

**Decision Document for
ISSUANCE OF POA-2017-00227 (RGP-03)
A Regional General Permit for
USAGAK Training Areas**

1 Introduction and Overview

This document discusses the factors considered by the Corps of Engineers (Corps) during the issuance process for this Regional General Permit (RGP-03) (POA-2020-00227), referred to hereinafter as “RGP.” This document contains: (1) the public interest review required by Corps regulations at 33 CFR 320.4(a)(1) and (2); (2) a discussion of the environmental considerations necessary to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act; and (3) the impact analysis specified in Subparts C through F of the 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR Part 230). This evaluation of the RGP includes a discussion of compliance with applicable laws, consideration of public comments, an alternatives analysis, and a general assessment of individual and cumulative impacts, including the general potential effects on each of the public interest factors specified in 33 CFR 320.4(a).

1.1 Summary of the Regional General Permit (see Attachment for full text)

Maximum Acreage Limitations: RGP-03 authorizes permanent discharges of dredged and/or fill material into WOTUS, including wetlands, for single and complete projects up to 2.0 acres, and for temporary discharges (see General Condition 2 below for definition of temporary discharges). The purpose of placement of fill or dredge material must be for the following:

1. Training Activities and Support of Training Activities:
 - a. Discharge of sidecast and fill material as a result of training activities such as creation of trenches and fox holes, vehicle and personnel defilades, and placement of targetry.
 - b. Permanent discharges of dredged and/or fill material for creation and maintenance of infrastructure that directly supports training activities. For example: target and bivouac pads, berms, access roads/trails, firing lines, utilities, material sites, and fills as part of the construction of bridges and low water crossings.
 - c. Discharge of fill material associated with land clearing for training activities. For example: using dozer, disking and possibly hydro-axing for clearing a drop zone or for line-of-site management.
2. Non-training Activities:
 - a. Erosion control and restoration activities. For example, placement of materials for soil stabilization and revegetation, and culverts associated with restoration of training impacts to wetlands and other aquatic resources.
 - b. Discharge of fill material associated with land clearing for fire management. For example, disking to create wildfire breaks.
3. Geographic Limitations:
 - a. RGP-03 only permits activities designated in Ranges, Impact Areas and Training Areas (TAs) on USAGAK Lands (Figure 1) including the Tanana

Flats TA, Yukon TA, Donnelly TA East, Donnelly TA West, Black Rapids TA, Whistler Creek TA and Gerstle River TA (see Figure 1).

- b. Excluded areas within USAGAK lands include out-grant locations not used for the primary purpose of warfare training, the Fort Wainwright Small Arms Complex and Cantonment Area, and those areas with mixed land use not specifically designated as Ranges, Impact Areas or TAs.

1.2 Statutory Authority: Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344)

1.3 General

RGPs are a type of general permit issued on a regional basis to authorize certain activities that are substantially similar in nature and cause only minimal individual and cumulative environmental impacts. RGPs must comply with the related laws cited in 33 CFR 320.3. Specifically, evaluation of this RGP considers compliance with each of the following laws as applicable: Section 401, 402, and 404 of the Clean Water Act, Section 307(c) of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, Section 302 of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, as amended, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the Interstate Land Sales Full Disclosure Act; the Endangered Species Act; the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation and Management Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. In addition, compliance of the RGP with other Federal requirements, such as Executive Orders and Federal Regulations addressing issues such as floodplains, essential fish habitat, and critical resource waters are considered.

Activities that result in more than minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment cannot be authorized by RGP's. Individual review of each activity proposed for authorization by the RGP would be performed through the pre-construction notification to the Corps and would be required for verification that an activity complies with the RGP.

1.4 Avoidance and Minimization of impacts to waters of the U.S. (WOTUS):

1.5 Applicants under this RGP would be expected to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands when practicable. General conditions have been added to the RGP and special conditions will be added on a case-by-case basis to minimize impacts to WOTUS, including wetlands and streams. For each verification of the permit involving permanent impacts, an avoidance and minimization statement will be part of the verification process (see 'Application Procedures'). This RGP cannot be verified unless permanent impacts have been avoided and minimized to the fullest practicable extent. Adoption of this RGP would result in avoidance and minimization to aquatic resources because it encourages permanent fill limits, prohibits work in certain water types and identifies and applies limits to unique and valuable aquatic resources. Proposed Mitigation and discussion:

The District Engineer (DE) may add conditions to the RGP authorizations to require mitigation to reduce the adverse environmental effect so that they are no

more than minimal (see 'Conditions' in Permit Text). Mitigation will be determined on a case-by-case basis during each permit verification.

1.6 Terms and Conditions

See section of the Regional General permit titled TERMS AND CONDITIONS.

2 Review Process

The analysis in this document and the coordination that was undertaken prior to the issuance of this RGP fulfill the requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA).

The state must grant or waive a Clean Water Act Section 401 water quality certification (WQC) for this RGP prior to a final Corps permit decision. A Section 401 WC was granted for this RGP on January 7th, 2021 Day, Year; pursuant to this general certification, specific activities authorized under the RGP would not be subject to Section 401 on a case-by-case review.

RGP's that authorize activities within, or affecting land or water uses within a state that has a federally approved coastal zone management program (CZM), must also be certified as consistent with the state's program. By operation of Alaska State law, the federally approved CZM program expired July 1, 2011, resulting in a withdrawal from participating in the Coastal Zone Management Act's (CZMA) National Coastal Management Program. The CZMA is there not applicable to RGP's.

2.1 Scope of Analysis

The determination of the scope of analysis for the Corps federal action is guided by the Corps' NEPA implementation regulations 33 CFR 325, Appendix B.

The scope of analysis includes the specific activity requiring a Department of the Army permit. Other portions of the entire project are not included because the Corps does not have sufficient control and responsibility to warrant federal review.

The scope of analysis for each project authorized under this RGP will be described within the project specific RGP verification Combined Decision Document (CDD).

2.2 Purpose and Need:

The basic project purpose is the discharge of fill for Military Training Activities. The purpose and need and the overall project purpose for each project would be discussed in the CDD for each project. In general, there is a need for troop maneuver actions and associated infrastructure development in the Training Areas (TAs) of the Interior of Alaska (1). These actions are critical to support the war mission and defense capabilities of the United States. The continued use of USAGAK range and training lands to develop the Army mission requires routine maintenance, upgrades, and in some cases new construction of facilities to continue to provide Soldiers with a high-quality training environment. USAGAK is a unique landscape which enables one of the only large, uninhabited land and air training facilities in the United States, and it is relied upon almost exclusively for military training in cold climate conditions and for large combat air brigades. There

is no other option in the country for large scale maneuvers and development of the country's military capabilities due to proximity of population centers in the lower 48 states, and as such, USAGAK TA's are dedicated spaces where these activities are allowed.

Activities covered under this RGP enable training opportunities for troops on the ground practicing skills needed to use in postures on the battlefield (trenching, vehicle maneuvering and defensive temporary structures or targets, etc.) and activities that enable access to these on the ground training activities (firebreaks, stream crossings, bivouac pads, etc.). When performed separately, these activities have only minimal adverse effects when carried out with best management practices (see General Conditions).

The basic purpose of this RGP is to create a category of activities which have minimal impacts to the aquatic environment, and to facilitate timely permitting process within this category. A 'look-back' analysis of Corps permits from 1999 to 2018 (2) showed the average permanent impact to WOTUS caused by war preparedness activities is less than two acres in size (1.18 acres; see Section 5.3). Of all permit actions during this period, 69% were Nationwide Permits and 31% were Standard Permits. In the past, the Corps has relied upon the Nationwide Permit series to verify war preparedness activities as most had minimal impact to the aquatic resource (see Section 5.3, Table 3). However, some activities with only minimal impacts are unique to the Military and cannot be covered by Nationwide Permits. The U.S. Army Garrison Alaska's Range Complex and Training Land Upgrades Programmatic Environmental Assessment (3) performed a needs analysis summarized in Table 1, showing typical training activities associated with wetland impacts. As per Corps regulations, a small portion of these activities would be analyzed as Individual Permits due to their size and scope, but most represent small impacts that are not covered under Nationwide Permits. The aforementioned Programmatic Environmental Assessment summarized the environmental impacts of activities proposed under this RGP for cumulative effects on water quality and the aquatic environment and found this group of activities to have only minimal impacts to WOTUS (see Section 5.4). Furthermore, the Training Areas of USAGAK are rich in wetlands (see Section 4), and operations across this landscape are not practicable to accomplish without effects to the resource.

Table 1. Fort Wainwright Lands analyzed under the 2010 US Army Garrison Fort Wainwright Range Construction Environmental Analysis showing a forecast of development projects by type.

Project Name	TA	Wetland Impacts (acres)	Description	Pad	Berm	Road/Trail	Firing Line	Clearing	Fencing	Grading	Abutments	Utilities
DTA Road Upgrades	DTA East	up to 303	Upgrade/improve existing access trails			x					x	
DTA Firing Points	DTA East	2	Harden pads and access trails	x		x					x	
Expand KD Range	SAC	<1	Expand range from 10 to 20 firing lanes		x		x	x				
Target Emplacement	SAC	<1	Place hard targets in impact area									
Theater Specific Village	BRTA	up to 11	Improve access trails, construct pads, place relocateable Afghan-style buildings.	x		x						
Expand OP26 for Range Control West Operations	DTA West	5	Construct barrack-style and maintenance buildings, include heat, well, septic	x		x			x	x		x
Delineate DTA East Boundary	DTA East	7	Cut trees either with a hydro-axe, dozer, or by hand along the boundary of DTA East					x				
Expand Buffalo DZ	DTA East	40	Clear trees, level ground, plant grass					x		x		
Convert Fuel Break to Airstrip	DTA East (BAX-CACTF area)	6	Level existing clearing and add a single lift of gravel to make a façade for training, include a tower	x							x	
New Road to bypass CTR	DTA East	15	Option with greatest impact would be to build a new road that avoids archaeology sites, but impacts wetlands			x					x	
Black Rapids TA Roads Upgrades	BRTA	2	Upgrade/improve existing access trails			x					x	
Gerstle River TA Road Upgrades	GRTA	up to 164	Upgrade/improve existing access trails			x					x	
Replace or Relocate Simpsonville Buildings	DTA West	<1	Depending on option chosen, either replace or relocate 8-10 live fire village buildings - elevated about ground on footers.						x			
Add New OPs along the Winter Trail	DTA West	17	Five new OPs would include 2-5 acres of clearing, gravel pads for buildings and parking areas, bunkers, range towers, latrines.	x		x		x				x
*East-West Road Upgrades	DTA East	up to 234	Upgrade/improve existing access trails			x					x	
Totals		809		5	1	9	1	4	2	9	0	2
* This project is not being analyzed in the Range Construction EA (2010), but was previously analyzed in the DTA East Mobility and Maneuverability Enhancement EA May 2008.												

