



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, ALASKA
P.O. BOX 6898
JOINT BASE ELMENDORF RICHARDSON, ALASKA 99506-0898

Environmental Resources Section

Ms. Judith Bittner
State Historic Preservation Officer
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Office of History and Archaeology
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1310
Anchorage, AK 99501-3565

Dear Ms. Bittner:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District (Corps), in partnership with the Denali Commission, installed pilings for barge moorings in several Alaskan communities this summer. The Corps coordinated with your office on barge mooring projects in Alakanuk, Emmonak, Grayling, Kotlik, Mountain Village, and Nunam Iqua in a letter sent July 9, 2010. In a response dated August 10, 2010, your office concurred with our finding of no adverse effect provided we conducted additional reconnaissance at the community of Grayling (Section 34, T33N, R57W, Seward Meridian, USGS quad Holy Cross D-3; Figure 1) prior to installation. The purpose of this letter is to provide your office with the results of that survey.

Project Description and Survey Methods

Prior to installing the five 12-inch-diameter steel piles, the area was examined by archaeologists on May 31, 2011. The ground surface, river bank, and erosional surfaces were inspected for exposed cultural material and surface features. Subsurface shovel tests were then placed at approximately 50-meter intervals perpendicular to the river bank along the proposed project area. The tests terminated at permafrost or sterile soils. When cultural material was encountered, additional tests were placed every 5 meters in cardinal directions from the positive test until no cultural material was found. This method resulted in a general delineation of site boundaries.

