review Process](#)



Alaska Army National Guard

P.O. Box 5169
JBER, AK 99505-0800
Main: 907.428.7158
Fax: 907.428.7191

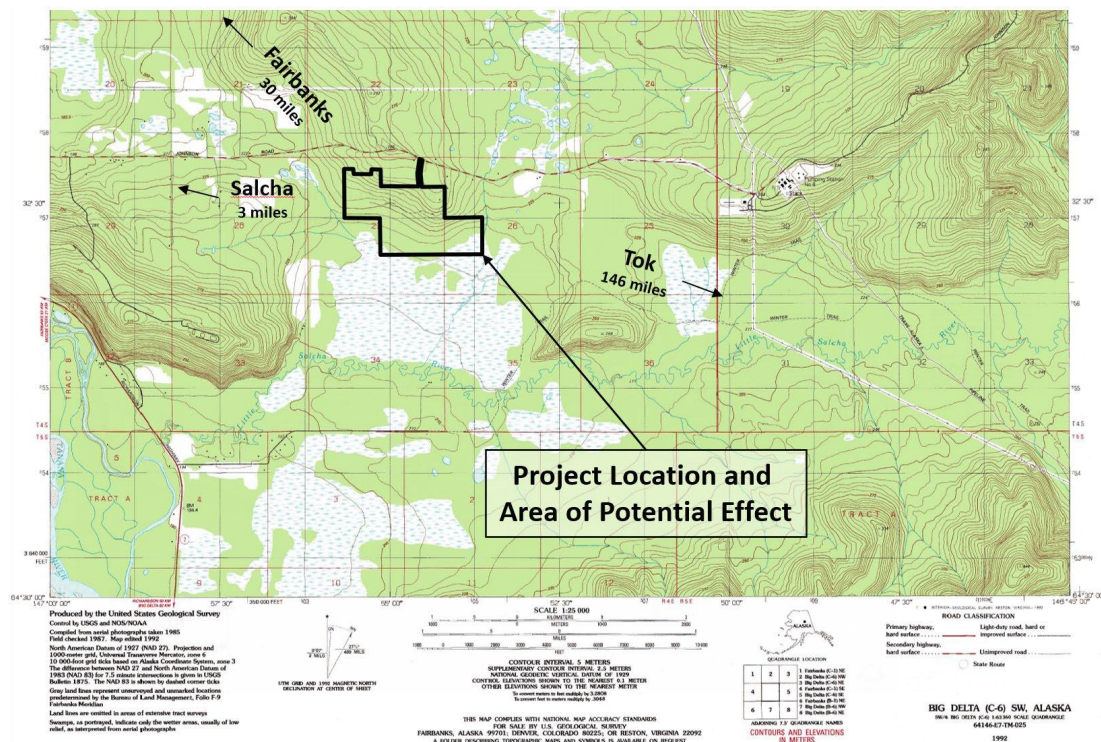
February 10, 2025

Request for concurrence of a determination of no historic properties affected for the proposed geotechnical borings for and the development of a state veterans cemetery by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs in Salcha, Alaska

Dear Ms. Bittner,

The Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) is seeking to obtain a grant from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration (NCA) to build and subsequently operate a cemetery solely for the benefit of interring veterans (as defined in 38 CFR part 39.2) and their eligible family members (see 38 CFR part 39.10). The action of a federal agency granting such funds to a state agency is a Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act undertaking. The NCA has delegated their responsibility to conduct all of the required Section 106 consultation for this undertaking to the DMVA, as stipulated in the enclosed letter from NCA to DMVA.

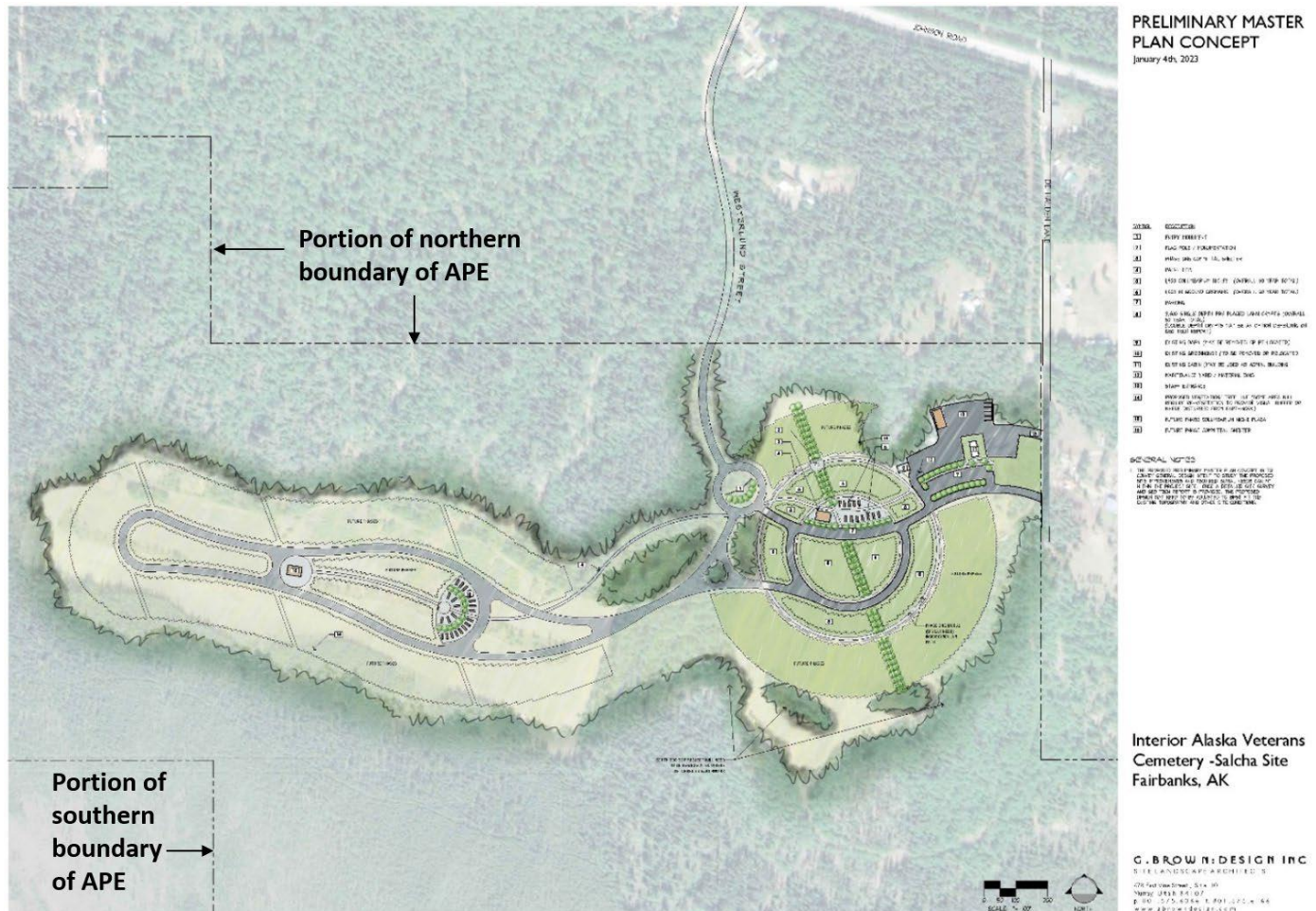
In preparation for such a delegation, and as required in NCA grant conditions, the DMVA has conducted the appropriate actions to fulfill cultural resource assessments as defined in 36 CFR 800 for the property under consideration. The report on that assessment, conducted by True North Sustainable Development Solutions (TNSDS) is enclosed.