2.3 Water Dependency Determination

All activities proposed under this RGP would not require access or proximity to or siting within a special aquatic site to fulfill its basic purpose. The activities are not considered water dependent. Therefore, the individual reviews of each project will need to document that alternatives not involving special aquatic sites are not available to the applicant.

2.4 Public Comment and Response

A Public Notice (PN) describing the RGP was issued (mailed/emailed) and posted on the Corps website

(<http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory/Special-Public-Notices/>) on January 27, 2020. The PN expired on February 26, 2020.

Table 2. Comments received from the Public Notice.

Agency and/or Person provided with Public Notice:	Response received? Y/N	Date Received:	Comments/Issues Raised, Applicant's Response and Corps Evaluation:
State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)	Y	28 January 202028 January 2020	Sarah Meitl, Review and Compliance Coordinator: Stated "no objections to the USACE's proposed method to comply with Section 106 for the proposed general permit."
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)	Y	21 February 202021 February 2020	Marcia Heer, USEPA, Region 10-Water Division: Asked if the Army has completed any EAs for these actions. On February 24 I forwarded her the Fort Wainwright EA titled 'Five-Year Clean Water Act Permit Renewal (2007).
State Water Quality Agency	Y	21 February 202021 February 2020	Teri Buck, Environmental Program Specialist / State of Alaska Division of Water: Asked for our Decision Document to review. I stated this would not be complete until the Public Notice period was over and instead provided her with two of Fort Wainwright's EAs, Fort Wainwright the 'Five-Year Clean Water Act Permit Renewal (2007) and the US Army Garrison Fort Richardson and Fort Wainwright Alaska's Range Complex and Training Land Upgrades Final Finding of No Significant Impact and Programmatic Environmental Assessment (2010).
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS)	Y	24 February 202024 February 2020	Amal Ajmi, USFWS. Fish and Wildlife Biologist Planning and Consultation. Comments were forwarded to the Applicant for response on 24 February, 2020. The Applicant responded on 05 March, 2020. See below for discussion.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)	Y	25 February 202025	Amy Jensen, Regional Wetland Coordinator, USEPA Region 10. The Corps forwarded comments to Applicant for response on 26,

Agency and/or Person provided with Public Notice:	Response received? Y/N	Date Received:	Comments/Issues Raised, Applicant's Response and Corps Evaluation:
		February 2020	February, 2020. The Applicant responded on 05 March, 2020. See below for discussion.
Fairbanks North Star Borough	Y	24 February 2020	Nancy Durham, Floodplain Coordinator: In a letter dated 24 February she stated that a floodplain permit is required for any work conducted in the Special Flood Hazard Area (Flood Zone A, AE, AO, & AH).

Discussion — U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: The Service sent a letter stating that wetlands were trust resources and they had concerns about some specifically. Bear, McDonald and Clear Creeks in the Tanana Flats Training Area, and Stuart Creek in the Yukon Training Area were earmarked as being anadromous and they declared the importance of providing adequate fish passage at stream crossings. The letter recommends that floodplain connectivity be preserved to the greatest extent possible by constructing stream crossings that are full span when possible. They also earmarked the floating mat fens in the Tanana Flats near Wood River as being a unique and difficult to replace aquatic resource that supports numerous species and should be avoided. The Services recommendations also include maintaining vegetative buffers and cited multi-agency guidelines for riparian and high-value wetland buffers (*Alaska Department of Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Alaska Department of Natural Resources. 2002. General recommendations for riparian management zones in Interior Alaska*). Erosion and sediment control BMPs should use only non-plastic based, biodegradable materials and any temporary erosion control fencing or other products should be removed to avoid wildlife entanglement, and secondary harm effects. The Service concluded they do not object to the RGP proposal if the following special conditions are included:

1. No military activities are permitted within the fen wetlands.
2. No military activities are permitted in wetlands until minimum conditions of 12-inch frost depth and six inches of snow cover are met.
3. Permitted activities will avoid ground disturbing projects in thaw-sensitive soils (e.g., thermokarst prone), and highly erodible soils whenever possible.
4. A 100-foot buffer of undisturbed native vegetation shall be maintained when practicable between all military activities and higher-value wetlands, such as fens, open-water ponds and lakes, and flowing water.
5. All vegetation removal, trimming, and grading of vegetated areas should be scheduled outside of the peak bird breeding season to the maximum extent practicable, which is generally from May 1 to July 15 for most migratory birds, and starting March 1 for owls, jays and ravens.

6. No fill, equipment or construction materials shall be stockpiled or stored on wetlands that do not have DA authorization for those activities.

7. Natural drainage patterns shall be maintained to the extent practicable by the installation of culverts in sufficient number and size under access roads and trails to prevent ponding, diversion, or concentrated runoff that would result in adverse impacts to adjacent wetlands and other fish and wildlife habitats.

8. All disturbed, stockpile and fill areas shall be stabilized to prevent erosion. Increased water turbidity and accumulation of sediment in drainages, sloughs, and other wetlands shall be evidence of insufficient stabilization.

Corps Evaluation of Comments: Requested Condition 1 —The Corps agrees that projects proposed in unique aquatic resources such as the Tanana Flats Fen system would not be in accordance with a Regional General Permit's goal of 'non-significant impacts'. The Applicant agreed that this fen system should have increased protections and proposed a joint Services committee to meet and outline management strategies outside of this process. 2 —The Corps disagrees that these conditions must be present for use of the terms of this RGP. Delaying construction projects until after freeze-up is not practicable in most cases. Also, General Condition 7, Best Management Practices, addresses prevention of sediment and erosion into adjacent waters. The Applicant responded that "USARAK Army Regulation 350-2 addresses frozen ground and snow conditions required for unpermitted travel and training in wetlands (during the winter months)". Specifically, U.S. Army Alaska Regulation 350-2 details acceptable conduct during training exercises in the field to reduce negative environmental impacts. A synopsis of Regulation 350-2 regarding maneuver training is as follows. Vehicles will remain on marked trails and designated routes except when directed otherwise during tactical deployment. Vehicles will drive on established roads during administrative time. During breakup (usually 1 April through 15 May) all vehicles are restricted to established roads and dry trails. During summer months (usually May through September) cross-country movement is permitted in all areas except designated creek bottoms, lakes, streams and open flowing. Tracked or wheeled maneuvering is not permitted within fifty meters of all streams, lakes and any open flowing water during summer months unless crossing at a 90-degree angle to the stream. Fish spawning streams will not be crossed during summer months without the proper permit. Vehicular stream crossing is allowed in winter months (usually October through March) at permitted ice bridge sites and other areas if there is no flowing water. Tactical turns, such as missile avoidance or neutral steer turns, will be avoided unless absolutely necessary. Vehicles will not drive directly up steep hills. 3 — The Corps agrees with the comment. General Condition 14. Permafrost, outlines specific BMPs and success metrics for minimization. USAGAK also responded to the concerns stating that "RGP activities in thaw-sensitive soils and highly erodible soils - this is

a BMP in Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP)". 4 — In areas of high value wetlands, Special Conditions may be applied such as vegetated buffers to minimize secondary impacts. Also, General Condition 5, Impacts to Adjacent Waters of the US, and General Condition 7, Best Management Practices, both address avoidance and minimization measures to protect adjacent aquatic resources. The Applicant responded saying "This is an INRMP BMP". 5 — The Corps has no jurisdiction regarding these actions, however the Applicant responded that "Following the Migratory Bird Treaty Act is in accordance with the INRMP and it is a federal law the Army follows.". 6 — The Corps agrees, and this is described in the text of the RGP. 7 — The Corps agrees, this issue is covered in General Condition 5, Impacts to Adjacent waters of the U.S. 8 — The Corps agrees, this is covered under General Condition 2, Temporary Discharges of Dredge or Fill Material and General Condition 7, Best Management Practices.

Discussion — USEPA: The EPA voiced concerns that a General Permit Application (GPA) is only mandatory for temporary work if proposed work occurs near or in anadromous streams and/or National Wild and Scenic Rivers and no GPA is required for temporary or permanent impacts occurring in high value wetlands, within 500-feet of fish-bearing anadromous streams, within ESA habitat, and within cultural resources areas. They voiced that the PN had not sufficiently portrayed the amount and type of wetlands in the covered areas nor had it shown any excluded high value wetlands or streams and waterbodies. They recommended that larger scale maps and aerial photos be included with the RGP for each TA and a mapped WOTUS overlay. Also, that the acreage of each TA's projected impacts to WOTUS and total acreage of all TA's impacts to WOTUS be included in the evaluation of alternatives and the RGP. They recommended that the overall use of this RGP have a threshold cap on acres of potential impact, that dike construction be removed as a permitted activity in the RGP, that highly functioning wetlands (i.e., TFTA fen system) be specifically excluded from this permit, and that there be a condition that requires stream crossings occur in areas that cause the least disturbance and that properly sized culverts or bridges be installed at these crossings. See Section 2.5 for changes precipitated by these comments.

Corps Evaluation of Comments: Regarding maps, impacts in high value wetlands, and projected acres of impact in each TA, see Section 2.5. As a Federal entity, when the USAGAK is a Permittee it acts as the federal lead on all actions involving the Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation Act and must perform its own consultation with the respective agencies for impacts to these resources. Therefore, the Corps does not need to be notified to perform these consultations. General Conditions 9 and 11 state that non-Federal Permittees must submit GPAs if there is the potential for cultural/historic property issues (NHPA) or any ESA critical habitat or species nexus. This is reiterated in General Condition 20, sub-parts e and f. In the unlikely chance that non-Federal Permittees use this permit, the Corps will act as the Federal lead and perform consultations with the Services.

2.5 RGP changes Subsequent to the Public Notice

The public notice prompted several small changes to the text of the RGP. Comments from USEPA regarding the permitting of dikes for non-training purposes were reconsidered and the use of this permit to verify dike construction was retracted. USAGAK provided more detailed maps of each major training area detailing their non-public wetlands mapping efforts to this point which will be used in the RGP. The Application Procedures Section was reworded to clarify that non-federal Permittees must submit a GPA for actions likely to have cultural (NHPA) resources or ESA issues. Based on comments from USFWS and EPA, an appendix describing Special Aquatic Resources not covered under this RGP was added (Appendix A of RGP-03). It specifically references the Tanana Flats TA fen system where use of the RGP would be inappropriate due to the magnitude of impacts any development would cause in this sensitive resource. It also contains maps and a list of other Special Aquatic Areas in the Training Lands for the use of special conditions, or restrictions to development are merited based on the unique or sensitive nature of the resource. This Appendix would be periodically reviewed for updates for the lifetime of the RGP.

