

USACE Block 17 Directions to the Site:

Within SW 1/4 section 2, T. 20 N., R. 17 W., Kateel River Meridian; at Latitude 67° 9'36.75"N., Longitude 162°19'56.76"; Noatak River mile 14, approximately 18 miles northeast of Kotzebue, Alaska and which can be noted on USGS map Noatak A-I. The legal description of the above property is Native Allotment F-15983, USS 10965, 50-96-0179. The Project site is a lease within the allotment, Drake Lease Doc No 2017-000171-0. The allotment is located approximately 20 miles north of Kotzebue, on the northeastern bank of the Noatak River. See Project Vicinity Map Figure 1.

Access to the site is by river barge along the Noatak River below the highwater mark, ADL 418490.

USACE Block 18 Description of Proposed Action:**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION**

Drake proposes extracting an additional 300,000 cubic yards from the Noatak material site. An Excavator and a loader will be used for extracting material and loading dump trucks.

The heavy equipment's servicing, maintenance, and storage will be done on-site. All waste oil, coolants, and replacement parts will be removed by barge and disposed of at the City of Kotzebue Hazardous Waste Collection Facility or at the local Class III Landfill if applicable.

The project is an extension of the Noatak River Gravel Pit Project previously permitted under POA-2008-618, Noatak River. Gravel mining operations were initially permitted on March 10, 2009 and placed into use on August 1, 2011. The total aggregate mined since 2011 is approximately 150,000 cubic yards.

The current gravel pit and two additional undisturbed cells total 21.5 acres. Of the total acreage, Cell 1 is approximately 2.5 acres and Cell 2 is approximately 5 acres. See Figure 6.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

Work would occur seasonally between May and October.

Per the Northwest Arctic Borough Title 9 Conditional Use Permit Item 20, during the fall caribou migration, Drake Construction, Inc. (DCI) or any project contractors will not block or cause diversion of the migration of caribou. DCI and/or any project contractors will cease any activity that may interfere with the seasonal fall caribou migrations and/or caribou summer movements, such as marine, ground and airborne transports, ground and airborne surveys or movement of equipment, until such time as the migration or summer movements have cleared $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the area where the activity had occurred. During the seasonal fall caribou migration period of mid-August through mid-November, DCI will take extra precautions to avoid deflecting even small

numbers (e.g. group sizes of 5-10) of the first caribou moving through the area as these groups/bands set trails as "lead caribou" that subsequent caribou later follow during the migration.

Per the Northwest Arctic Borough Title 9 Conditional Use Permit Item 32, DCI will begin project activities (to include barging and hauling of aggregates) on or after May 25 and will cease operations (to include barging and hauling of aggregates) by October 31 of each season. DCI will cease operations (including barging and hauling of aggregates) from September 15 until October 15; provided that DCI may transport equipment and supplies to and from the gravel quarry as needed.

The estimated life of the project is 5 years, providing an estimated 300,000 CY of material and impacting a total of 21.5 acres. Operationally, the camp facilities, and lay down for supplies, fuel, etc, will all remain in the active excavation area.

EQUIPMENT

Below is a list of potential equipment to be used onsite.

- Excavators
- Grader
- Loaders
- Haul Trucks, Screening Plant
- Articulated Dump Truck
- Fuel trucks
- Service Truck
- Other vehicles

USACE Block 19 Project Purpose

DCI proposes to continue developing an aggregate material source in western Alaska, about 560 miles northwest of Anchorage and about 20 miles north of Kotzebue along the northeastern bank of the Noatak River (see Figure 1). The purpose of this project is to extract sand and gravel materials for use in support of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (Alaska DOT&PF) roadway projects in Kotzebue, Alaska and other entities and communities. The proposed project includes the extraction of sand and gravel materials from the current extraction site.

Activities include constructing, operating, and eventually closing a gravel borrow pit that would serve the Kotzebue area and the surrounding villages. The project is on land owned by Ms. Lily (Pilcher) Mayland, which is held in trust by the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a restricted-use Native Allotment. The footprint of the proposed site is limited to a portion of Ms. Mayland's property identified as a source of high quality borrow material. DCI has a recorded lease for this property. See Figure 9 for the boundary of the lease. An Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed in May 2008, before POA-2008-618, Noatak River was issued. The EA was updated in 2020 when the Mayland lease was renewed.

Material would be transported down the Noatak River to the city of Kotzebue by barge and tugboat, where it would be commercially available to various projects in the region. The construction site would utilize the existing infrastructure consisting of a 1,250-foot by 31-foot (bottom width) haul road, a barge landing, and stockpile area. Material excavation and reclamation would occur in phases. Extraction at the current mine extraction area will continue with additional phased extraction in Cell 1 and Cell 2. See Figure 6. Reclamation at the site will follow the attached reclamation plan.