The State of Alaska owns a 257.5 acre parcel of land referred to as Parcel No. 366137 at 7229 Dehalden Lane in Salcha, Alaska. The parcel includes these portions of the Big Delta (C-6) SW, Alaska USGS topographic map of 1992, all in the Fairbanks Meridian:

Entire NW ¼ of SW ¼ of Sect. 26, T4S, R4E
 Entire N ½ of SE ¼ of Sect. 27, T4S, R4E
 Entire S ½ of NE ¼ of Sect. 27, T4S, R4E
 Parts of NE ¼ of NE ¼ of Sect. 27, T4S, R4E
 Entire SE ¼ of NW ¼ of Sect. 27, T4S, R4E
 Parts of NE ¼ of NW ¼ of Sect. 27, T4S, R4E

The center of the parcel is at Long -146.9120, Lat 64.5385. The Area of Potential Effect is the entire 257.5 acre parcel. While only a portion of that parcel is currently planned for cemetery development, additional activities might be added to the preliminary plan concept as results of all environmental studies are completed.



DMVA also proposes to be responsible for conducting geotechnical borings to gather information germane to design opportunities and limitations of the project. That activity is fully described, methodology explained, and boring locations identified in the enclosed memorandum. All of that work will be conducted within the APE.

The cultural resource study field methods, results, and recommendations are provided with clarity and detail in the report by True North Sustainable Development Solutions *2024 Draft Report for Cultural Resource Investigations with Recommendations for issuing a Finding Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and its Implementing Regulations 36CFR800 for the Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery, Located in Salcha, Alaska (aka Salcha CRM Investigation)*. The work (enclosed) meets and exceeds the standards required for this kind of work as outlined by the National Park Service and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources' Office of History and Archaeology.

In brief, the field work for the study included intensive surface survey, test excavations, drone survey and historic architectural investigations. Architectural elements on the landscape are all younger than 45 years old. No archaeological sites or features were observed on the property.

Based on the work conducted and presented in the *Salcha CRM Investigation*, the DMVA, as delegated by NCA, determines that the proposed development of a new state veteran cemetery in Salcha, Alaska, including the geotechnical borings, will have no effect on historic properties. The DMVA on behalf of the NCA requests the concurrence by the Alaska State Historic Office (AKSHPO) in this determination.

The DMVA also invites the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) and the Fairbanks North Star Borough to comment on this project. Although the property is owned by the state of Alaska, the TCC is the not-for-profit association that provides a unified voice for sovereign tribal governments consisting of 37 federally recognized tribes in the region that includes Salcha, Alaska. It is the hope of DMVA that the TCC can provide insights into the existence of or potential to exist ancient sites, traditional cultural properties and areas sacred to the Alaska Natives in this region to ensure that these are incorporated into the understanding and planning for this state veterans cemetery.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough, as a Certified Local Government, has information on historical properties in the region, too. It is the hope of DMVA that the Fairbanks North Star Borough can share concerns, knowledge and plans for the future of the region to ensure that the proposed state veterans cemetery is in harmony with the planning conducted for the citizens of the region.

The *Salcha CRM Investigation* is a large (electronic) document that requires extra software to transit to the consulting parties. DMVA is using the state of Alaska-sanctioned ZendTo Alaska software to facilitate the transfer of this document to AKSHPO. Attempts will be made via ZendTo to provide this information to the Fairbanks North Star Borough and TCC. If that does not work this information will be provided via alternative software or snail mail.

The DMVA looks forward to working with the AKSHPO, TCC and the Fairbanks North Star Borough to address all concerns, comments and questions.

Sincerely,



Thomas R Wolforth
Cultural Resource Manager
Alaska Army National Guard
References Cited

Enc. Section 106 delegation letter from NCA to DMVA
Memorandum on proposed geotechnical investigation
Salcha CRM Investigation via ZendTo Alaska

Cc: Bob Sattler, TCC Environmental Quality w/ encls.
Kayde Whiteside, Fairbanks North Star Borough Community Planning Department w/ encls.
Verdie Bowen, DMVA Director of Office of Veterans Affairs, w/o encls.
Don Flournoy, DMVA Environmental Director, w/o encls.
Don Porter, R&M Consultants w/o encls.
Thomas Paquelet, NCA w/o encls.
Robert Meinhardt, TNSDS, w/o encls.

From: Amy Hellmich
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 4:03 PM
To: Wolforth, Tom R (MVA) <tom.wolforth@alaska.gov>
Subject: RE: DMVA photos of things at veterans cemetery land

3130-1R DMVA / 2025-00146

Good afternoon,

The Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (AK SHPO) received your correspondence (dated February 10, 2025) concerning the subject project on February 14, 2025 and additional requested information on March 17, 2025. Following our review of the documentation provided, we concur with the finding of No Historic Properties Affected for the project, to include geotechnical boring. Please note that our office may need to re-evaluate our concurrence if changes are made to the project's scope or design.

As stipulated in 36 CFR 800.3, other consulting parties such as the local government and Tribes are required to be notified of the undertaking. Additional information provided by the local government, Tribes, or other consulting parties may cause our office to re-evaluate our comments and recommendations. Please note that our response does not end the 30-day review period provided to other consulting parties.

Should unidentified historical or archaeological resources be discovered in the course of the project, work must be interrupted until the resources have been evaluated in terms of the National Register of Historic Places eligibility criteria (36 CFR 60.4), in consultation with our office. Please note that some resources can be deeply buried or underwater, and that fossils are considered cultural resources subject to the Alaska Historic Preservation Act.

This email serves as our office's official correspondence for the purposes of Section 106. Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment. Please contact me at (907) 269-8724 or amy.hellmich@alaska.gov if you have any questions or we can be of further assistance.

Best regards,
Amy Hellmich

Amy Hellmich
Architectural Historian - Review and Compliance
Alaska State Historic Preservation Office
Office of History and Archaeology

(rec'd 3/21/25)



Memorandum for Record

Re: Current status and recommendations for required future actions associated with the National Historic Preservation Act consultation for the proposed Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery in Salcha, Alaska

To: Tom Paquelet, USDVA NCA
Verdie Bowen, DMVA VA
Don Porter, R&M Consulting
Kristi McLean, R&M Consulting
Don Flournoy, DMVA Environmental

From: Thomas Wolforth, DMVA Environmental

Date: April 3, 2025

Executive summary

The State of Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA VA) is working with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration (USDVA NCA) on a Veterans Cemetery Grants Program for a veterans cemetery in the interior of Alaska. That action is a Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) undertaking.

The USDVA NCA has delegated their responsibility to conduct consultation to the DMVA VA. The DMVA VA has begun that consultation with support from the State of Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs cultural resource manager. Pursuant to the conditions of that delegation, with this memorandum the DMVA cultural resource manager is reporting to the USDVA NCA and DMVA VA on the information shared in consultation.

More work is required to fulfill consultation. The DMVA cultural resource manager needs to continue to pursue with the Tanacross Village information about a potential known burial at or near the proposed new veterans cemetery. The USDVA NCA and the DMVA VA needs to decide whether to include a cultural monitor in future work at the new veterans cemetery.

Information is provided in this memorandum to assist decision makers. Recommendations are provided based on the information related specifically to this project and from contexts and experiences relevant to the process, the place and the people involved.

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Introduction and rationale for this memorandum

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration (USDVA NCA) delegated their responsibility to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to the State of Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Division of Veterans Affairs (DMVA VA) for the undertaking of granting funds for a state veterans cemetery pursuant to the conditions of the USDVA NCA Veterans Cemetery Grants Program (Appendix A).

Part of the USDVA NCA's responsibilities in authorizing such grants under Section 106 of the NHPA and its implementing regulations 36 CFR § 800 includes consultation with: Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (AK SHPO); any associated Certified Local Government (CLG); any associated federally-recognized tribe¹; and any relevant interested parties. USDVA NCA has chosen to delegate the responsibility to start the conducting of that consultation to the Mr. Verdie Bowen, Director of the DMVA VA (Appendix A).

DMVA VA has started conducting consultation with relevant interested parties that include veterans groups. The DMVA cultural resource manager has started conducting consultation with the AK SHPO, the relevant CLG, and the relevant federally-recognized tribes and their affiliates. This report does not include consultation with veterans groups (directly, but a notable percentage of members of federally-recognized tribes are military veterans). The DMVA VA has already been consulting with relevant veterans groups for years about this project.

Description of consultation conducted to date.