3 Alternatives

The alternatives discussed below are based on an analysis of the potential environmental impacts and impacts to the Corps, federal, tribal, and state resources agencies, the general public, and prospective permittees. Since the consideration of off-site alternatives under the 404(b)(1) guidelines does not apply to specific projects authorized by general permits, the alternatives analysis discussed below consists of a general NEPA alternatives analysis for the RGP.

Alternative 1: No Action:

Under this alternative, the RGP would not be issued. The no-action alternative would not achieve one of the goals of the Corps Permit Program, which is to reduce the regulatory burden on applicants for activities that result in minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment.

If this RGP is not available, additional resources would be required for the Corps to evaluate some minor activities (not covered under NWP) through the IP process, and for the public, federal agencies, tribal entities, and state resource agencies to review and comment on the public notices for these activities. Another important benefit of the proposed RGP that would not be achieved through the “no action” alternative is the incentive for project proponents to design their project so that those activities meet the terms and conditions of the RGP (e.g., minimization and acreage limits). The Corps believes that RGP’s significantly reduce adverse effects to the aquatic environment because most applicants modify their projects to comply with the RGP’s to reduce processing times and increase certainty of requirements.

3.1 Alternative 2: On-Site:

Alternative 2 includes all training areas and Impact Area buffer zones where military operations may potentially occur on Fort Wainwright and DTA. Excluded areas within USAGAK lands include out-grant locations not used for the primary purpose of warfare training, the Fort Wainwright Small Arms Complex and Cantonment Area, and those areas with mixed land use not specifically designated as Ranges, Impact Areas or TAs.

Alternative 3: Off-Site:

There are no practicable off-site alternatives. The RGP is conditioned to avoid and minimize discharges of dredged or fill material into WOTUS to the maximum extent practicable on the project site. The consideration of off-site alternatives is not directly applicable to general permits (40 CFR 230.7(b)(1)). It is also antithetical to permitting training activities since the activities cannot happen off training lands.

4 Affected Environment

Fort Wainwright lies approximately 120 miles south of the Arctic Circle near the City of Fairbanks in Interior Alaska. The installation consists of the Main Post near Fairbanks, the Tanana Flats Training Area (TFTA) south of Fairbanks, and the Yukon Training Area (YTA) (4) east of North Pole covering a total of approximately 917,000 acres.

The 13,700-acre Main Post is located two miles east of central Fairbanks on the Chena and Tanana rivers and is composed of urbanized land, including the cantonment area, housing and the Ladd Airfield. It also contains nearly 5,150 acres of designated maneuver training areas (4). The remaining Main Post is specifically not subject to coverage of this RGP because it is not designated training area (i.e., Cantonment) or it is a part of the Small Arms Complex which should be examined for impacts under its own scope and project purpose independent of the scope and purpose covered here. Of the remaining 5,628 acres of the Main Post area proposed to be covered by this RGP, 2,064 acres (37%) are considered wetlands and 209 acres (<4%) are other WOTUS.

The TFTA lies south of the Tanana River and is bounded the Wood River on the west stretching 32 miles south of the Main Post to be bounded by approximately the 64.3° N. parallel to the south. Of its total 644,664 acres, approximately 542,558 acres (84%) are considered wetlands and 6,344 (<1%) are other WOTUS (5). Over 595,000 acres classified as maneuver training land, and 59,000 acres dedicated for ranges or major weapons systems. Access during summer months is limited to air and boat. The single bridge spanning the Tanana is owned by the Alaska Railroad, and no public access is allowed. In the winter, an ice bridge is constructed across the river and the entire area is trafficable. It is within the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex and over the last decade studies have been mounted to improve facilities, increase access and develop existing artillery fire points, landing zones, drop zones and observation points (its ground based infrastructure) as well as provide for increased use of its Impact Areas and air to ground infrastructure. Special aquatic

resources here include a fen complex near the mouth of the Wood River near the western boundary, and the Blair Lakes, a large and unique lacustrine system, in the eastern section of the south boundary.

Yukon Training Area is located 16 miles east-southeast of Fairbanks and immediately north, east, and adjacent to Eielson Air Force Base. The approximately 257,000-acre YTA lies east of the Tanana River between the Chena and Salcha Rivers, and northeast of the Richardson Highway. Of its total, approximately 132,258 acres are considered wetlands (51%), and 27,496 acres (11%) are other WOTUS (5). It has about 229,000 acres of training area suitable for large-scale exercises, and 28,000 acres for ranges.

Donnelly Training Area is located approximately 105 miles southeast of Fairbanks, near the City of Delta Junction by the Delta River. The total training area is approximately 633,991 acres, though less than half (305,482 acres) has been mapped as of 2019. Of this mapped area, 132,258 acres (43%) are considered wetlands, and 27,495 acres are other WOTUS (5). For management purposes DTA is divided into West and East Training Areas (DTA East and DTA West, respectively). DTA West is approximately 531,000 acres and stretches from the Delta River to the Little Delta River. All the unmapped areas of DTA are west of the Delta River. It is inaccessible by regular vehicle in the summer and accessed by ice road in the winter. DTA East encompasses approximately 93,000 acres from Granite Creek in the east to the Delta River. In contrast, it is partially urbanized and surrounded by the Interior Alaska's primary agricultural lands. DTA was formerly known as Fort Greely but was reclassified as a training area after Base Realignment and Closure in the 1990s. The Main Post of Fort Greely was transferred to the Space and Missile Defense Command in 2002, but the remaining training lands remain under the Army's jurisdiction and since 2018 have been reclassified along with Fort Wainwright and are now administered as US Army Garrison Alaska (USAGAK). DTA also contains three outlying training sites: Gerstle River Training Area, Black Rapids Training Area, and Whistler Creek Rock Climbing Area.

Gerstle River Training Area, approximately 25 miles southeast of Allen Airfield, parallels the Alaskan Highway and abuts Gerstle River on its eastern boundary. Of its 20,792 acres about 9,217 (44%) are considered wetlands and 187 acres (<1%) are other WOTUS (5). The landscape consists predominately of alluvial aprons, moraines, and stream deposits. The overall slope is to the northwest and varies in elevation between 1,260 and 2,000 feet. The western portion of the Training Area lies in the Granite Mountains foothills.

Black Rapids Training Area approximately 36 miles south of Delta Junction on the east side of the Richardson Highway. It is the home of the Northern Warfare Training Center whose main function is to train troops in cold weather warfare and high-altitude mountaineering skills. Of its 2,791 acres, 70 acres (<3%) are considered wetlands and 57 acres (<2%) are small rivers and streams with several pond and lake impoundments (5). It and Whistler Creek TA are in the foothills of the Alaska Range and have very steep, mountainous terrain with fast moving, glacier/snowfield fed streams. There are no anadromous fish resources and

wetlands are forested shrub-scrub riparian at lower elevations or alpine depressions. Artesian springs are common in the mid-to low elevations and streams are found to abruptly start and stop from horizontal outcrops of porous bedrock strata. Little if any use of this RGP is expected in this TA.

Whistler Creek Training Area is located about 38 miles south of Delta Junction on the east side of the Richardson Highway. It has one operational range of 542 acres encompassing the whole TA, of which almost 6 acres (1%) are wetlands and almost 4 acres (<1%) are other WOTUS (mainly Whistler Creek) (5). There are no anadromous fish resources and wetlands are shrub-scrub riparian at lower elevations or alpine depressions. Historically, Whistler Creek has never been used for training involving military munitions; the main focus is preparation of troops for warfare at high altitudes and cold climates with an emphasis on mountaineering skills (4). Therefore, the landscape has remained unaltered with only minor roads/trails and few buildings. There is little if any use of this permit expected at Whistler Creek TA.

In general, wetlands in the sub-arctic provide many services to humans and human infrastructure, and the functions they perform have a significant effect on the biological, chemical and hydrological functions of the overall area. USAGAK wetlands include moist and wet tundra types, permafrost areas, marshes, bogs, fens, and swamps. As a large subset of Alaska's Interior region, the many riparian and shallow water ponds and associated wetlands are recognized as important breeding habitats for numerous migratory bird species. The value of wetlands to wildlife in Alaska is not limited to migratory birds; many mammals, fish and other species utilize the habitat year-round. Wetlands support landscape features for salmonid habitat, including direct benefits such as providing rearing habitat, resting and feeding places to juvenile salmon, and indirectly benefitting salmonids with moderation of temperature, flow and timing of water levels. Wetlands located within key USAGAK watersheds, such as the Chena and Salcha Rivers (albeit a small portion of the Salcha watershed), are disproportionately important to Chinook salmon.

Wetlands provide many other valuable ecological functions, such as insulation for permafrost (temperature regulation) and maintenance of water quality by slowly filtering excess nutrients, sediments, and pollutants before water seeps into rivers, streams, and underground aquifers. Wetlands provide valuable flood attenuation in some flood prone areas due to the ability to intercept, retain and slowly release large amounts of surface water.

5 Environmental Consequences

5.1 Discussion and General Evaluation Criteria

This document contains a general assessment of the foreseeable effects of the individual activities authorized by this RGP and the anticipated cumulative effects of those activities. In the assessment of these individual and cumulative effects, the terms and limits of the RGP, pre-construction notification requirements, and the RGP general conditions are considered. The individual permitting action

decision document will address how each permitted action would affect the individual and cumulative effects in each watershed.

The following evaluation comprises the NEPA analysis, the public interest review specified in 33 CFR 320.4(a)(1) and (2), and the impact analysis specified in Subparts C through F of the 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR Part 230).

The issuance of an RGP is based on a general assessment of the effects on public interest and environmental factors that are likely to occur as a result of using this RGP to authorize activities in waters of the United States. As such, this assessment must be speculative or predictive in general terms. Since this RGP would authorize activities across the Interior of Alaska in Training Lands, projects eligible for RGP authorization may be constructed in a wide variety of environmental settings. Therefore, it is difficult to predict all of the indirect impacts that may be associated with each activity authorized by an RGP. For example, the RGP verification that authorizes 25 cubic yard discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States may be used to fulfill a variety of project purposes, and the indirect effects will vary depending on the specific activity and the environmental characteristics of the site in which the activity takes place. Indication that a factor is not relevant to a particular RGP does not necessarily mean that the RGP would never influence that factor, but that it is a factor not readily identified with the authorized activity. Factors may be relevant, but the adverse effects on the aquatic environment are negligible, such as the impacts of a boat ramp on water level fluctuations or flood hazards. Only the reasonably foreseeable direct, indirect, and cumulative effects are included in the environmental assessment for this RGP. The DE will impose, as necessary, additional conditions on the RGP authorization or exercise discretionary authority to address locally important factors or to ensure that the authorized activity results in no more than minimal individual and cumulative adverse environmental effects. In any case, adverse effects will be controlled by the terms, conditions, and additional provisions of the RGP.