Extracted material would be loaded on barges at the Noatak River shoreline and barged where needed. No improvements would be necessary below the ordinary high water mark at the barge landing. The estimated life of the project is 5 years, providing an estimated 300,000 CY of material and impacting a total of 21.5 acres

The mine is active seasonally during summer months using conventional “truck and shovel” operation using both bulk and selective mining methods. Currently there is no road or rail access to the site, and all personnel and supplies are transported by tug and barge. The project is completely isolated from existing power and other infrastructure.

USACE Block 23 Description of Avoidance, Minimization, and Compensation

AVOIDANCE

Complete avoidance of wetlands is not practicable to accomplish the purpose and needs of this project. No in-water work is expected to take place during the extraction of materials. Temporary stockpiles will be placed at least 100 feet away from the waters of the U.S. The project requires excavation in freshwater emergent wetlands to extract suitable sands and gravels for the construction of regional projects. The applicant has lease ownership of the property and subsurface.

Wetlands are located on the subject property, and avoiding all wetlands to meet the project's purpose and needs is not practicable. See Figure 4. Project alternatives, including no action, barging gravel from Nome, single-phase extraction at the proposed location, and the proposed location in two-phase extraction, were evaluated to identify the most practicable alternative after taking into consideration site logistics, Alaska Department of Transportation (ADOT) construction requirements, noise pollution, and the overall project purpose. Alternatives were considered, with the current proposed project being the most reasonable and practicable alternative. The alternatives considered include the following:

Alternative 1: No Action

The No Action alternative would not develop any more of the property and leave it as it is currently. This alternative provides no new source of sand and gravel for construction projects.

Alternative 2: Barge Gravel from Nome

Kotzebue does not have a deep draft port. Barging gravel from Nome to Kotzebue could have impacts on wildlife. The coastline and water bodies from Nome to Kotzebue are critical habitats for wildlife.

Alternative 3: One-phase, current location

Extraction would occur in one 21.5-acre cell unit until all usable material is exhausted. Reclamation would include grading and re-seeding.

Alternative 4: Two-phases, current location

Current mining would continue within the existing disturbed footprint. Additional extraction would occur in two additional Phases (two cells), one cell at a time, until all usable material is exhausted. Cell 1 is approximately 2.5 acres and Cell 2 is approximately 5 acres. Reclamation includes ponds. See Figure 5 and 6.

Analysis of Alternatives

The proposed action (Alternative 4) is the preferred alternative for meeting the purpose and need of the project, which is to provide additional sand and gravel at the least cost with the least impact on wetlands. This alternative also provides a phased approach to extraction.

MINIMIZATION

The proposed site's selection is based on utilizing the applicant's property, with an extraction site of approximately 21.5 acres.

To further minimize impacts to the waters of the U.S., the project is designed to reduce wetland impacts to the greatest extent practicable. Complete avoidance of wetlands is not practicable to

accomplish the purpose and needs of this project. To minimize the impact of this project on the environment, the following measures are proposed:

- The proposed project will follow necessary USFWS and NOAA Fisheries recommendations to avoid disturbing migratory birds or Threatened or Endangered species.
- There are no known Historic Properties. A Cultural Resources Desktop Assessment was completed in 2020 by Northern Land Use Resources and submitted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) as part of the updated Environmental Assessment requested by the BIA. This assessment can be provided if requested.
- The extraction limits will be clearly identified in the field prior to extraction to ensure the permitted project footprint is not exceeded during development.
- This site is currently an active mine and increasing the current size is the least damaging option. Any other option requires new site development.
- Extraction would occur in Phases, one cell at a time, until all usable material is exhausted.
- Movement of construction equipment would be restricted to within the identified project boundaries to minimize disturbance to native vegetation.
- Stockpiles will not be placed in undisturbed wetlands.
- BMPs such as vegetative buffers would be installed and implemented to minimize the introduction of additional suspended sediment into the wetlands.
- All refuse, garbage, or debris created during activities will be removed and disposed of at an approved facility.

COMPENSATORY MITIGATION

No purchases of mitigation bank or in-lieu fee credits are proposed during any phase of the proposed rehabilitation as neither option is currently available for the area. The applicant stated that compensatory mitigation should not be required for the Noatak River Gravel Mine project because all practicable steps have been taken to avoid and minimize adverse impacts to the wetland ecosystem.

USACE Block 25 Adjacent Landowners

The property is bounded on the:

- north and east by NANA (PO Box 49 Kotzebue, AK 99752)
- south by KIC (P.O. Box 1050. Kotzebue, AK 99752)
- west by Native Allotment 092665 (care of Kotzebue IRA Council, PO Box 296, Kotzebue Alaska, 99752-0296)