Consultation began immediately following the delegation of these responsibilities to DMVA VA on January 29, 2025. The DMVA cultural resource manager, Thomas Wolforth, performed appropriate research that led to the generation of a letter that was sent out on February 11, 2025 (Appendix B) that:

- Based on the recommendations of the True North Sustainable Development Systems report (TNSDS) for this project, made a determination of no historic properties affected.
- Asked for concurrence from Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (AKSHPO) on this determination.
- Identified other consulting parties based on definitions and requirements stipulated in 36 CFR § 800.2(a)(4) and invited them to consult on this project.

The other potential consulting parties that received this letter of invitation to consult were representatives of the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) and the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB). Both groups responded after I followed up with emails to them.

¹ The phrase “federally-recognized tribe” is used interchangeably with “tribal government” in this memorandum.

Fairbanks North Star Borough

The FNSB is a Certified Local Government (CLG). As such they are identified in 36 CFR § 800.2(c)(3) as a party that is required to be invited to consult. The Historic Commission of the FNSB met on March 3, 2025, deliberated on the matter, and passed a resolution that officially concurred with the determination of no historic properties affected by this undertaking (Appendix C).

Please note that the FNSB has completed their task, but have expressed an interest in continued communications and involvement as this undertaking proceeds.

Alaska State Historic Preservation Office

During their required 30-day review period, the AKSHPO requested more information about the buildings on the project. Specifically, they wanted photographs of the exteriors of the buildings. Although those images had not been included in the TNSDS report, TNSDS had taken such photographs. R&M Consulting assisted me in getting those photographs to AKSHPO pronto. Soon thereafter AKSHPO finished their review and provided their concurrence on the determination of no historic properties affected by this undertaking (Appendix D).

In that letter AKSHO does these things:

- Provides their concurrence.
- Reminds USDVA NCA and DMVA VA that AKSHPO reserves the right to alter their concurrence should new information come to light.
- Reminds USDVA NCA and DMVA VA that they still have responsibilities with NHPA should cultural materials be encountered during construction or use of the project area. In particular they point out the possibility of deeply buried archaeological remains.

Tanana Chiefs Conference

As part of my background research I began reached out to the U.S. Army cultural resource manager at Fort Wainwright. That staff member has almost two decades of experience conducting NHPA consultation with tribal governments associated with the Fairbanks region of the Tanana River Valley where the proposed IAVC cemetery will be near Salcha, Alaska. Based on their recommendations, I began consultation for the IAVC by including the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) in the invitation to consult letter (Appendix B).

The TCC is not a federally-recognized tribe. The TCC is a not-for-profit consortium that serves 37 tribal governments over a large portion of the interior of Alaska. They have the funding, staff and resources to help those many small tribes achieve their goals in caring for their citizens in their sovereign small tribal communities throughout that region. These tribal governments work in tandem with the TCC with many responsibilities, including consulting on NHPA undertakings.



Who We Are

Tanana Chiefs Conference(TCC) is an [Alaska Native non-profit corporation](#), also organized as Dena' Nena' Henash or "Our Land Speaks". We work towards meeting the health and social service needs of Tribal members and beneficiaries throughout our region.

Over the course of email communications, the TCC recommended to me that DMVA should include the tribes of Healy Lake, Tanacross, and Dot Lake in the consultation process, as these groups were most likely to have some knowledge of and concern with a project being proposed in Salcha. I reached out to each group over the phone and received responses from Healy Lake Tribe and Tanacross Village.

Through continued communications over the next weeks and months, representatives of TCC expressed that the DMVA ensure that consultation proceed with the local tribes associated with Salcha, and that TCC be included in the actions and results of that consultation.

Tanacross Village Council

Tanacross Village Council is the name of the federally-recognized tribe situated along the Alaska Highway southeast of Salcha. This tribal government is sometimes referred to as the Native Village of Tanacross or simply Tanacross Village. I prefer to use the title Tanacross Village Council in an attempt to emphasize the "council" aspect of the name to avoid confusion with any reference to merely a "village" (a common term used in Alaska to refer to a small settlement or community) of Tanacross.

The community of Tanacross has a population of about 145. Nearly 90% of those occupants are Alaska Native heritage and consequently, members of the Tanacross Village Council federally-recognized tribe.

During consultation, Jerry Isaac, the Tribal Administrator pointed out that a tribal member that he is aware of my have information on the existence of a burial of a tribal member somewhere in the Salcha area. I provided Mr. Isaac with a map of the proposed IAVC to assist in tracking down that potential burial concern. To date, consultation on this matter has not been resolved.

Healy Lake Tribe

The Healy Lake Tribe is the name of the federally-recognized tribe situated along the Alaska Highway southeast of Salcha. This tribal government is sometimes referred to as the Mendas Cha-Ag Tribe or simply Healy Lake Village. I prefer to use the title Healy Lake Tribe to avoid confusion with the use and multiple meanings of "village" in Alaska parlance. The village of Healy Lake has a population of around 25 and is the closest village to Salcha. All of these villagers are members of the Healy Lake Tribe.

During consultation, Evelyn Combs, the Secretary/Treasurer (board member of the council) and Risk Management Program Coordinator and Cultural Resource Manager of the Healy Lake Tribe shared the information on the proposed IAVC with the elected council members in the monthly meeting. The council shared that:

- They have no concerns regarding traditional cultural use or sacred sites in the area.
- They would like to know that there will be a cultural monitor present during the work.

Dot Lake

The Dot Lake Tribe is the name of another federally-recognized tribe situated along the Alaska Highway southeast of Salcha. This tribal government is sometimes referred to as the Village of Dot Lake. It can be confused with the Dot Lake Village, which is simply the name of the community where about 40 people live. Information on the demographics of the village is not available.

I phoned the tribe but received no response or return call. Once I established connections with Healy Lake Tribe and Tanacross Village Council, I made a decision to focus on those two groups and not continue pursuing Dot Lake Tribe in consultation for this project.

The tribal groups

An attempt was made to meet in person with members of TCC, Tanacross Village Council and Healy Lake Tribe in Fairbanks on Tuesday March 25, 2025. That meeting was cancelled at the last minute due to personal matters associated with each of the three potential attendees that day.

Details of currently unresolved concerns expressed by consulting parties

Alaska State Historic Preservation Office

From their letter to DMVA (Appendix D):

“Additional information provided by the local government, Tribes, or other consulting parties may cause our office to re-evaluate our comments and recommendations. Please note that our response does not end the 30-day review period provided to other consulting parties.”

From their letter to DMVA (Appendix D):

“Should unidentified historical or archaeological resources be discovered in the course of the project, work must be interrupted until the resources have been evaluated in terms of the National Register of Historic Places eligibility criteria (36 CFR 60.4), in consultation with our office. Please note that some resources can be deeply buried or underwater, and that fossils are considered cultural resources subject to the Alaska Historic Preservation Act.”

Tanacross Village Council

The investigation within members of the Tanacross Village Council regarding whether a known burial exists at or near or is somehow related to the proposed IAVC in Salcha has not been resolved.

Healy Lake Tribe

The Healy Lake Tribe has been involved with NHPA consultation extensively with the U.S. Army and the Department of Transportation and other agencies that have had projects in this region. With that experience comes increased understanding of the process and how that process can be employed in mutually productive ways for the agencies and the tribe. That experience also builds a certain level of expectation for the agencies to engage in sincere and meaningful ways with a federally-recognized tribe.

That knowledge, concern and expectation are cogently expressed by Ms. Combs of the Healy Lake Tribe in their emphasis that a cultural monitor should be used at IAVC:

“Salcha is an odd area, one my tribe keeps an eye on, because we have battle sites, funerary sites, and old village sites in that territory. Many accessible places in the Salcha area are tied to historic tragedies (pre-colonial) and post-colonial genocides, village abandonments, and some unmarked/mass burials. I am not necessarily allowed to describe these places outside of my tribe in writing, and it is the tribe's wish that we keep these locations obscure to protect them, but when necessary, we share locations in person (co-survey, map sharing, shared ethnology) to protect the site, our tribe's historic and spiritual wellbeing, and if it is in the researcher's inclinations, their own spiritual safety and wellbeing.”