The indication that a factor is not relevant to the RGP does not necessarily mean that the RGP would never influence that factor, but that it is a factor not readily identified with the authorized activity. Factors may be relevant, but the adverse effects on the aquatic environment are negligible, such as the impacts of a buried utility line to water level fluctuations or flood hazards. Only the reasonably foreseeable direct or indirect effects are included in the environmental assessment for this RGP. The DE would impose, as necessary, additional conditions or to ensure the authorized activity results in no more than minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment. In any case, adverse effects would be controlled by the terms, General Conditions (GC), and additional provisions of the RGP.

5.2 Impact Analysis

Upon each use of the RGP, a case-by-case impact analysis would occur to ensure that the specific activities would have minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment. A GPN is required for activities authorizing

permanent impacts, any impact affecting essential fish habitat, or within a National Wild and Scenic River, at which time an abbreviated impacts analysis is considered as part of the verification. The GPN requirement allows the DE to review proposed activities on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the individual and cumulative adverse effects of those activities on the aquatic environment are minimal. If the DE determines that the adverse effects of a particular project are more than minimal after considering mitigation, then the discretionary authority would be asserted, and the applicant would be notified that another form of DA authorization, LOP or IP, is required.

When making the minimal adverse environmental effects determinations, the DE would consider the direct and indirect effects caused by the RGP activity. The DE would also consider site-specific factors, such as the environmental setting in the vicinity of the RGP activity, the type(s) of resource(s) that will be affected by the RGP activity, the functions provided by the aquatic resource that would be affected by the RGP activity, the degree or magnitude to which the aquatic resources perform those functions, the extent that aquatic resources functions would be lost as a result of the RGP activity (e.g., partial or complete loss), the duration of the adverse effects (e.g. temporary or permanent), the importance of the aquatic resource functions to the region (e.g. watershed or ecoregion), and mitigation required by the DE. The DE may add case-by-case special conditions to the RGP authorization to address site-specific environmental concerns.

Though the frequency and magnitude of training activity will vary for USAGAK depending on the level and source of global military threat, a forecast for type and magnitude of impacts in the next five years was estimated from the Army's use of Nationwide Permits from the prior 19 years (Table 3).

The average impact of activities for these WOTUS in this look-back was 5.49 acres (Table 3), however this includes several very large projects of over 80 acres which would Not be considered under this RGP. The average impact per permit without these large projects was 1.18 acres (Table 3). Within this average are included a category of several small to medium sized projects over the threshold for most NWP permits but not considered large (2–25 acres, see Table 3, shaded entries). Over the look-back period, this category of small to medium impacts comprised 67.53 acres (9 projects, 16.7% of total acres permitted) of impacts to WOTUS across all training lands. Projects in this category are a target for use and verification under the proposed RGP because: 1. Some of the impacted acreage in this category consists of temporary impacts and the RGP could be used to incentivize minimization of permanent impacts to under ≤ 2 acres, and 2. The RGP would automatically impose a 100% threshold of compliance reporting to these temporary impacts, an increase from current NWP compliance efforts, which are done at a rate of 10% of total permitted

Table 3. All Corps permits issued to US Army in Project Area (1992 thru 2018) showing acres of impacts to WOTUS, and type of permit. Unless noted, impacts are permanent.

Permit Identification	Location	Acres	Permit Type	Description
POA-1992-0132-D	TAs 54 and 57	0.41	NWP	Road construction
POA-1995-0011-4	2 locations on Jarvis Creek and one on Beales slough	122.4	SP	Mine gravel
POA-1996-0879-4	Delta River near OP6	3.2	SP	Emergency dike to stop flooding of Small Arms Complex
POA-1997-0402-D	Meadows Road at Texas Range	0.3	NWP	Install fiber optic cable and power lines
POA-1997-0913-4	Winter Trail DTA West	21	SP	Training exercise
POA-1998-0801-D	T12S, R9E, Sections 13 and 14	0.003	NWP	Training exercise
POA-1999-0308-D	Meadows Road at Texas Range	0.14	NWP	Install fiber optic cable
POA-1999-00001	Husky DZ, YTA	5.96	SP	Discharge, Chena River, material site
POA-1999-0544-4	Bondsteel Range (TA53)	0.65	SP	Road improvement and construction for access to new range (range features built on uplands)
POA-2000-0031-D	J Lake	0.1	NWP	Gabion basket installation
POA-2000-00178	Chena River, Glass Park	0.003	NWP	Dredging and maintenance
POA-2001-0921-4	TA 49 from OP2 to Meadows Road	5.17	SP	Construct a road
POA-2001-0927-D	33-Mile Loop Road	0.15	NWP	Road improvement
POA-2002-0586-D	Jarvis Creek, BAX	0.1	NWP	Test borings for BAX, up to 0.1 acre
POA-2002-01097	Tanana River, FWA	0.17	NWP	Transportation, road construction and upgrades. Prior SP (2003), NWP in 2012.
POA-2003-0578-4	Collective Training Range (TA53). DTA	0.83	SP	Range access improvement. Modification to SP.
POA-2003-0578-M	Bondsteel Road (TA53)	1.3	SP	Road improvement
POA-2003-0862-D	33-Mile Loop Road	0.4	NWP	Road improvement
POA-2003-0897-D	OP Road (TA49)	0.3	NWP	Drainage improvements to OP Road
POA-2003-0900-D	Falls Creek, Black Rapids Training Area	0	NWP	Streambank stabilization, Falls Creek. < 1 acre.
POA-2003-1318-D	BAX	0.002	NWP	Test borings for BAX
POA-2003-1555-4	Jarvis North (TA5)	85	SP	Jarvis North Fuel Break
POA-2004-0150-D	Bolio Lake area	0.5	NWP	Test borings
POA-2004-1163-D	Arkansas Range, Small Arms Complex	0.17	NWP	Streambank stabilization, Beales overflow channel. Two NWPs.
POA-2004-1319-4	Bolio Lake area	1.5	SP	Helipad expansion
POA-2004-1547-D	Winter Trail Crossing, Small Arms Complex	0.06	NWP	Gravel fill at winter trail/ice bridge crossing site
POA-2005-0614-4	Eddy DZ (TAs 5 and 6)	24.5	SP	Construct Battle Area Complex and Combined Arms Collective Training Facility

Table 3. Continued.

Permit Identification	Location	Acres		Description
POA-2005-0614-M	Eddy DZ (TAs 5 and 6)	1.3	SP	BAX-CACTF modification for additional roads
POA-2005-0614-N	Eddy DZ (TAs 5 and 6)	0.01	NWP	BAX-CACTF modification for power pole installation
POA-2005-0614-O	Eddy DZ (TAs 5 and 6)	0.75	NWP	BAX-CACTF modification authorizing temporary stockpiles
POA-2005-0847-D	12-Mile Crossing (TA19)	0.13	NWP	Road improvement. NWP14 in 2005 and 2013.
POA-2005-1157-4	33-Mile Loop Road	3.3	SP	Road improvement
POA-2005-1157-D	33-Mile Loop Road	0.43	NWP	Road improvement
POA-2005-1157-M1	33-Mile Loop Road	0.34	SP	Road improvement
POA-2005-01322	Moose Creek Bivouac Site	2.7	SP	Discharge, Moose Creek
POA-2007-0020-4	Meadows Road Firing Points (TAs 53, 57 & 58)	1.5	SP	FP access improvement
POA-2007-1503-D	Fleet Street (TA5)	0.2	NWP	Road improvement
POA-2007-01667	Chena River, FWA	0.039	NWP	Infrastructure development, Chena River
POA-2008-00543	Tanana River, FWA	0.1	NWP	SP Modification. Construct air curtain
POA-2008-0693	Diamond Lake, DTA West	0.23	NWP	Gravel pad and concrete footings for Observation Tower
POA-2008-0873	Feeder 9 (Wahlgren Hwy, TAs 56 and 57)	0.01	NWP	Install 40 new power poles
POA-2008-00931	Wahlgren Hwy, Twin Lakes Road (TAs 54 and 57)	0.44	NWP	Install fiber optic cable
POA-2008-01320	OP5 to ASP along OP Road (TAs 49 and 50)	0.25	NWP	Install fiber optic cable
POA-2008-01321	Chena River	0.2	NWP	Discharge of fill
POA-2008-01398	Chena River	0.5	NWP	Residential development, Fort Wainwright
POA-2012-00398	Sue Lake, DTA East	0.24	NWP	Sue Lake, road construction
POA-2012-00398	Mary Lake, DTA East	0.25	NWP	Mary Lake, road construction
POA-2012-00777	Black Rapids	0.01	NWP	Riverine, maintenance of channel and bridge BRTA
POA-2012-00852	Fort Wainwright	0.1	NWP	Temporary impacts, structure FWA
POA-2014-00344	Jarvis Creek, 33-Mile Loop	0.14	NWP	Permanent impacts
POA-2014-00344	Jarvis Creek, 33-Mile Loop	1.85	NWP	Temporary impacts
POA-2016-00344	DTA, Arctic Anvil	5	NWP	Temporary impacts, maneuver training, trenches
POA-2016-00565	Chena River, FWA	0.291	NWP	Bank Stabilization
POA-2018-00150	Moose Creek	2.3	SP	Bravo Battery sediment retention
	Total Acreage	296.9		
	Average Permit Acres	5.499		
	Average NWP Acres	1.184		
	Mode, All Permit Types	0.1		

projects. Compliance on Army lands is The average impact of activities for these WOTUS in this look-back was 5.49 acres, however this includes several very large projects of over 80 acres which are often difficult due to access issues, and in the past compliance has been closer to 0% reporting. Overall, project impacts were small to very small; 68.5% of permits were for NWP's for 0.01–2 acres of impacts. The mode for the entire time period was 0.1 acres. The threshold for permanent impacts of this RGP was set at 2 acres to cover the small to very small category and be a reasonable goal for the applicant to incentivize the minimization of small to medium sized project impacts.

5.3 Cumulative Analysis

Based on reported use of Corps 404 permits during the period of January 1992 through December 2008, the Alaska district has issued/verified permits totaling an impact of 296.9 acres of impacts to WOTUS across all Army Training Areas in the Interior (USAGAK).

Based on reported use of Standard and Nationwide Permits during that time period, the Alaska district required compensatory mitigation zero times to offset the authorized impacts to WOTUS and to ensure that the authorized activities resulted in only minimal adverse effects on the aquatic environment. The lack of mandatory compensatory mitigation indicates that activities were determined by the Alaska DE to result in no more than minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment. During the period of the five-year issuance of this RGP, the demand for activities authorized could increase or decrease.

An internal analysis of cumulative impacts was done by US Army Garrison Fort Wainwright for Army lands at Fort Wainwright's Cantonment Area, YTA, TFTA and for DTA East and West in preparation for their application for a programmatic Wetlands Permit from the Corps in 2007 (6). Overall impacts across a time period encompassing the Army's presence in the Interior of Alaska (from the 1940's and 1950's to 2007) were calculated from damage from bivouac, maneuvers, firing points, and use of drop zones and did not include damage from Cantonment construction or munitions (Small Arms Complex). On Fort Wainwright, approximately 388 acres of wetlands (as classified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetlands inventory classification system) were disturbed, with the vast majority of that occurring before the year 2000 (384.6 of 387.7 acres). See Table 4 for a summary.