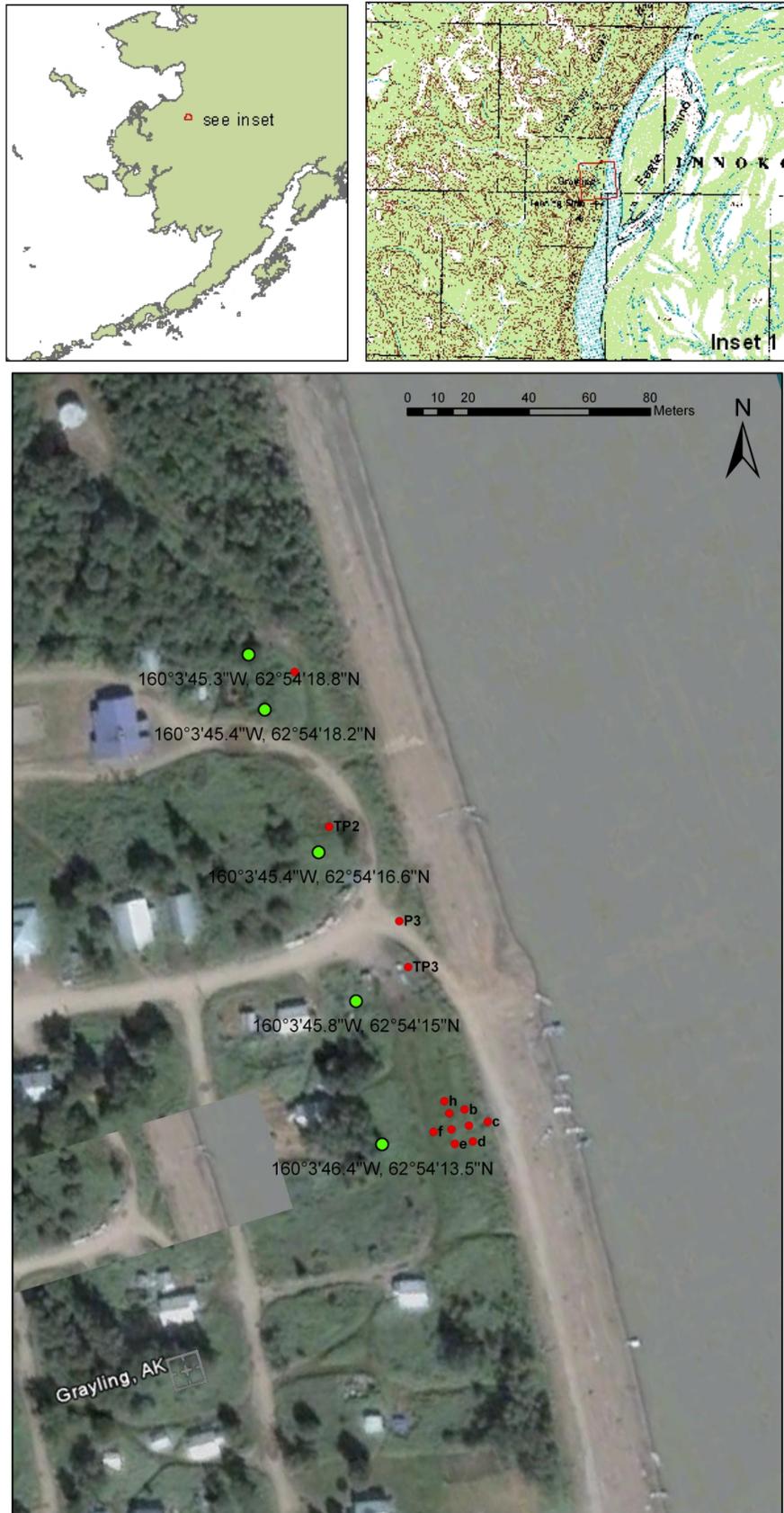


Figure 1. Location of Grayling. Location of subsurface tests (red) and mooring points (green).

Known Cultural Resources in Area

Two cultural resources were known in the area of potential effect for this undertaking. The precontact through historic period site XHC-00001 encompasses a large area and was reported to include the remains of semi-subterranean houses, cabins, and probable associated archaeological deposits. XHC-00086 is a smaller site within the boundaries of XHC-00001 and includes portions of the current community north of Grayling Creek. This site is also attributed to the precontact through historic periods.

The lower Yukon River drainage was unglaciated during the second half of the Wisconsin glacial stage (McFadyen Clark 1996:xiii). The earliest accepted occupation dates of the region are between 10,000 and 12,000 years ago. By 10,700 years before present (BP), obsidian trading among occupants of the region had begun, and the Paleo-Arctic tradition appeared (McFadyen Clark 1996:16-17). Between 8,000 and 4,000 BP, the region was occupied by people of the Late Tundra and Northern Archaic traditions. Important Late Tundra material has been reported at Kagati Lake in southwest Alaska and several locations in south-central Alaska, while Paleo-Arctic and Northern Archaic material has been reported at Onion Portage and Trail Creek Cave to the north (Ackerman 2001:111-112; Peregrine 2001a:127 and 2001b:167). The Arctic Small Tool tradition (approximately 4,700-2,500 BP) is known for diminutive tools marked by long parallel flake scars, particularly bipointed projectile points, side blades, small burins and scrapers, and polished adze blades. Many Arctic Small Tool camp sites have been reported across Alaska in addition to a few moderately-sized rectangular houses. These sites include Onion Portage, Mosquito Lake, and Punyik Point in the Brooks Range, various sites on the Seward Peninsula and Norton Sound, and south to Brooks River and the Naknek River (Dumond 2001a).

The Norton Tradition (3,000-1,000 BP) is occasionally subsumed under the Arctic Small Tool tradition and can be divided into Choris, Ipiutak, and Norton subtraditions. The Norton tradition is known for antler and ivory projectiles, labrets, stone lamps, and flaked projectile points and side blades. Large and well-stratified Norton Tradition sites have been reported at Point Hope, Cape Krusenstern, Cape Nome and Onion Portage to the north, and Brooks and Naknek rivers to the south. While distinctive open-work ivory carvings and highly stylized anthropomorphic art are attributed only to Ipiutak subtradition (1,700-1,100 BP), the Choris subtradition (3,000-2,500 BP) is marked by large elliptical semisubterranean houses and fiber-tempered pottery with linear-stamped decoration. The more recent Norton subtradition (2,500-1,000 BP) also included linear stamped pottery, but utilitarian and check-stamped pottery has also been reported. Norton subtradition houses had long, sloping entrance tunnels (Dumond 2001b:135-143).

After AD 1000, Proto-Athapaskan cultures spread across Alaska's interior. Settlements are small, yet disbursed over a wider area, indicating an expanding resource base. The material culture included copper tools and adornments, barbed bone and antler projectile points, bone and stone hide-processing tools, coarse pottery, pecked and ground adzes, and flaked tools. There was increasing and continuing regional specialization until the historic period. Trading fairs and partnerships not only linked the peoples of the interior river systems to the coast, but also to the Chukchi trade (Clark 2001:169-172).

Grayling is within the traditional territory of the Ingalik Athapaskan (or Deg Xinag speakers of the Deg Hit'an). Before the 19th century, there were at least four subdivisions of Ingalik in the lower middle Yukon, Innoko, and Kuskokwim. The Anvik-Shageluk Ingalik were concentrated along the Yukon and Innoko rivers between the Anvik River and Blackburn. The Holikachuk Athapaskan of the upper and middle Innoko River were closely associated with the Ingalik. At the beginning of the historic period, the combined population of the region is estimated to have been 2,000. The region was characterized by a three-tier settlement system. Winter settlements were concentrated along major river drainages with semi-subterranean houses, a kashgi or men's house, and assorted storage features. Before break up in spring, residents would move to spring camps for fishing and trapping. Summer fishing camps were occasionally associated directly with winter settlements, but were smaller with framed, above-ground structures (Vanstone 1979a:34-36, 1979b:3-4).