“While I can't put into writing the places we hold significant, I could and would verbally describe and show you these places to keep you informed for work, and safe spiritually if that concerns you. In the native way, if you don't already know this, going somewhere like an old battlefield, burial ground, or abandoned village could be very, very bad for you. I hold these beliefs in practice, and as an archaeologist only make this known as an option to other researchers if they feel off about it in any way.”

“For work sites being revisited and have had a monitor assigned, I just had a successful consultation regarding replacing the Gerstle and Johnston Veteran Memorial bridges. Both bridges experienced an explosion of industrialization in a previously (more or less) undisturbed area, and honestly, probably aren't in danger of uncovering anything new. The Gerstle, however, is important to my tribe, and we insisted on being present because there is always a chance of something changing in that lacustrine valley.

I can think of road construction projects where we, as a collective of organizations, understand the ground has been disturbed many times over in modern times, but monitors are present just in case something is kicked up.”

Consultation is a dialogue: continuing the engagement for the IAVC

USDVA NCA and DMVA VA are part of the dialogue that is consultation. Consultation is a give and take, a negotiation, a dialectic. When it works best the result of consultation is the generation of some idea or proposed action that neither party on one side or the other even thought about themselves, but only came up with by sharing concerns, knowledge and desires with one another.

It is not my role in this consultation process to make the decision for the USDVA NCA and DMVA VA whether cultural monitoring or any other thing is done on this project. My role in consultation is to facilitate the sharing of project concerns and cultural concerns between the project proponents and those that may be impacted by those proposed project activities.

The AKSHPO, FNSB, TCC, Healy Lake Tribe and Tanacross Village Council have heard what the project proponents (USDVA NCA and DMVA VA) are proposing. The project proponents have read above what those being impacted by the project know and are concerned about. It is now time for the project proponents, the USDVA NCA and DMVA VA to respond. Before I propose what that response could or should be, I am going to elaborate on the nature of cultural monitoring with particular emphasis in helping USDVA NCA and DMVA VA reflect on the potential benefits and detriments.

Considering cultural monitoring from the proponent’s perspective

It is natural for a project planning team to take a defensive stance when a consulting party introduces something to the project that has not been considered before in project planning. In this example, the Healy Lake Tribe has shared a strong sentiment about having a cultural monitor present for IAVC work. One could easily wonder if that request is normal? Is that out of line? Is there some kind of hidden agenda with that request? Do I have to even bother with that idea? Another tribe has introduced the idea that there may be an area of intimate concern for a member of their tribe: a burial. Is that normal? Why is this not a clearly identified situation?

Yes, you have to bother with that as indicated in the ways that the USDVA NCA letter (Appendix A) describes, the way the NHPA law is written and the way that tribes and agencies have been doing so for decades around Salcha. But instead of being bothered by it, one can ease the presumed pressure of that idea by thinking instead how this sentiment could be helpful in the project planning and implementation.

Having a cultural monitor can cost some money, but can save much money and time if indeed there are cultural remains on the IAVC land

As mentioned by AKSHPO, deeply buried archaeological remains could exist hidden below the ground surface at IAVC. Even the best work by TNSDS may have missed that. Indeed, in this area of the state it is common for archaeological sites to be hidden below layers of earth. In fact it is more than common. Deeply buried archaeological sites are the norm in this part of Alaska. Furthermore, they are numerous. The many that are known to exist are only a small sample of the number that probably exist. Some of those archaeological sites are famous for being some of earliest ones in the entire western hemisphere. The archaeological work conducted in Alaska has and continues to make profound contributions to the understanding of how humans moved around the planet at the end of the Pleistocene.

Sometimes the cultural-laden deposits are under wind-blown silts or drifting volcanic ash. Sometimes they are under riverine sediments. Sometimes they are covered by the growing tundra. In all of these kinds of instances, one would never see the archaeological remains on the ground surface. Instead, they would be hidden by the silts, sediments, volcanic tephra and accumulating vegetational mass of the tundra. All of these kinds of physical settings are likely present at the Salch property.

Based on these conditions, it must be expected that archaeological remains could exist hidden below the ground at the Salcha. One cannot know whether that is the case without conducting extensive archaeological tests to find out conclusively one way or the other.

The DMVA VA has contracted with an archaeological firm to address this possibility. The firm, TNSDS, conducted a good faith effort to find out. Their research, field and analytical methods were sound, and were recognized by the cultural resource manager at DMVA and the archaeological compliance reviewers at SHPO as appropriate and meeting or exceeding the minimum standards set forth for this kind of work by the National Park Service. Those being:

- *Secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation* (48 FR 44716) (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/upload/standards-guidelines-archeology-historic-preservation.pdf>)
- *National Register Bulletin #24 – Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning* (https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB24-Complete_Part1.pdf) (https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB24-Complete_Part2.pdf)
- *OHA HPS #12 – Archaeological Research Designs* (<https://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/oha/hpseries/hp12.pdf>)
- *OHA HPS #18 – Survey Methods* (<https://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/oha/hpseries/hp18.pdf>)

In addition to the sound research and review of existing information about remains nearby and conducting a thorough surface survey of the property, the TNSDS crew dug nine test units. They were placed in locations that past experience shows that are likely places for buried/hidden archaeological sites. The dirt from those excavation pits was pushed through a screen that had 1/8 inch gaps. Four of the test digs were dug to a depth of less than 65 centimeters. One was dug to 80 centimeters below the surface and another five of them were dug to a depth of 100 centimeters.

They were dug that deep because the TNSDS knows well that, based on the abundance of archaeological work previously conducted, the buried/hidden archaeological remains are common place around this area. Here is one of those deep test excavations from TNSDS.

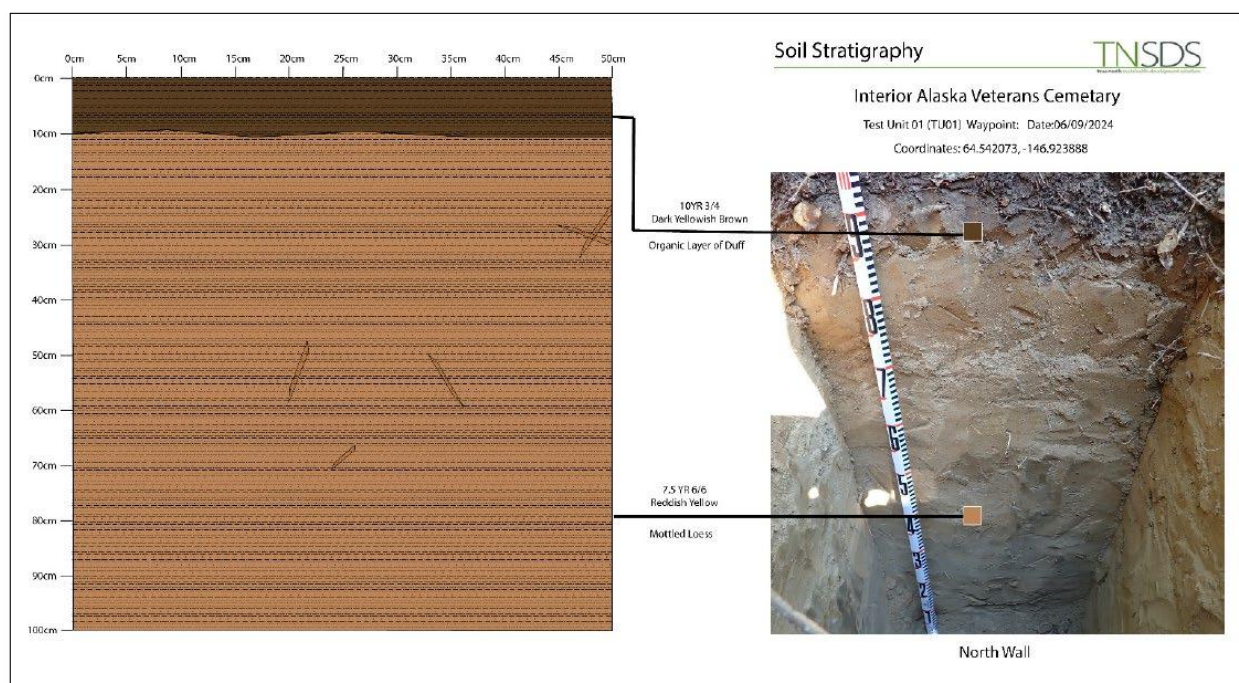


Figure 84. Test Unit 01 Soil Stratigraphy Detail (©TNSDS 2024).