At that time, wetland disturbance at DTA was classified as low. Only 11.1 acres of wetlands were disturbed on DTA from 2000 to 2004. Note that ground-truthed wetlands data were lacking at that time on 296,356 acres of DTA West, so actual wetlands damage may have been greater. However, there is little to no vehicle traffic during the summer in DTA West, so any additional damage would be minimal, mostly from air maneuvering and impacts. Table 5 summarizes wetland disturbance levels at DTA by type of land use.

Table 4. Acreage of Wetland Damage by land use type at Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

Year	Acres and Type of Land Damaged		
	Main Post	TFTA	YTA
Pre-2000	103.2 (Maneuver) 103.2 (Bivouac)	0.0	173.4 (Bivouac) 4.8 (Drop Zone)
2000	2.3 (Maneuver)	0.0	0.3 (Drop Zone) 0.5 (Maneuver)
2001	0.0	0.0	0.0
2002	0.0	0.0	0.0
2003	0.0	0.0	0.0
2004	unavailable	Unavailable	unavailable
2005	unavailable	Unavailable	unavailable
6 Total	208.7	0.0	179.0

Table 5. Acreage of Wetland Damage by Land Use Type at Donnelly Training Area, East and West.

Year	Acres and Type of Land Damaged
Pre-2000	86.3 (Bivouac) 34.0 (Maneuver) 268.9 (Drop Zone)
2000	<0.1 (Maneuver)
2001	1.0 (Maneuver) 3.4 (Firing Point) 3.7 (Drop Zone)
2002	0.0
2003	2.9 (Maneuver)
2004	Unavailable
2005	Unavailable
7 Total	400.3

Cumulative effects of development and maneuvering in wetlands due to training activities across USAGAK lands have not yet reached thresholds of concern. Regarding WOTUS and wetlands, these thresholds are defined as the following (6):

Table 6. Decision thresholds for assessment of cumulative effects of the Proposed Action. Thresholds based off the Army's Five-Year Clean Water Act Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment and revised for this permit review by the Army Corps Regulatory.

Area of Concern	Spatial Boundary	Threshold of Concern for the Proposed Action
Wetland Soils	Localized within Watershed (HUC 10)	If the Proposed Action caused any of the following in a significant (>2%) portion of the watershed or meaningful ecological unit: erosion resulting in permanent loss of soils, secondary impacts to surrounding WOTUS; and/or compaction that precluded establishment of native vegetation; permafrost degradation, multiplying the effects of wetland impact outside of a single action area; or significant conversion of Histosols within the HUC 10 watershed.
Surface Water	Watershed (HUC 10)	If the Proposed Action caused unpermitted deposition of dredged or fill material into wetlands or other waters; violated state water quality standards; violated a federal or state discharge permit; or resulted in degradation of an aquifer. If the action resulted in conditions that approached or exceeded federal or state water quality standards (18 AAC 70 18 AAC 80, if applicable)
Groundwater	Localized to the aquifer	If the action resulted in degradation of an aquifer. If the action resulted in conditions that approached or exceeded federal or state water quality standards (18 AAC 70 18 AAC 80, if applicable)
Wetlands	Watershed (HUC 10) and localized	If the Proposed Action's impacts exceeded significant surface area of wetlands in a watershed (>2%) and/or impacted high value wetlands as designated by local management efforts or agency input.
Wildlife and Fisheries	Highly localized to regional	If the Proposed Action caused local population-level impacts (e.g., potential to reduce local populations below self-sustaining levels, or long-term loss or impairment of substantial portions of local habitat [species specific]); or resulted in direct impacts/disturbance to birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (i.e., unpermitted "take").

6 Public Interest Review

6.1 Public Interest Review Factors (33 CFR 320.4(a)(1)) are discussed below, as applicable to this proposed permit (see Table 7.) consideration for the cited policy and others which may be applicable.

Table 7. See discussions below for each Public Interest Review Factor.

Public Interest Factors	Effects					
	None	Detrimental	Neutral (mitigated)	Negligible	Beneficial	Not Applicable
1. Conservation: (33 CFR 320.4(p))				X		
2. Economics:(33 CFR 320.4(q))					X	
3. Aesthetics: (33 CFR 320.4(e))				X		
4. General Environmental Concerns: (33 CFR 320.4(p))				X		
5. Wetlands: (33 CFR 320.4(b))			X			
6. Historic Properties: (33 CFR 320.4(e))			X			
7. Fish and Wildlife Values: (33 CFR 320.4(c))			X			
8. Flood Hazards: (33 CFR 320.4(k))					X	
9. Floodplain Values: (33 CFR 320.4(l))			X			
10. Land Use: (33 CFR 320.4(j))						X
11. Navigation: (33 CFR 320.4(o))						X
12. Shoreline Erosion and Accretion:(33 CFR 320.4(g))					X	
13. Recreation:(33 CFR 320.4(e))					X	
14. Water Supply and Conservation: (33 CFR 320.4(m))				X		
15. Water Quality (33 CFR 320.4(d)):			X			
16. Energy Needs (33 CFR 320.4(n)):						X
17. Safety (33 CFR 320.4(k)):				X		
18. Food and Fiber Production:						X
19. Mineral Needs:						X
20. Consideration of Property Ownership (33 CFR 320.4(g)):						X
21. Needs and Welfare of the People (33 CFR 320.4(j)):					X	

1. Conservation: Broadly defined, conservation is the planned management of natural resources in order to prevent or minimize exploitation, destruction or neglect. Because the armed forces' natural resources belong to the public, Congress enacted the Sikes Act (16 USC 670a-670o, 74 Stat. 1052) to ensure public access to renewable natural resources on Department of Defense (DoD) lands, subject to safety requirements and military security. It requires DoD to develop and implement Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMPs) (7) when appropriate, for military installations across the U.S. INRMPs are prepared in cooperation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA-Fisheries) and the respective state fish and wildlife agency to reflect the mutual agreement of the parties concerning conservation of fish and wildlife resources on the installation. Under the Sikes Act, Army Regulation (AR) 200-3 Natural Resources — Land, Forest, and Wildlife Management, Executive Order (EO) 13112, the Clean Air Act, and the Clean Water Act, installations are required to maintain a healthy, no net loss environment. As such, it is vital to determine when and where negative impacts on soil, water, plant and animal communities and cultural resources are occurring. Therefore, USAGAK maintains several programs that constantly monitor, report, and mitigate the effects of training activities on Natural Resources. The Integrated Training Area Management (ITAM) program is a core program of the Army's Sustainable Range Program (SRP) and is responsible for maintaining the land to help the Army to meet its training requirements. This requires understanding and balancing Army Training requirements and land management practices. Within the ITAM Program, the Range and Training Land Assessment (RTLTA) program acquires data and assesses information to optimize the capability and sustainability of land to meet the Army training and testing mission. To accomplish this goal, the RTLTA program conducts assessments to inventory and monitor natural resource conditions. RTLTA manages, analyzes, and reports on the data collected in order to evaluate relationships between land use and land condition. The RTLTA program will be used to monitor and report impacts permitted under this RGP. ITAM also relies on the Land Rehabilitation and Maintenance (LRAM); Sustainable Range Awareness (SRA) programs to repair and rehabilitate damaged resources and to outreach and train land users on sustainable practices. Additionally, the effects on conservation would be minimized by conditions of the state 401 WQC, NPDES Permit and any DA permit issued for the development project. None of the streams within or downstream of the project site are listed by (and as defined by) the state of Alaska as National Wild & Scenic Rivers, with the exception of the Delta River, which bisects Donnelly Training Area into West and East Training Areas. As such, any projects under the proposed RGP would be assessed through the constraints of the National Wild and Scenic Act in its vicinity. The Corps has determined the effect on conservation is expected to be neutral for temporary impacts as a result of the applicant's own mandate for conservation on military lands, and negligible for permanent impacts due to mitigative actions as outlined in the General Condition requirements of the RGP.

2. **Economics:** The proposed actions under the RGP would result in direct, indirect and cumulative beneficial impacts to the State, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, the Cities of Fairbanks, North Pole, and Delta Junction, and the businesses therein. RGP proposed actions would consist of construction in support of training on USAGAK Lands. Military construction to support training, has had an outsized importance in the economy of Alaska for over 75 years. Since the Cold War, the US Army has had a large influence in the state and local economies of Alaska. It has continued to be a primary influx vector of federal money, workers, contractors, enlisted troops and their families for different reasons every several decades since then. Alaska's proximity to the Soviet Union elevated its usefulness to the Nation for defense and training strategies throughout the later part of the 20th century, and in the first decades of the 2000's it continues to be a primary strategic location for missile defense against Russia and North Korea. With each new build-up of infrastructure or strategic expansion, Alaska imports federal money and human resources and exports national defense. Many of those soldiers, civilian and contractor employees, and their families live off base, and with those living on base spend a significant share of their income in the surrounding community. Millions more dollars are spent locally on procurement and construction to support the Army's human resources. The military's share of Alaska's federal gross domestic product has surpassed civilian federal spending since 2003. Tens of thousands of service members and their families live in Alaska and spend money here, and with them comes money to build and maintain large, sophisticated facilities. The effects of this RGP on economics in the region would generally be beneficial.
3. **Aesthetics:** The Training Lands of USAGAK are essentially undeveloped and are high in aesthetic values: natural vistas, large wilderness areas, and one Wild and Scenic River. The nature of military training is not conducive to urban, rural or residential uses, thus over seventy million acres of training lands are maintained as wild and the Army has pursued acquisition of non-residential use buffers around these areas for mitigation of sound effects caused by munitions. This RGP would not convert these areas to another purpose or aesthetic, rather, it would facilitate only small (<2 acre) projects. This Proposed Action specifically states that large projects, such as road development into the TFTA or DTAW, that have a greater potential to impact aesthetics, are not verifiable under this RGP. The effects of this RGP on aesthetics in the region would be minimal.
4. **Environmental Concerns:** The proposed action could result in effects from increases in noise and traffic. Construction activities would result in a direct increase in noise, which could affect sensitive wildlife and humans. These impacts are expected to be temporary and localized to daytime hours, when ambient noise from nearby areas is higher and therefore, would be negligible. In addition to direct impacts, indirect and cumulative impacts may occur due to increases in noise following the conversion of unoccupied land into areas with training infrastructure. Because of the relatively small size of permanent impacts of the Proposed Action and the likeliness of further development taking place in TA's with large infrastructure projects already in place, it is expected that the additional noise impacts would be negligible. Construction activities would likely

result in a slight increase in traffic on the adjacent roads due to construction equipment accessing the site. This would be temporary and localized. In general, climate change could be exacerbated due to an increase in permafrost degradation which has been proven to release captured greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. This is a general concern in the sub-arctic as the earth's climate undergoes change, and it is well established the rate of change is occurring at a more rapid pace and at a higher intensity in and near the polar regions. Overall, broader climate effects are a greater factor in permafrost degradation and the ensuing greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, climate change due to permafrost degradation is beyond the scope of the effects of this RGP permit. In summary, the RGP actions would have temporary and minimal effects.