Both archaeological evidence and historical accounts provide evidence of early settlements near Grayling. Northern Land Use Research (2001) and Tanana Chiefs Conference (2008) reported late prehistoric and early historic archaeological deposits at XHC-00086, XHC-00087, and XHC-00088 in the vicinity of the runway. This area was also investigated as early as the 1920s by Fredrica de Laguna and Ales Hrdlicka. The sites encompass "Old Grayling," with many semi-subterranean houses, a kashgi, cache pits, and burials (which were reportedly removed by Hrdlicka). Stephen R. Braund & Associates (2008) documented prehistoric lithic material on a hill adjacent to the project area (XHC-00154 and/or XHC-00155), which was examined decades earlier by de Laguna. To date, only stone artifacts have been reported in this area. As recorded in early written accounts, names of the settlement include "Maadzikat" (meaning 'amulet river mouth'), "Dois-Brats," and "Shaman's Village" (see Vanstone 1979b:49-50).

The interior peoples of the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers participated peripherally in trade with the Russians via Aleksandrovskiy Redoubt at the mouth of the Nushagak River. The post also served as a launching point for several 19th century Russian expeditions that opened the region to the fur trade. This led to a network of Russian-American Company forts and posts into the interior that exploited the existing indigenous trade relations and routes. Kolmakovskiy Redoubt was established along the middle Kuskokwim River in 1832. The following year, Mikhailovskiy Redoubt was built near the mouth of the Yukon (at modern-day St. Michael). A trading post (*odinochta*) was opened in 1836 at Ikogmiut, now known as Russian Mission. The most inland *odinochta* was established at Nulato following a final Yukon River expedition in 1838 (McFadyen Clark 1981; Vanstone 1978, 1979b).

A smallpox epidemic struck the populations near the Nushagak, Kuskokwim, and Yukon rivers in 1838. The population was reduced by as much as two-thirds; thus, by the beginning of the 20th century the regional population was reduced to approximately 500 (Vanstone 1979a:58-59, 1979b:3-4). A final Russian-American Company expedition was Lieutenant Lavrentiy Alekseyevich Zagoskin's exploration of the Yukon River in 1843 (McFadyen Clark 1981:586; Vanstone 1978:5). The Russian-American Company made no more major explorations up the Yukon River; however, they maintained the posts at Mikhailovskiy and Ikogmiut that attracted many people for trade opportunities and from which traders and Russian Orthodox missionaries

traveled extensively in the region (McFadyen Clark 1974:83; Vanstone 1978:5). The people of several middle Yukon River communities served as middlemen in the trade between trading posts on the coast and in the interior. For example, Zagoskin encountered a large Holikachuk trading party from the upper Innoko River who were headed to the mixed Inupiat-Ingalik settlement *Anilukhtakpak* near the confluence of the Innoko and Yukon rivers (modern-day Holy Cross) (Vanstone 1979a:67).

Settlements and routes essential to traditional trade continued to be central to the 19th century fur trade. After the 1867 sale of Alaska, the Russian-American Company posts were operated and managed by American trading companies, who attempted to expand their influence in the region. The increasing competition among various companies between 1868 and 1883 provided the Ingalik and Holikachuk unprecedented opportunities to participate in the fur trade (Vanstone 1976:201). The trading post at Anvik was closed in 1883 (Vanstone 1979a:109). Despite this, the number of Euroamericans traveling through the middle Yukon began to increase as prospectors used the river to access the upper Yukon gold fields. This is when modern-day Grayling was established.

In his exhaustive publication *Historic Ingalik Settlements along the Yukon, Innoko, and Anvik Rivers, Alaska*, James Vanstone (1979b:50-51) summarized historic accounts of Grayling:

The earliest identifiable historic reference to the settlement occurs in 1869 when Raymond (1871) noted 'native houses'... There is a reference to the settlement in 1888 when one family was in residence and the name Grayling is on the track chart of the Yukon used at the end of the 19th century. On this chart there are notations of wood camps both above and below the name as well as the name 'Pickett's Wood,' an indication of the importance of this location to the steamboat captains... In the summer of 1900... there were 32 people... in Grayling and the settlement was described as a rendezvous where the Indians came in summer to fish and cut wood and in winter to trade, a way station for native travel with a largely transitory population... [Regarding Old Grayling,] Holikachuk residents probably used it intermittently as a fish camp, although it had no permanent residents after 1930. The site appeared to have been recently abandoned at the time of Hrdlicka's visit in June 1926...