No archaeological materials or features were encountered in any of the test excavation units. What does that mean? The results of all that hard work are presented in this way:

Archaeological Survey Conclusions

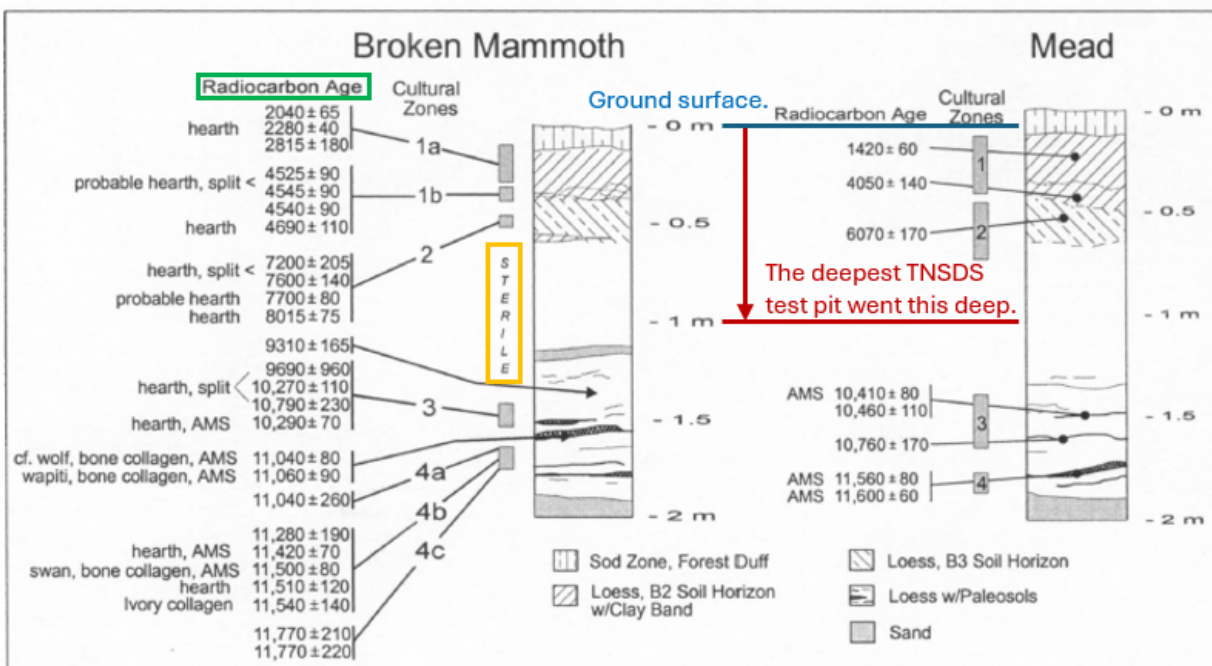
The Phase I Archaeological Survey results concluded that there were no unknown buried cultural resources in the Study Area nor the APE during the cultural resources investigation. The existing cabin, barn/stable, greenhouse,

That is a fair statement based on the work conducted (work that was done according to agreed upon standards in the profession and by SHPOs across the nation). Yet, could there actually be buried cultural resources at the Salcha property? Certainly, there could.

Two examples of archaeological remains being found deeply buried in Alaska soils comes from the archaeological sites known as Broken Mammoth and Mead. Both sites are within 30 miles of the proposed IAVC cemetery location. Work there (Holmes 2001) indicates that layers of earth that are buried over a meter below ground surface contain remains from people living there over 9,000 years ago. The deepest test excavations conducted by TNSDS (1.0 meters deep) for the IAVC property did not go deep enough to have encountered that kind of archaeological site buried that deeply (over 1.0 meters deep).

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Arctic Anthropology 38:2



“Sterile” means that some natural process brought some kind of sediment to this location and built up over the years without any human activity there. Thick (over 50 centimeters thick) sterile deposits are present over old archaeological sites. Radiocarbon dates directly associated with these cultural deposits that are over 1 meter below the ground surface indicate that people were here from 9,310 ± 165 radiocarbon years ago and 11,770 ± 220 radiocarbon years ago. Those dates are not “calibrated” here, but would probably calibrate to about 7,300 to 9,770 years B.P.

It is conceivable and expected that the work being conducted by the IAVC will move earth to depths of 1.0 meters and deeper. Furthermore, future burials may also be dug that deep. If it so happened that someone doing that earth moving encountered a stone arrowhead, or carved bone image, or skeletal remains of a human being, they would be required to stop work and conduct the actions required by NHPA (mentioned by AKSHPO) before any work could continue.

If a cultural monitor was present during that finding, the construction crew could continue working so long as the conditions for such an eventuality had been worked in consultation between USDVA NCA, DMVA VA, AK SHPO and tribes beforehand.

Having a cultural monitor working with the IAVC creates an opportunity that did not previously exist to establish a solid relationship with a local tribe

You are entering the sovereign territory of the tribes along the Tanana River Valley. You are strangers in their place.

You have done a great job in reaching out to many tribes to introduce yourselves and your plans. The tribes recognize and appreciate that. You have asked them to share their knowledge and concerns. They have responded. Now it is up to you to demonstrate how you intend to continue in this dialogue.

How you respond will be noted by more than the tiny few members of these small tribes. Your actions will be observed, examined, talked about and shared with everyone from next door neighbors to state and federal agency officials that live and work around there, and with elected officials in the state and federal government. You have an opportunity to make a good impression and allegiance that will benefit you in ways that you cannot yet imagine. If that inspirational approach is not compelling, perhaps you may be interested in seeing this from another perspective (Appendix E), one that is articulated by Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski.

The tribes care as deeply as you do about the spirituality associated with people that will be buried in the IAVC

The tribes are potential allies in your construction work and daily operations of the cemetery for generations to come. They have knowledge that you do not have, and they are willing to share it with you. They have already expressed their genuine concern for your safety and the safety of those that will be working on those lands during their consultation, as expressed by Ms. Combs during consultation.

In addition, Alaska is famous for, and Alaskans speak often and proudly of, the fact that there is a high percentage of Alaska Natives that have served in the armed forces of the United States. One can find plenty of military-regulation gravestones in the small cemeteries that are scattered about in villages with small populations throughout the state. With a veterans cemetery in the center of the state, as proposed for the IAVC, it would be interesting to explore with tribes what they think about having their loved ones interred in such a hallowed place.

Cultural monitoring is nothing new.

It is commonly done in Alaska. Others have benefited from this. The State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities is experienced with this. The various military bases around the state are familiar with this.

I have conducted archaeological monitoring at more than several places in Alaska. Although that is not quite the same as cultural monitoring, it is very similar. In every case where I have conducted archaeological monitoring in Alaska, and in every case that I have contracted with other archaeological firms to conduct archaeological monitoring for the

DMVA in Alaska, absolutely no cultural remains and no archaeological sites and no human skeletal remains have been encountered.

Was that a valuable way to spend project money? Absolutely. If only one of those projects would have been done without a monitor and had encountered some kind of remains, that project would have had to stop until a long list of things had been done to fulfill the NHPA that is always present during all portions of all undertakings. Costs for that one example would have outweighed the amount spent for the archaeological monitoring of all the others combined.

And by doing that archaeological monitoring and all of the consultation and logistics prior to and after the construction work, I witnessed the benefits in establishing a sincere rapport with the tribal governments that were involved.