5. Wetlands: The proposed action would impact small fractions of large, mostly contiguous wetlands across Interior Alaska within military training areas. The permit area is such that most of the natural environment is pristine or intact, and the impact thresholds multiplied by the expected use pattern would not cause significant impacts to overall wetland health over time. However, it is recognized that certain wetlands in the permit area should not be altered or impacted because the loss would have significant effects due to their significance or rarity in the landscape. Examples of this scenario include impacts to highly functioning/valuable wetlands, for instance those performing many services or scoring very high on a regional wetland assessment matrix. Another reason may be that a wetland is unique and irreplaceable, like the floating peat mat fen system near the Wood River in the TFTA. Lastly, a wetland may be strategically located where it performs irreplaceable services, such as an anadromous stream and its associated riparian wetlands, or wetlands with hydrologic storage capacity upstream of impervious urban areas. Though impacts to some unique or highly functioning wetlands may be addressed prior to the proposed action, each potential issuance of the permit would assess the individual wetland and its significance within the watershed. Significant impacts will not be eligible for verification under this RGP, and overall cumulative impairment on a watershed level will be evaluated on a 5-year basis. Additionally, this document has listed aquatic resources which may not be developed under the terms of this RGP due to their ecological significance (Appendix A of RGP-03), as well as that have been identified as potentially significant. The DE will exercise discretionary authority to require an individual permit if the wetlands to be filled are high value and the activity will result in more than minimal impacts to the environment. The DE can also add case-specific special conditions to individual verifications to reduce impacts.
6. Historic Properties: As a federal entity, USAGAK bears responsibility for consideration of the effects of any undertaking on its historic properties and cultural resources. As a hub for military activity in World War II on the Eastern Front and the last stop for the Lend Lease program, historic properties of significance saturate its landscape. Additionally, Alaska's Interior was

unglaciated throughout the Pleistocene period, and hosts some of North America's oldest continuously inhabited landscapes. Due to the historic and cultural importance of this area, USAGAK has its own Historic Properties Specialist, Archaeologist, and Tribal Liaison and actively surveys the landscape to catalogue and document areas of significance and coordinates and consults with tribal entities. It is committed to upholding the Historic Preservation Act and will be considered the lead agency on any findings. There is no foreseen impact of this RGP to cultural resources.

7. Fish and Wildlife Values: Resident fish and wildlife values will be considered on a case by case basis and any impacts to the overall populations of species in a watershed will be considered a significant impact. Guidance from Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) on the importance of seasonal habitats for resident species (refuge and nesting, lekking grounds, moose wintering habitat, etc.) was solicited with the Public Notice and no specific recommendations were received. Impacts to migratory birds caused by training activities, especially the importance of wetland habitats to the success of certain neotropical passerines (Rusty Blackbird and Olive sided flycatcher, both considered species of concern in Alaska), is documented for the TFTA and DTA West. Impacts to migratory bird habitat will be assessed on a case by case basis and will be guided by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and input from DPW Environmental, the USFWS and the ADFG. In the last decade new data has been recorded regarding the presence of the Little Brown Bat in Alaska, which are present in USAGAK training areas and are likely to be a species of concern in the future. As with other resident species of concern or importance (such as furbearers, moose and caribou), impacts to these populations due to wetland degradation will be investigated with agency coordination on a case by case basis and mitigated as necessary. All anadromous streams or wetland impacts near anadromous streams will be coordinated with the ADFG.
8. Flood Hazards: The proposed RGP would not impact existing structures intended to reduce flood risks, nor would it result in the construction of flood hazards. This RGP could not be used to authorize the construction of large instream infrastructure, rather it would facilitate the construction of small impact, low use instream structures which preserve the channel's bed and banks from erosion. Examples are hardened low water crossings which mitigate the effects of Stryker and other off-road vehicles eroding banks and causing sedimentation and damage to bed gravels. Low water crossings create single entry/exit points and prevent vehicles from entering and crossing small streams at any location. The proposal would facilitate small impacts for the construction of bridges which would also mitigate damage to riparian wetlands, riverbed and banks from broadcast crossings during training activities. Thus, the activities resulting from the use of this RGP generally would have neutral to beneficial effects.

9. Floodplain Values: USAGAK Training Areas cover an immense amount of diversity in floodplain values, and each permit verification would be assessed for effects to floodplain connectivity and processes. This RGP takes into consideration the provisions of Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management and would not have an impact on the current level of connectivity of streams, rivers and floodplains in the Training Areas. General Condition 10 prohibits use of this RGP in cases where essential fish habitat would be adversely impacted, including impacts which are more than minimal to the floodplain. As well, General Condition 5 mandates that natural drainage patterns shall be maintained to avoid impacts to adjacent waters and wetlands, including floodplain wetlands.
10. Land Use: The primary responsibility for zoning and land use rests with the State, Local and Tribal Governments, and in particular, with the Department of Defense, USAGAK. The land use changes resulting from the proposed project would be in line with the current management strategy, which is National Security. For each permit verification, decisions by USAGAK regarding land use as it pertains to National Security will be balanced with considerations of the greater good of the Public. There are few instances where the Corps would reconsider USAGAKs decisions about the greater good of the Public, and one of these instances would be special aquatic sites of great importance (see this Section, sub-paragraph e).
11. Navigation: The proposed RGP would not apply to Section 10, Navigable Waters.
12. Shoreline Erosion and Accretion: Each verification of the proposed permit would be evaluated based on impacts to shoreline erosion and accretion impacts. In general, training activities are not performed in floodplain areas except for crossings (see this Section, sub-paragraph i). Thus, use of this RGP to streamline the permit process for single stream crossings would be beneficial because they alleviate widespread effects of multiple crossings across the stream corridor.
13. Recreation: This proposal will not impede the public's use or access to the Training Lands for the purposes of recreation. If new infrastructure is verified under this RGP, it is possible there will be small positive effects from increased summer, spring and fall access to otherwise remote and difficult to reach areas outside of freeze-up.
14. Supply and Conservation: Actions verified under the proposed RGP are not expected to have effects on the quantity or quality of water supply for the human populations living in and around the USAGAK Training Lands. Training Lands are generally located away from population centers and are not characterized by concentrations of impervious surfaces which, when added fill impacts from fill occur, could cumulatively inhibit aquifer or groundwater recharge. Typically, areas where this RGP would be used have a vegetated, natural land cover with intact, natural infiltration processes and are not co-located with local, municipal or public drinking water sources where supply and quality would be scrutinized due to human use. The cumulative effects of wetland conversion to flood attenuation, aquifer and groundwater recharge, and local stream water budgets are important

considerations in Training Areas with salmonid streams and adjacent communities which rely on well water supply. The forecasted amount of fill that would be permitted by this RGP would not be expected to adversely impact these needs. Minor, temporary impacts to water supply may result from its use during construction, such as pouring concrete, dust abatement, road construction. These direct, indirect and cumulative impacts would be minor and short term. Overall, the impacts of the proposed action on water supply and conservation would be negligible.

15. Water Quality: Increases in total suspended solids are expected from the removal of existing vegetation and the presence of loose, disturbed, un-compacted soils during project construction under use of the proposed permit. Maintenance of water quality for permit verifications with permanent impacts would be minimized through Special and General Conditions. General Condition 2, outlines time thresholds that temporary fills may remain onsite, mandates that fill is not susceptible to erosion, and that backfill does not create drainage (e.g., a French drain) effects. General Condition 4 mandates reporting of RGP permit discharges to Corps on an annual basis. Finally, General Condition 7 minimizes impacts to water quality through mandatory best management practices. With these minimization measures and the potential for additional Special Conditions, this RGP is not expected to have measurable water quality effects to the wetlands and waters of the Training Areas.
16. Energy Needs: Use of the proposed RGP is not expected to increase energy demand or have any direct, indirect or cumulative adverse effects on energy production. There are expected to be insignificant increases in energy use (fuel) during project construction for discharges permitted under the proposed RGP, but these are minute and temporary increases. The RGP would not be used for authorizing infrastructure projects which would require large energy consumption.
17. Safety: Use of the proposed RGP would represent small construction areas occurring in ranges and TAs not in use by Troops at the time of construction and standard steps to maintain public safety would be employed. RGP use would more likely be comprised of maneuvering exercises performed by troops while the Ranges were in use and closed to the public. Potential use of this RGP is not anticipated to significantly add to this already moderate to high level of background hazards.
18. Food and Fiber Production: The TAs have been withdrawn from the State of Alaska for use by the Department of Defense, there are no areas of compatible use for Food and Fiber Production.
19. Mineral Needs: As above, the proposed RGP is not intended to meet the Nation's mineral needs, and the action area is not available to public or private entities for mineral extraction. The sole purpose of the action area is for war preparedness.
20. Consideration of Property Ownership: Training Areas in the USAGAK are typified by large, uninhabited buffer areas for public safety and to minimize the impacts of

sound and troop access and egress. Given these land management considerations, use of this RGP will not affect private property owners in any way.

21. Needs and Welfare of the People: The needs and welfare of the People will be served by adoption of this RGP because it applies to geographically isolated Army lands which have already been withdrawn specifically for national security development. There is no jeopardy for loss of use or resource extraction or any likelihood the permits use would infringe on other Public Interest factors concerning economic or resource development. Potential impacts on natural resources due to potential use of this RGP are being mitigated by General Conditions and Special Conditions where necessary, and a use report feature will allow for higher scrutiny of fills and discharges on USAGAK lands than has occurred in the past. These measures would prevent direct and indirect impacts which are more than minimal and allow for an accurate cumulative effects assessment on a yearly basis which serves the greater needs and interests of the People for sustainably managed and healthy aquatic resources.

Additional discussion of effects on factors above: N/A

6.2 Additional Public Interest Review Factors (33 CFR 320.4(a)(2))

6.2.1 Relative extent of the public and private need for the proposed structure or work:

This RGP authorizes military training and associated activities that have no more than minimal individual and cumulative adverse environmental effects. These activities satisfy public and private needs for national security and defense preparedness. The need for this RGP is based upon the number of these activities that occur annually with no more than minimal individual and cumulative adverse environmental effects.

6.2.2 Were there any unresolved conflicts as to resource use, the practicability of using reasonable alternative locations and methods to accomplish the objective of the proposed structure or work?