Similar information is reported by Orth (1971:389), although he states that the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Nunivak* reported a store, woodyard, and 75 people at Grayling in 1900.

Grayling was in the Anvik Mining District and adjacent to the Iditarod Mining District. One commercially mined placer deposit operated from 1918 to 1940 in the Anvik District near the head of the Stuyahok River (Cobb 1973:105-106). Most mining in the Iditarod District occurred north of Grayling in the Flat and Innoko areas between 1909 and 1912, although several operations continued until the present (Cobb 1973:145-146). Supply ships traveling between the coast and mines in these districts, as well as those farther up the Yukon, likely stopped at Grayling for wood.

Twenty-five families moved from Holikachuk to Grayling between 1962 and 1966. As Vanstone reported, the site was used by both Holikachuk and Ingalik people in the past and such a move would have fit into the traditional settlement patterns of the region. The U.S. Census of

1970 found 130 inhabitants at Grayling (Vanstone 1979a, 1979b). The City of Grayling was incorporated the prior year.

Survey Methods and Results

As proposed in a previous letter, Corps archaeologists Margan Grover, Kelly Eldridge, and Dominique Cordy conducted a pedestrian survey and subsurface shovel testing in the area of potential effect on May 31 and June 1, 2011. Inset 2 of Figure 1 illustrates the final mooring point locations (green dots) and the subsurface test locations (red dots). The four primary tests were placed parallel to the river bank at 50-meter intervals. They were from 30 to 50 centimeters in diameter and terminated at permafrost. Tests 1 through 3 encountered no cultural material, although several strata of burned wood and charcoal were noted in the stratigraphic profile of the tests.

A grit-tempered undecorated pottery sherd was recovered from Test 4. The sherd was clearly prehistoric, measured 3.0 x 2.1 x 0.7 centimeters, and encountered 7 centimeters below the ground surface. To delineate the area and nature of the deposit, additional shovel tests were excavated 5 meters west (Test 4a), north (Test 4b), east (Test 4c), and south (Test 4d) of Test 4. A dark greasy paleosol with charcoal was encountered in the west, east, and north tests at 10 centimeters below the ground surface. A second grit-tempered undecorated sherd (measuring 2.7 x 3.0 x 1.0 centimeters) was encountered 5 centimeters below the ground surface in the west test. More tests were excavated 10 meters south (Test 4e), west (Test 4f), and north (Test 4g) of Test 4. In the north and south tests, the upper 7 centimeters below ground surface consisted of a dark brown silt with charcoal but no cultural material. In the west test, two thin, glazed, undecorated refined earthenware fragments were found 18 centimeters below the ground surface. The stratigraphy in this test was disturbed and consistently a blackish brown mottled silt to the permafrost. A final test was placed 15 meters north of Test 4. The soil deposits were stratified with a possible black paleosol at 10 centimeters below the ground surface, although the only cultural material was fragments of an aqua PVC pipe.



Figure 2. Left: Prehistoric pottery from Test 4. Right: Prehistoric pottery from Test 4a.

There were no visible cultural features in the area where the pottery was encountered. Given the low concentration of prehistoric material and the association with the limited paleosol 10 centimeters below the ground surface, the pottery is likely associated with the prehistoric occupation of XHC-00086 (New Grayling), XHC-00154, and XHC-00155. Archaeological and ethnographic data suggest the site was used seasonally as a fish camp, when residents would have occupied more ephemeral structures. XHC-00155 was determined not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, but no determination was completed for the other two sites.

Assessment of Effect

As prior consultation with your office determined, a reconnaissance survey was completed in the area of potential effect in Grayling. The extent of the archaeological was delimited and avoided (refer to Figure 1). Therefore, the undertaking resulted in no adverse effect to historic properties. Access to the sites used existing routes and required no ground disturbance.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Aaron Wilson by phone at (907) 753-2631 or e-mail Aaron.K.Wilson@usace.army.mil.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Salyer
Chief, Environmental Resources Section

Cc:

Honorable Shirley Clark, Mayor, City of Grayling
Gabriel Nicholi, Sr., President, Hee-Yea-Lingde Corporation
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CONCUR
D. Walters

TYPED: Grover/23 Sept 2011/x5537

FILE: O:_Projects by Location\Denali Commission\AKV289 (325271) Mooring Points
Planning and Design\07 Phase II Lower Yukon River Delta\Grayling\archaeology\SHPO letter
report Grayling 2011.docx

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