My bias

One reading this may consider the information shared above as my bias on this matter. Bias certainly plays a major role in consultation: all parties have their strong opinions. I consider it my duty to you to share with you what I have learned from my experience. That is indeed my job description. This experience has led me to appreciate what consultation can do and what benefits derive from talking with and listening to members of tribal governments.

So, what could be the downside(s) if one decides to have a cultural monitor for this IAVC project?

Money must be spent to have a cultural monitor present

There is a financial component to this decision. DMVA VA will need to hire a cultural monitor for some, currently, unknown amount of time. But that cultural monitor would likely be a person that is a tribal member and lives close to the Salcha area. If that is so, then there should be no costs for lodging, food and little for transportation. The costs may be relatively low.

Plenty of coordination must take place to work with a cultural monitor

Someone on the IAVC team will need to put in a lot of time and energy to generate a contract, coordinate with the cultural monitor in the field, manage the work and required reporting after field work, and plenty more.

Setting expectations prior to going into the field for everyone that is working in the field is an important part of this. That will involve a coordinated effort before the work begins.

Buried and hidden cultural resources might be encountered resulting in work shut down

This is the conundrum of having a cultural monitor: deeply buried remains might never have been found if it were not for having someone looking for them during the construction work. This perspective is misleading, however.

From my decades of experience in this business, I have witnessed examples where backhoe operators on construction sites are the first to declare and be concerned about the archaeological remains that they have surprisingly encountered. And I have seen that project managers are most often caring and diligent in their desire to do the right thing: stop the project when they encounter archaeological remains. Indeed, there are financial penalties and even jail time associated for those convicted of not doing so.

When that kind of thing happens without a monitor, NHPA stipulates that everything must stop until a variety of tasks involving the project proponent, AKSHPO and tribes takes place. That is costly in time and money.

When that kind of thing happens when a monitor is present and everyone has worked out the expectations for that before field work begins, the construction work continues without a hiccup while the actions that were planned ahead of time to deal with this are implemented right then and there.

Next step: USDVA NCA and DMVA VA need to decide

It is my opinion that based on everything that I have shared with you above, that DMVA VA should invest the time and money on hiring a cultural monitor for this proposed IAVC project.

I am not in a position to make that decision. That must come from DMVA VA in consultation with USDVA NCA.

If DMVA VA decides to not have a cultural monitor

If the DMVA VA decides that it does not want to have a cultural monitor, I would be happy to set up a meeting between DMVA VA and the tribe to share that with them directly. One can expect that the tribal government may not be happy with that information. It is quite possible that the tribal government would register its concern with the AKSHPO. AKSHPO has a legal duty to listen to that complaint, reflect on it, and comment to DMVA VA, USDVA NCA and associated regulatory agencies (for instance the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation) about the disagreement between the agency (DMVA VA and USDVA NCA and tribal government). The process to resolve that can be a lengthy one depending upon how aggressive the proponent is in wanting to disengage from its NHPA responsibilities. The result of doing contentious actions will certainly resonate throughout the Tanna River Valley for the people that live there.

If DMVA VA decides to have a cultural monitor

If the DMVA VA decides that it does want to have a cultural monitor, I would happy to set up a meeting between DMVA VA and the tribe to share that with them directly. Things on the agenda in that meeting would include information about:

- Who does cultural monitoring?
- How does one contract for that?

- How much does it cost?
- When should a cultural monitoring be monitoring and when not?
- Who is responsible for reporting on the results?
- What about future digging there for future burials?

USDVA NCA and DMVA VA to do

- ☐ Use the information presented in this memorandum.
 - For a concise outline of actions taken and results to date please refer to the short list in Appendix F.
- ☐ Use additional information and experience beyond what is presented in this memorandum.
- ☐ Consider meeting with representatives of the relevant tribal governments to discuss this information.
- ☐ Decide whether the project proponents will support and make happen cultural monitoring at the IAVC.
 - When that decision is made, you are welcome to continue the consultation with the tribes yourselves.
 - If you would like my continued assistance in this work, that work will take more hours than I am currently slated to use for this project. I would be able to perform the additional work outlined in this memorandum after DMVA alters my current works hours dedicated to this project.

Bibliography

Holmes, Charles E.

2001 Between two worlds; Late Pleistocene cultural and technological diversity in eastern Beringia. *Arctic Anthropology* Vol 38, No 2:154-170.

Meinhardt, Robert L., Tiffany Ann Curtis, Justin Hays, Mark Rusk, Gianna Kersch and Joan Bayles Burgett

2024 *Draft report for cultural resource investigations with recommendations for issuing a finding pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and its implementing regulations 36CFR800 for the Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery, located in Salcha, Alaska.* Prepared for R&M Consultants, Inc., Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Northern Region. Prepared by True North Sustainable Development Solutions, Wasilla, Alaska.

Appendix A: USDVA NCA letter to DMVA VA



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON DC 20420

January 29, 2025

Verdie Bowen, Director
Alaska State Office of Veterans Affairs
4600 Debarr Road, Suite 180
Anchorage, AK 99508
Verdie.Bowen@alaska.gov

Subject: AK-09-01
Delegation of Authority for National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Consultation

Applicability: Applies Nationwide to State or Tribal Veterans Cemetery Undertakings Funded by the National Cemetery Administration of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Dear Mr. Bowen,

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) supplies grants to states, tribes, territories and counties to establish, expand or improve State or Tribal Veterans cemeteries.

Part of NCA's responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. § 470f, and its implementing regulations, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR § 800), NCA is authorizing its grant applicants to start consultation on NCA's behalf, following 36 CFR § 800.2(c)(4). NCA applicants and their authorized representatives shall consult with State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) to start the process set up under 36 CFR § 800. Specifically, this letter authorizes NCA applicants to indenture consulting parties, name historic properties and work with consulting parties to assess any adverse effects to historic properties.¹

Grant applicants must involve NCA in consultation whenever:

- Any consulting party, including the grant applicant, SHPO, THPO or Indian tribe, proposes that the undertaking may have an adverse effect on historic properties, as defined pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.5(a);
- There is disagreement between a grant applicant and the SHPO, THPO or Indian tribe about the scope of the area of potential effect, identification, and evaluation of historic properties, and/or the assessment of adverse effects;
- There is objection from a consulting party or the public about its involvement in the consultation process, recommended findings and determinations, or implementation of agreed upon terms; or
- There is potential for foreclosure or intentional adverse effects (such as anticipatory demolition), as defined pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.9(b) and (c).

NCA expects Veterans Cemetery Grants Program applicants to involve consulting parties in developing recommendations about Section 106 findings and determinations, and to carry out the exchange of documentation and information in a respectful, constructive, and predictable manner, within the timeframes provided within 36 CFR § 800.

For questions about this blanket authorization, please contact Thomas Paquelet, Veterans Cemetery Grants Program, at 304.820.9086 or Thomas.Paquelet@va.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Earp".

James Earp
Director, Veterans Cemetery Grants Program

¹ See the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's [Section 106 Review Process](#)



THE STATE
of ALASKA
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Military and
Veterans' Affairs
Alaska Army National Guard

P.O. Box 5169
JBER, AK 99505-0800
Main: 907.428.7158
Fax: 907.428.7191

State Historic Preservation Officer
Department of Natural Resources
Office of History and Archaeology
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1310
Anchorage, AK 99501