There are no unresolved conflicts as to resource use since this RPG will apply to Military Training Lands only, which are set aside for Military Training purposes. This RGP will not change or prevent any of the current uses of the area to which it applies.

The RGP requires permittees to avoid and minimize adverse effects to WOTUS to the maximum extent practicable on the project site. Consideration of off-site alternatives locations is not required for activities that are authorized under general permits. General permits authorize activities that have no more than minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the environment and the overall public interest. The DE will exercise discretionary authority and require an individual permit if the proposed activity will result in more than minimal adverse environmental effects on the project site. The consideration of off-site alternatives can be required during the individual permit process.

- 6.2.3 The extent and permanence of the beneficial and/or detrimental effects which the proposed structure or work is likely to have on the public and private uses to which the area is suited:

Discussion: There is no private use of this land, which is withdrawn for military purposes only. This land withdrawal arrangement between the State of Alaska and the Department of Defense is expected to last in perpetuity, therefore no direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are expected for private uses during this period. Similarly, public access is allowed but is superseded by the mission of the Army for war preparedness and National Security. Use of the proposed permit would not negatively alter the public's ability to access, use and recreate on USAGAK lands. It may have minimal, long-term positive effects due to increased access as a byproduct of road, trail and pad upgrades in the TAs.

7 Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Guideline Analysis

7.1 Alternatives

See Section 3.

7.2 Prohibitions (40 CFR 230.10(b))

No discharge of dredged or fill material shall be permitted if it:

1. Causes or contributes, after consideration of disposal site dilution and dispersion, to violations of any applicable State water quality standard;
2. Violates any applicable toxic effluent standard or prohibition under section 307 of the Act;
3. Jeopardizes the continued existence of species listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, or results in likelihood of the destruction or adverse modification of a habitat which is determined by the Secretary of Interior or Commerce, as appropriate, to be a critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. If an exemption has been granted by the Endangered Species Committee, the terms of such exemption shall apply, in lieu of this subparagraph;
4. Violates any requirement imposed by the Secretary of Commerce to protect any marine sanctuary designated under Title III of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972.

7.3 Findings of Significant Degradation (40 CFR 230.10(c))

Except as provided under section 404(b)(2), no discharge of dredged or fill material shall be permitted which will cause or contribute to significant degradation of the WOTUS. Findings of significant degradation related to the proposed discharge shall be based upon appropriate factual determinations, evaluations, and tests required by subparts B and G, after consideration of subparts C through F, with special emphasis on the persistence and permanence of the effects outlined in those subparts. Under these Guidelines, effects contributing to significant degradation considered individually or collectively, include:

1. Significantly adverse effects of the discharge of pollutants on human health or welfare, including but not limited to effects on municipal water supplies, plankton, fish, shellfish, wildlife, and special aquatic sites;
2. Significantly adverse effects of the discharge of pollutants on life stages of aquatic life and other wildlife dependent on aquatic ecosystems, including the transfer, concentration, and spread of pollutants or their byproducts outside of the disposal site through biological, physical, and chemical processes;
3. Significantly adverse effects of the discharge of pollutants on aquatic ecosystem diversity, productivity, and stability. Such effects may include, but are not limited to, loss of fish and wildlife habitat or loss of the capacity of a wetland to assimilate nutrients, purify water or reduce wave energy; or
4. Significantly adverse effects of the discharge of pollutants on recreational, aesthetic, and economic values.

7.4 Factual Determinations (40 CFR 230.11).

The factual determinations are required in 40 CFR 230.11 and are discussed in Section 7.6.

7.5 Appropriate and Practicable steps to minimize adverse impacts (40 CFR 230.10(d))

As demonstrated by the information in this document, as well as the terms, conditions, and provisions of this RGP, actions to minimize adverse effects have been thoroughly considered and incorporated into the RGP. General conditions require the permittees to avoid and minimize discharges of dredged or fill material into WOTUS to the maximum extent practicable on the project site.

Compensatory mitigation may be required by the DE to ensure that the net adverse effects on the aquatic environment are no more than minimal and will be determined on a case by case basis for each permit verification. Additionally, the DE will exercise discretionary authority and require individual permits for specific projects in waters of the United States if those activities will result in more than minimal adverse effects on the aquatic environment.

7.6 Evaluation Process (40 CFR 230.7(b))

7.6.1 Cumulative effects (40 CFR 230.7(b)(3))

The 404(b)(1) Guidelines at 40 CFR 230.11(a) define cumulative effects as "...the changes in an aquatic ecosystem that are attributable to the collective effect of a number of individual discharges of dredged or fill material". For the issuance of general permits, the 404(b)(1) Guidelines require the permitting authority to "set forth in writing an evaluation of the potential individual and cumulative impacts of the categories of activities to be regulated under the general permit." [40 CFR 230.7(b)].

If a situation arises in which cumulative effects are likely to be more than minimal, and the proposed activity requires further review or is more appropriately

reviewed under the individual permit process, provisions of the RGP allow the DE to take such action.

The individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment resulting from the activities authorized by this RGP would be minimal. The Corps expects that the convenience and time savings associated with the use of this RGP would encourage applicants to design their projects within the scope of the RGP, including its limits, rather than request individual permits for projects that could result in greater adverse impacts to the aquatic environment. The DE would restrict or prohibit the use of this RGP on a case-specific basis if it is determined that these activities would result in more than minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment.

See Section 5.3 and 5.4 for further evaluation of the potential individual and cumulative effects.

7.6.2 Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines Impact Analysis. Subpart C through F.

Table 8. Potential impacts on physical and chemical characteristics of the aquatic ecosystem (Subpart C 40 CFR 230.20).

Potential Impacts on Physical and Chemical Characteristics	Effects					
	Major	Minor (Long Term)	Minor (Short Term)	Negligible	No Effect	Not Applicable
Physical and Chemical Characteristics						
Substrate		X				
Suspended particulates/turbidity				X		
Water				X		
Current patterns and water circulation		X				
Normal water fluctuations					X	
Salinity gradients						X

1. Substrate: Minor, long term effects to substrates would occur throughout the TAs. The substrates in the project footprint varies by resource type. The riverine and lacustrine systems are generally dominated by coarse gravels, sands and silts.

The palustrine areas are mostly silts and organics with vegetation. The project would implement Best Management Practices to prevent inadvertent discharge outside of the project footprints. Rare substrates, such as deep peats or floating peat mats, will be assessed and categorized as Special Aquatic Resources (see section 2.5 and Appendix A of RGP-03). Impacts to substrates with underlying permafrost will be maintained at a minimum by applying General Condition 14 and/or Special Conditions as appropriate.

2. Suspended particulates/turbidity: Negligible, short term effects would occur in non-glaciated streams and Palustrine, open water systems. It is anticipated that projects verified under this RGP would result in a temporary increase in suspended particulates during installation of in-water structures (e.g., low water crossings) and during fill activities in areas of standing or open water. The ambient turbidity levels of some rivers and streams in the project area are very high due to natural processes, and additional, temporary increases would be anticipated to have negligible effect. Vegetated palustrine WOTUS would not see effects outside of the project footprint due to the inhibiting vegetative mats. General Condition 7, Best Management Practices, would minimize effects to adjacent WOTUS.
3. Water: Negligible, long term effects are anticipated to water quality in the project area from use of this RGP. The fill material proposed for the project would have to comply with the 401 certification and therefore be clean and free of contaminant (General Condition 8). This is also stated in General Condition 6. It would not be anticipated that the discharge would measurably affect the physical or chemical properties of the receiving waters.
4. Current patterns and water circulation: Minor, long term effect are expected from use of the permanent discharges portion of the RGP. In particular, road and trail projects may cause altered hydrology patterns across the landscape. To minimize these effects and maintain natural overall hydrological conveyance, General Condition 5 mandates maintenance of natural drainage patterns.
5. Normal water level fluctuations: No effects are anticipated to normal seasonal water fluctuations due to potential actions under this RGP. One potential cause of seasonal water fluctuation, hydrologic storage capacity represented by land cover of WOTUS in HUC 10 watersheds, will not be significantly diminished due to RGP thresholds on individual projects. Flow rates and water quantity of riverine wetlands will not be directly impacted by activities under the RGP, because projects representing more than minor impacts will not be verified by this permit. Many of the Training Areas in the Interior Lowlands maintain hydrologic connectivity via shallow groundwater, which is not expected to be impacted by surface discharges.
6. Salinity gradients: No potential effects. There are no marine or estuarine WOTUS in the project area.

Table 9. Potential impacts on the biological characteristics of the aquatic ecosystem (Subpart D 40 CFR 230.30).

Potential Impacts on Biological Characteristics	Effects					
	Major	Minor (Long Term)	Minor (Short Term)	Negligible	No Effect	Not Applicable
Threatened and endangered species						X
Fish, crustaceans, mollusk, and other aquatic organisms				X		
Other wildlife			X			

1. Threatened and endangered species: No potential effects. See section 7.3 subpart 3 and General Condition 9.
2. Fish, crustaceans, mollusks and other aquatic organisms in the food web: The proposal would have a negligible and short-term effect on the aquatic food web. The placement of fill materials has the potential for direct and indirect lethal impacts to sessile and planktonic organisms, and indirect negative food web effects to fish that prey on those organisms. However, the effects would be short lived and negligible as the aquatic resources in the area are generally pristine and provide abundant opportunity for habitation/proliferation by organisms and refugium for fish and organisms. General Condition 10 maintains that permitted activities may not adversely effect essential fish habitat, and each project shall be reviewed for such potential effects.
3. Other wildlife: Minor, short term effects are expected from construction noise and activity on any potential permit site. In general, land management decisions on USAGAK, as defined by its Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan, account for avoidance and minimization of impacts to wildlife. This is a congressionally mandated strategy promulgated by the Sikes act of 1960 (16 USC 670a-670o, 74 Stat. 1052) which provides for cooperation by the Departments of the Interior and Defense with State agencies in planning, development and maintenance of fish and wildlife resources on military reservations throughout the United States. The RGP would not change the way USAGAK lands are managed.

Table 10. Potential impacts on special aquatic sites (Subpart E 40 CFR 230.40).

Potential Impacts on Special Aquatic Sites	Effects					
	Major	Minor (Long Term)	Minor (Short Term)	Negligible	No Effect	Not Applicable
Special Aquatic Sites						
Sanctuaries and refuges						X
Wetlands		X				
Mud flats		X				
Vegetated shallows				X		
Coral reefs						X

1. Sanctuaries and Refuges: Not Applicable. There are no federally designated sanctuaries or refuges on USAGAK lands.
2. Wetlands: Minor to negligible, long term effects are expected from the use of this proposed permit. USAGAK training lands are very large, representing over 700,000 acres of mostly pristine land. The rate of use of this permit at a two acre cap for each use is expected to be consistent with historic needs for Corps permits, possibly slightly greater, which have averaged 11.4 acres of fill per year from 1992 to 2018 (see section 5.3 for discussion). This average acreage includes large impacts not permissible under this RGP. At this rate, permitted discharge into WOTUS would result in 0.001% of wetlands impacted across the Training Lands per year. This is an underestimate due to the rate including permitted fills of over 2 acres. See also discussion of wetlands under Section 6.1 above.
3. Mudflats: Minor, long term effects could result from the use of this RGP. Mudflats in the TAs of USAGAK are typically seasonally exposed silt and gravel bars in large, low gradient river systems with high sediment loads (e.g., Gerstle, Tanana, and Delta Rivers). The Tanana River is a Section 10 waterbody not eligible for review under this permit. Development in these large river systems are usually associated with larger impacts and it is unlikely this RGP would facilitate such endeavors. However, if a project did qualify, impacts would not be negligible because this is a unique wetland type to the Training Areas, and even small impacts would result in overall decline of this wetland category.

4. Vegetated shallows: Negligible, long term effects are expected. These WOTUS are typically found in palustrine and lacustrine open waters (e.g., *Polygonum amphibium*, *Potamogeton gramuneus*, *Nuphar variegatum*) as small lake fringe habitats. Training activities are not likely to occur in these areas.
5. Coralreefs: N/A
6. Riffle and Pool Complex: Negligible, long term effects may occur. These can be minimized by adherence to best management practices and low impact design features, as well as special conditions.

Table 11. Potential impacts on human use characteristics (Subpart F 40 CFR 230.50).

Potential Impacts on Human Use Characteristics	Effects					
	Major	Minor (Long Term)	Minor (Short Term)	Negligible	No Effect	Not Applicable
Human Use Characteristics						
Municipal and private water supplies						X
Recreational and commercial fisheries				X		
Water-related recreation		X				
Aesthetics					X	
Parks, national and historical monuments, national seashores, wilderness areas, research sites, and similar preserves						X

1. Municipal and private water supplies: No Effect – The project is not in the vicinity of any water intake structures.
2. Recreational and commercial fisheries, including essential fish habitat: Use of this RGP would potentially have negligible to minor, long term effects to essential fish habitat in anadromous streams in Training lands. There are many anadromous streams throughout the TAs (8) This RGP has specific measures to minimize and avoid effects to this resource including General Conditions 10 (Essential Fish Habitat), 19 (Mitigation) and 20 (General Permit Agency Coordination). The project was coordinated for effects to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and it was determined, and concurred, that the project

would not adversely affect EFH. Recreational use of fisheries will not be directly or indirectly inhibited by use of the RGP, nor would commercial harvests which do not occur on USAGAK lands. There may be minor direct effects which would present as negligible indirect effects downstream at commercial fishing areas.

3. Water-related recreation: The proposal is expected to cause minor, long term positive effects to water-related recreation opportunities in many of the TA's. Recreation and subsistence fishing is a common activity in Interior Alaska, and as a major geographical portion of this is on Training Lands, the activity is common and important for the local communities of Delta Junction, North Pole, Nenana and Fairbanks. The likelihood that verifications of this permit would be for road and access improvement to the Training Lands is high. At present, many rivers and other waterbodies are only accessible by aircraft or in the winter when overland travel is possible. Permitted actions that improve access infrastructure would improve the public's ability to access water-related recreation areas.
4. Aesthetics: No effect. Major projects which would change the character of the landscape and it's aesthetic value would not be verified under this permit's acreage thresholds.
5. Parks, national and historical monuments, national seashores, wilderness areas, research sites, and similar areas: N/A. There are no such designated areas in the Training Lands of USAGAK.

Additional discussion of effects on factors above: N/A.

8 Compliance with Other Laws, Policies, and Requirements

8.1 Determination of Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA)

For each separate action proposed under this RGP the direct and indirect effects of the action would define the action area. The determination and rationale for effects on ESA listed species would be in each individual verification and described within its own RGP CDD. See General Condition 9 for details.

Currently, there are no listed TSA or ESA species in the project area. Consultation with the Services through the Public Notice process provided a concurrence on February 24th, 2020 from USFWS stating that in this case, the project area contains no ESA-listed species or designated critical habitat, so no effects to listed species are expected, and no further action is required.

8.2 Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)

Effects determination and rationale: Many streams in the TA's have been designated as anadromous waters, which are the basis of EFH in the Interior of Alaska. Some permit verifications may result in alteration of such streams, causing minor short term and minor long term effects. Example of potential effects include the partial hardening of bank and bed due to the installation of low water crossings. These structures, however, are for the purpose of decreasing stream

bank erosion with concrete footings and by limiting impacts of crossing Stryker vehicles to one location rather than spread out over hundreds of feet of shoreline. Other verified activities in streams would include bridge construction for the same purpose. These activities are expected to be carried out using BMPs, only be verified if minor in nature, and cause overall positive impacts. See General Condition 10 for details.

Consultation occurred with the USFWS on February 24, 2020 through the Public Notice process. The Service sent a letter stating that wetlands were trust resources and they had concerns about specific anadromous streams including Bear, McDonald and Clear Creeks in the Tanana Flats Training Area, and Stuart Creek in the Yukon Training Area. They declared the importance of providing adequate fish passage at stream crossings, keeping floodplain connectivity wherever possible and using only full-span construction. It was agreed that more coordination between the Service and USAGAK should take place on resource management and they agreed to continue coordination outside of this process. This agreement which would also satisfy the Service that minimization of effects would be addressed by the applicant regarding the use of this RGP.

8.3 Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106)

For most projects to be authorized under this RGP, the permit area would only include the project area and not any of those activities outside of WOTUS because all three tests identified in 33 CFR 325, Appendix C(g)(1) would not have been met.

For a limited number of projects, the permit area would include those areas comprising WOTUS that would be directly affected by the proposed work or structures as well as activities outside of WOTUS because all three tests identified in 33 CFR 325, Appendix C(g)(1) have been met. See General Condition 11 for details on how the appropriate documentation will be submitted to ascertain effects. The final description of the permit area for each project would be determined during the project CDD analysis.

The SHPO provided consultation on January 28, 2020 and concurred that the parameters of the RGP's General Conditions were satisfactory to meet minimization of effects.

8.4 Tribal Trust Responsibilities

Contact was made with representatives of all Tribal entities (e.g., Native Associations, Chiefs, Tribal Administrators, Post Offices, and Village Presidents) within fifty miles of Training Lands and with entities having historical, familial and cultural connections to the areas within USAGAK lands. The Native villages of Tetlin, Tannacross, Dot Lake, Healy Lake, Northway, Tanana and Nenana were included in the Public Notice and solicited for comments. No comments were received. For each RGP permit application requiring a General Permit Agency Consultation, the appropriate Tribal entities will be contacted for consultation.

8.5 Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA)

By operation of Alaska State law, the federally approved CZM program expired July 1, 2011, resulting in a withdrawal from participating in the Coastal Zone Management Act's (CZMA) National Coastal Management Program. The CZMA is therefore not applicable within the State of Alaska.

8.6 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

The Training Lands host the Delta River, portions of which were designated as Wild and Scenic in 1990. Designated parts include the Tangle Lakes region in the upper watershed and 62 river miles before its confluence with the Tanana River. As per General Condition 12, no RGP activity may occur in a component of the National Wild and Scenic River System, or in a river officially designated by Congress as a "study river" for possible inclusion in the system, unless the appropriate Federal agency with direct management responsibility for such river has determined in writing that the proposed activity will not adversely affect the Wild and Scenic River designation or study status. In this case, the Federal Authority is the Bureau of Land Management.

8.7 Water Quality Certification under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act

On January 7, 2021 the AKDEC granted a Water Quality Certification pursuant to Section 401 of the CWA and the Alaska State Water Quality Standards (18 AAC 70).

8.8 Other as needed: N/A

9 Determinations

9.1 Executive Orders

9.1.1 EO 13175, Consultation with Indian Tribes, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians: This action has no substantial effect on any Indian tribes, Alaska or Hawaiian natives.

9.1.2 EO 11988, Floodplain Management:

Alternatives to location within the floodplain, minimization, and compensatory mitigation of the effects were considered above. See section 2.4 for floodplain designations in the TAs. A floodplain permit from the Fairbanks North Star Borough is required for any work conducted in the Special Flood Hazard Area.

9.1.3 EO 12998, Environmental Justice:

In accordance with Title III of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 12898, it has been determined that the project would not directly or through contractual or other arrangements, use criteria, methods, or practices that discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin nor would it have a disproportionate effect on minority or low-income communities.

9.1.4 EO 13112, Invasive Species:

Through General Condition 7, Best Management Practices, the permittee will be required to control the introduction and spread of exotic species.

9.1.5 EO 13212 and EO 13302, Energy Supply Availability:

The proposal is not one that will increase the production, transmission, or conservation of energy, or strengthen pipeline safety.

9.1.6 EO 13547, Stewardship of the Ocean, Our Coast, and the Great Lakes: N/A

9.2 Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines Compliance

This RGP has been evaluated for compliance with the 404(b)(1) Guidelines, including Subparts C through G. Based on the information in this document, the Corps has determined that the discharges authorized by this RGP comply with the 404(b)(1) Guidelines, with the inclusion of appropriate and practicable conditions necessary to minimize adverse effects on affected aquatic ecosystems. The activities authorized by this RGP would result in minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment.

9.3 Effects on Corps Civil Works Projects (33 USC 408)

The applicant does not require permission under Section 14 of the Rivers and Harbors Act (33 USC 408) because the activity, in whole or in part, would not alter, occupy or use a Corps Civil Works project. There are no potential project areas which overlap with a Corps Civil Works Project, therefore there is no need for Section 408 nexus evaluation and no effects are expected.

9.4 Section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act General Conformity Rule Review

This RGP has been analyzed for conformity applicability pursuant to regulations implementing Section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act. It has been determined that the activities authorized by the RGP would not exceed de minimis levels of direct emissions of a criteria pollutant or its precursors and are exempted by 40 CFR 93.153. Any later indirect emissions are generally not within the Corps continuing program responsibility and generally cannot be practicably controlled by the Corps. For these reasons, a conformity determination is not required for the RGP.

9.5 Findings of No Significant Impacts

Based on the information in this document, the Corps has determined that the issuance of this RGP would not have significant impacts on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

9.6 Public Interest Determination

In accordance with the requirements of 33 CFR 320.4, the Corps has determined, based on the information in this document that the issuance of this RGP is not contrary to the public interest.

**Decision Document for
ISSUANCE OF POA-2017-00227 (RGP-03)
A Regional General Permit for
USAGAK Training Areas**

PREPARED BY:

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Date: January 8, 2021

REVIEWED BY:

Name and Title

Date: _____

APPROVED BY:

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Date: January 8, 2021

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