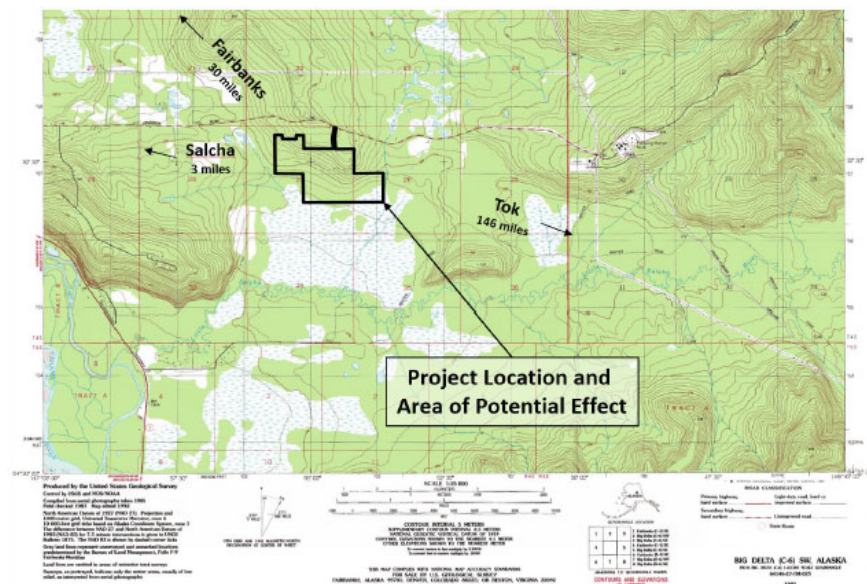
February 10, 2025

Request for concurrence of a determination of no historic properties affected for the proposed geotechnical borings for and the development of a state veterans cemetery by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs in Salcha, Alaska

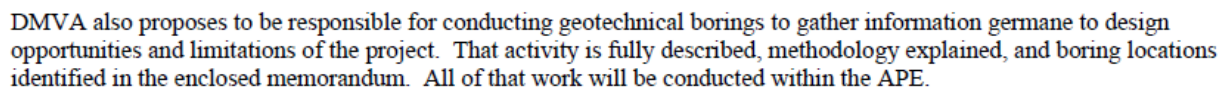
Dear Ms. Bittner,

The Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) is seeking to obtain a grant from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration (NCA) to build and subsequently operate a cemetery solely for the benefit of interring veterans (as defined in 38 CFR part 39.2) and their eligible family members (see 38 CFR part 39.10). The action of a federal agency granting such funds to a state agency is a Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act undertaking. The NCA has delegated their responsibility to conduct all of the required Section 106 consultation for this undertaking to the DMVA, as stipulated in the enclosed letter from NCA to DMVA.

In preparation for such a delegation, and as required in NCA grant conditions, the DMVA has conducted the appropriate actions to fulfill cultural resource assessments as defined in 36 CFR 800 for the property under consideration. The report on that assessment, conducted by True North Sustainable Development Solutions (TNSDS) is enclosed.



The center of the parcel is at Long -146.9120, Lat 64.5385. The Area of Potential Effect is the entire 257.5 acre parcel. While only a portion of that parcel is currently planned for cemetery development, additional activities might be added to the preliminary plan concept as results of all environmental studies are completed.



B-24

In brief, the field work for the study included intensive surface survey, test excavations, drone survey and historic architectural investigations. Architectural elements on the landscape are all younger than 45 years old. No archaeological sites or features were observed on the property.

Based on the work conducted and presented in the *Salcha CRM Investigation*, the DMVA, as delegated by NCA, determines that the proposed development of a new state veteran cemetery in Salcha, Alaska, including the geotechnical borings, will have no effect on historic properties. The DMVA on behalf of the NCA requests the concurrence by the Alaska State Historic Office (AKSHPO) in this determination.

The DMVA also invites the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) and the Fairbanks North Star Borough to comment on this project. Although the property is owned by the state of Alaska, the TCC is the not-for-profit association that provides a unified voice for sovereign tribal governments consisting of 37 federally recognized tribes in the region that includes Salcha, Alaska. It is the hope of DMVA that the TCC can provide insights into the existence of or potential to exist ancient sites, traditional cultural properties and areas sacred to the Alaska Natives in this region to ensure that these are incorporated into the understanding and planning for this state veterans cemetery.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough, as a Certified Local Government, has information on historical properties in the region, too. It is the hope of DMVA that the Fairbanks North Star Borough can share concerns, knowledge and plans for the future of the region to ensure that the proposed state veterans cemetery is in harmony with the planning conducted for the citizens of the region.

The *Salcha CRM Investigation* is a large (electronic) document that requires extra software to transit to the consulting parties. DMVA is using the state of Alaska-sanctioned ZendTo Alaska software to facilitate the transfer of this document to AKSHPO. Attempts will be made via ZendTo to provide this information to the Fairbanks North Star Borough and TCC. If that does not work this information will be provided via alternative software or snail mail.

The DMVA looks forward to working with the AKSHPO, TCC and the Fairbanks North Star Borough to address all concerns, comments and questions.

Sincerely,



Thomas R Wolforth
Cultural Resource Manager
Alaska Army National Guard
References Cited

Enc. Section 106 delegation letter from NCA to DMVA
Memorandum on proposed geotechnical investigation
Salcha CRM Investigation via ZendTo Alaska

Cc: Bob Sattler, TCC Environmental Quality w/ encls.
Kayde Whiteside, Fairbanks North Star Borough Community Planning Department w/ encls.
Verdie Bowen, DMVA Director of Office of Veterans Affairs, w/o encls.
Don Flournoy, DMVA Environmental Director, w/o encls.
Don Porter, R&M Consultants w/o encls.
Thomas Paquelet, NCA w/o encls.
Robert Meinhardt, TNSDS, w/o encls.

Appendix C: Fairbanks North Slope Borough consultation

Hello Tom,

Yes, the Commission voted 6-0 to concur with the determination of no historic properties affected. You may listen to the meeting here: [Historic Preservation Commission Meeting • Fairbanks North Star Borough • CivicClerk](#) the review of this item begins at 1:17:03.

No questions for the project at this time. I imagine they will be interested to follow this project as it progresses.

Thanks for checking in with us!

Kayde Whiteside

Long-Range Planner | Community Planning

kayde.whiteside@fnsb.gov | 907.459.1260

“It is best and easiest not to discredit others but to prepare oneself to be as good as possible.” - Socrates



Online notes from the FNSB commission:

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Action Memorandum

March 4, 2025

Review and potential recommendations regarding Section 106 National Historic Preservation Act Consultation Letters.

-Approved request for concurrence of a determination of no historic properties affected for the proposed geotechnical borings for and the development of a state veterans cemetery by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs in Salcha, Alaska (6-0)

Appendix D: AKSHPO concurrence letter (via email)

3130-1R DMVA / 2025-00146

Good afternoon,

The Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (AK SHPO) received your correspondence (dated February 10, 2025) concerning the subject project on February 14, 2025 and additional requested information on March 17, 2025. Following our review of the documentation provided, we concur with the finding of No Historic Properties Affected for the project, to include geotechnical boring. Please note that our office may need to re-evaluate our concurrence if changes are made to the project's scope or design.

As stipulated in 36 CFR 800.3, other consulting parties such as the local government and Tribes are required to be notified of the undertaking. Additional information provided by the local government, Tribes, or other consulting parties may cause our office to re-evaluate our comments and recommendations. Please note that our response does not end the 30-day review period provided to other consulting parties.

Should unidentified historical or archaeological resources be discovered in the course of the project, work must be interrupted until the resources have been evaluated in terms of the National Register of Historic Places eligibility criteria (36 CFR 60.4), in consultation with our office. Please note that some resources can be deeply buried or underwater, and that fossils are considered cultural resources subject to the Alaska Historic Preservation Act.

This email serves as our office's official correspondence for the purposes of Section 106. Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment. Please contact me at (907) 269-8724 or amy.hellmich@alaska.gov if you have any questions or we can be of further assistance.

Best regards,
Amy Hellmich

Amy Hellmich
Architectural Historian - Review and Compliance
Alaska State Historic Preservation Office
Office of History and Archaeology

(rec'd 3/21/25)

Appendix E: Letter from Senator Murkowski regarding consultation in Alaska

LISA MURKOWSKI
ALASKA

COMMITTEES:
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
RANKING MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR,
AND PENSIONS
INDIAN AFFAIRS

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0203
(202) 224-6665
(202) 224-5301 FAX

June 22, 2012

510 L STREET, SUITE 600
ANCHORAGE, AK 99501-1956
(907) 271-3735

101 12TH AVENUE, ROOM 329
FAIRBANKS, AK 99701-6278
(907) 456-0233

805 FRONTAGE ROAD, SUITE 105
KENAI, AK 99611-9104
(907) 283-5808

4079 TONGASS AVENUE, SUITE 204
KETCHIKAN, AK 99901-5526
(907) 225-6880

851 EAST WESTPOINT DRIVE, SUITE 300
WASILLA, AK 99654-7142
(907) 376-7665

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500-0004

Re: Tribal Consultation Policies

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to you today because a number of the 229 federally recognized Tribes in Alaska have registered serious concerns regarding inadequate public notice given to Tribes by agencies and departments, as well as other significant violations of tribal consultation policies. The federal Indian trust responsibility is a legal, fiduciary, and moral obligation that must be honored. It lays the framework and is the very foundation of federal Indian law. Consultation is essential to advancing tribal self-determination efforts and benefits both the Federal government and Tribes. Government-to-government consultation with our 566 federally recognized tribal governments is critical to the purpose of fulfilling the trust responsibility and works to improve the quality of life for Native Americans.

As you know, in 2000, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13175, which directed all executive branch departments and agencies to engage in tribal consultation on policies that have tribal implications in order to strengthen the government-to-government relationship with Tribes. In November of 2009, you issued Presidential Memorandum 57881 directing all agencies and departments to actively engage in implementation of Executive Order 13175 by reviewing and revising their tribal consultation policies as needed.

While both the Executive Order and the Presidential Memorandum attempt to improve relations with tribal governments through consultation, after hearing from a great number of Tribes in Alaska on the inefficiencies and inadequacies in agency and department tribal consultation policies, I am seriously concerned that the policies of many federal agencies are continuing to fail this Nation's first peoples. Unless something is done immediately to improve the situation, the Presidential directives that have been issued to support tribal consultation policies are doing nothing more than creating unrealistic expectations. We have come a long way from the failed Indian policies that created economic and political chaos across Indian country. Consultation is a term that has been said to embody your Administration's approach to federal Indian policy. Let us not regress to an era where the federal government made systematic promises to Tribal governments that it had no intention of keeping. Promises made to Tribes should be honored.

Some of the concerns I have heard from Alaska Native Tribes include:

- *There needs to be meaningful tribal consultation prior to notice of implementation of actions, regulation, or laws that impact Tribes;*
- *We need one consistent policy that works across all agencies and departments, a policy conceptualized and formulated by the Tribes;*
- *We need a better process in place to notify and inform Tribes of who, when, where, and what, regarding tribal consultation;*
- *A number of Agencies and Departments are not adhering to their own tribal consultation policies which compromises the government-to-government relationship;*
- *Tribes are not always afforded 30-day notice or adequate consultation notifications;*
- *When scheduling consultations, Agencies & Departments are not taking into account tribal concerns, interests, and/or time conflicts, such as geography, travel expenses, important cultural events, and traditional hunting and gathering seasons;*
- *Agencies & Departments are not engaging in meaningful consultation, it is a one way road of communication dissemination instead of discussion and dialogue;*
- *Greater efforts need to be made to listen to Tribes during the consultation process to inform Agencies & Departments prior to administrative decision making on proposed actions and issues that impact Tribes;*
- *The law must be adhered to – Public Law 108-199, Section 161 directs the OMB to consult with Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations on the same basis as Indian Tribes;*
- *Under Public Law 108-199, consultation policies apply to ANCSA corporations as well as Tribes. Federal agencies are therefore required to consult and coordinate with ANCSA corporations on the same basis as Indian Tribes in developing policies that would affect the corporations and their tribal shareholders.*

Mr. President, the relationship between the United States and each individual federally recognized Tribe is one between sovereigns and must be respected and honored. Given the numerous substantive complaints and concerns I have received regarding the implementation of your Presidential Memorandum on tribal consultation policies, I urge you to look into the matter further. Alaska is home to over 40% of all federally recognized Tribes in the Nation. Please keep that in mind as your Administration works to achieve tribal consultation that is more efficient, effective, and meaningful. I will continue my work in Congress to achieve the same end.

Respectfully,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

CC: Office of Management and Budget, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Internal Revenue Service, Department of Education, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

Appendix F: Review of consultation as of April 3, 2025

Fairbanks North Star Borough

- Has concurred with determination of no historic properties affected.
- Expressed an interest to hear more about project as it progresses.

Alaska State Historic Preservation Office

- Has concurred with determination of no historic properties affected.
- Expressed interest in DMVA consultation with others.
- Expressed concern about potential for deeply buried cultural materials.

Tanana Chiefs Conference

- Identified to DMVA the tribal governments that are related to the Salcha area.
- Continues to monitor the status of consultation between DMVA and the relevant tribal governments. There is a robust communication network between TCC and their regional tribes.

Tanacross Village Council

- Indicated that a tribal member may have information on the location of a burial in the vicinity of the proposed IAVC.

Healy Lake Tribe

- There are no potential impacts by the IAVC project to their traditional cultural or sacred sites that they know of at this time.
- Recommends that a cultural monitor be present at the IAVC location while construction of that cemetery is taking place.

Dot Lake Tribe

- I unilaterally discontinued pursuing communications with Dot Lake Tribe once I established communications with Tanacross Village Council and Healy Lake Tribe.
- This decision was made based on my interpretation of conducting good-faith efforts to consult with tribal governments as stipulated in 36 CFR § 800.2(b)(2)(ii)(A).

From: Wolforth, Tom R (MVA) <tom.wolforth@alaska.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2025 2:44 PM

To: Webmail Planning <planning@fnsb.gov>

Cc: Bowen, Verdie A (MVA) <verdie.bowen@alaska.gov>

Subject: invitation to consult on a cultural resource investigation in the borough

Greetings Fairbanks North Star Borough Community Planning Department,
I work for the State of Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA). We are moving along on the development of a new state veterans cemetery in nearby Salcha. As part of that we have conducted a cultural resource survey of the property. According to federal law (the National Historic Preservation Act - NHPA) it is incumbent upon us to consult with Certified Local Governments to share this information and learn more about the place from you.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough is a Certified Local Government. I would like to send you a letter (via email) from us discussing the project and inviting to you comment and consult. That would include a 72 megabyte report from the consulting archaeological firm that looked at the property.

To get that large report file to you, I would like to:

Use the ZendTo Alaska software (easy to use),

And ensure that I get this to the right people in your organization.

Could you please provide me with a point of contact for this transaction?

If you prefer snail mail, please let me know. I am looking forward to sharing this information with for this interesting and beneficial project.

Thank you,



Thomas R Wolforth
Cultural Resource Manager
Alaska Army National Guard and Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
POBox 5169, JBER, AK 99505

o 907.428.7184

c 907.350.8584

tom.wolforth@alaska.gov

Sent: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 3:30 PM
To: Wolforth, Tom R (MVA) <tom.wolforth@alaska.gov>
Cc: melissa.kellner <melissa.kellner@fnsb.gov>
Subject: RE: DMVA invitation to consult on new state veterans cemetery in Salcha

You don't often get email from kayde.whiteside@fnsb.gov. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello Tom,
I was able to download the report with no issues.

We'll share these communications with the Historic Preservation Commission at their March 4th meeting and will let you know if they have any comments regarding the project.

Thanks!

Kayde Whiteside
Long-Range Planner | Community Planning
kayde.whiteside@fnsb.gov | 907.459.1260

[Take the Fairbanks Area Community Values Survey – WIN PRIZES!](#)

<https://arcg.is/GyabD>

From: Wolforth, Tom R (MVA) <tom.wolforth@alaska.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 9:06 AM
To: Kayde Whiteside <kayde.whiteside@fnsb.gov>
Cc: Melissa Kellner <melissa.kellner@fnsb.gov>
Subject: DMVA invitation to consult on new state veterans cemetery in Salcha

Greetings Kayde,

Thank you for thinking about ways to communicate with a large file attachment.

This email includes a letter of invitation to consult on the proposed Dept of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) state veterans cemetery in Salcha. There are three other files that go with it. Two of those are included in this email. The third is the large one.

I am going to try using the ZendTo Alaska first to get that to you. That means I will upload that file to that software. It will notify you in an email and provide you a code to download. I think that you have seven days to grab it. If for some reason that does not