



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

MAR 17 2011

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, will be installing pilings for barge moorings in seven Alaskan communities: Akiachak (Section 36, T10N, R69W, Seward Meridian, USGS Bethel D-7); Goodnews Bay (Section 21, T12S, R73W, Seward Meridian, USGS Goodnews Bay A-7); Kongiganak (Section 32, T2S, R79W, Seward Meridian, USGS Kuskokwim Bay D-3); Lower Kalskag (Section 2, T16N, R62W, Seward Meridian, USGS Russian Mission C-4); Upper Kalskag (Section 27, T17N, R61W, Seward Meridian, USGS Russian Mission C-4); Napaskiak (Sections 8-9, T7N, R71W, Seward Meridian, USGS Bethel C-8); and Crooked Creek (Section 32, T21N, R48W, Seward Meridian, USGS Sleetmute D-6).

The Corps and Denali Commission completed similar projects in the communities of Chevak, Tuntutuliak, and Kwigillingok in early 2010, during which the Corps coordinated with your office in letters received on July 21, 2009 and November 18, 2009. Your office concurred with our findings of no adverse effects to historic properties in letters sent on August 7, 2009 and December 22, 2009. The Corps also 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 prior to installation. The purpose of this letter is to notify your office of a federal undertaking with the potential to affect historic properties and to seek your concurrence on the assessment of effect for the proposed project.

The Corps, in coordination with the Denali Commission, is planning to install 12-inch-diameter steel piles to a depth of roughly 30 feet at selected locations near the communities listed. The piles will be lifted into position with a crane and will be driven into the ground with a pile hammer. Soils are pushed aside as the pile is driven into the ground; therefore, only a minimal quantity of soil will be removed or disturbed. These moorings will allow barges to more efficiently and safely offload fuel and supplies to each community. Please note that while the enclosed maps may illustrate other project features, the current Corps project will only be for the moorings.

Akiachak Cultural Resources

Two piles will be driven at the western end of Akiachak along the northern bank of the Kuskokwim River at the existing barge landing (enclosure 1). The landing is a gently sloping bank composed of sand and silt with little vegetation. The area appears to be occasionally inundated by high water.

A limited level archaeological survey has been conducted in the vicinity of Akiachak. One reported cultural resource is listed in the Alaska Heritage Resource Survey (AHRs) in the vicinity of Akiachak. BTH-00017 (Akiachak, Akaitshagamut, or Akiakchagamiut) was established as early as 1890 by residents of Kihtagamiut (BTH-00003), which is south of the modern community. BTH-00017 was investigated several times in the 1980's by Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) archaeologists (BIA 1982; 1985). The site encompasses most of the community and includes an historic cemetery at the southeast end of the airstrip, assorted structural remains, and associated cultural material. Given the small scale of the proposed project and its relation to known cultural resources, it is unlikely that the Akiachak project will need to be preceded by cultural resources reconnaissance surveys.

Goodnews Bay Cultural Resources

The pilings will be placed on the spit at the convergence of the Goodnews River and Goodnews Bay. Two mooring points will be placed along the southwest shore of Goodnews Bay, and three mooring points will be placed along the southeast bank of the Goodnews River at the existing barge landing (enclosure 2). The gravel and sand banks in the project area are generally a low slope but become silty below mean tide.

Several cultural resources surveys have been conducted in Goodnews Bay. One site listed in the AHRs is in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project. Cultural material reported from GDN-00018 (Mumtrak, Mumtrahamute, or Mamteraq) spans the precontact period to the twentieth century. Charles Holmes (1998) examined the site in 1997 and reported that the archaeological deposits were concentrated near the modern runway, but scattered cultural material was reported at the abandoned runway and near the spit. During scoping meetings in 2010, residents expressed concerns about disturbance of cultural material along the Goodnews River shoreline. Because of the potential for cultural material in the project area and the community's concerns, the Corps will perform a cultural resource reconnaissance survey to locate and evaluate presently undiscovered historic properties/cultural resource sites.

Kongiganak Cultural Resources

Two mooring points will be placed upstream of Kongiganak north of the existing barge landing (enclosure 3). There are three historic properties/cultural resources listed in the AHRs in the vicinity of Kongiganak. These properties include XKB-00005 (St. Gabriel Russian Orthodox Chapel), XKB-00010 (Sod House Remains), and XKB-00011 (Kongiganak Cemetery). The St. Gabriel Chapel, consecrated in 1974, was determined ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places. XKB-00010 and XKB-00011 have not been evaluated for eligibility.

Some cultural resource surveys have been conducted in the vicinity of Kongiganak. The BIA (1995; 2001) examined the area in connection with road project proposals, but no archaeological deposits were reported near the barge landing. There is a low potential for cultural resources in the project area, and the proposed Kongiganak moorings are unlikely to affect previously unknown cultural material.

Upper and Lower Kalskag Cultural Resources

Two mooring points will be driven at the existing barge landing in Lower Kalskag (enclosure 4), where the bank of the Kuskokwim is gently sloping and composed primarily of silt and sand. In Upper Kalskag, two mooring points will be placed at the existing barge landing and two at the existing fuel landing (enclosure 5).

There are two cultural properties listed in the AHRS in Lower Kalskag. RUS-00012 (Lower Kalskag) is an historic period archaeological site last investigated by Oswalt (1980). The site encompasses most of the community. RUS-00017 (St. Seraphim Russian Orthodox Chapel) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and within Lower Kalskag. RUS-00005 (Upper Kalskag, New Kalskag, or Kaltshak) includes most of Upper Kalskag. This historic period archaeological site was last investigated by Oswalt (1980).

Both Upper and Lower Kalskag have been examined by archaeologists. The BIA has conducted several surveys along the Kuskokwim riverbank near the community. Stephen R. Braund and Associates (2004) also examined the riverbank, but mainly focused on a telecommunication project more than a mile inland. It should be noted that the banks of the Kuskokwim River are constantly shifting due to active erosion, and new archaeological sites along the river may have been revealed since the last surveys. Because there is a potential for broadly distributed cultural material in Upper and Lower Kalskag, the Corps will conduct cultural resources reconnaissance surveys to locate and evaluate cultural resources in the project areas.

Napaskiak Cultural Resources

Three mooring points will be placed in Napaskiak (enclosure 6). There are two cultural resources listed in the AHRS in the proposed project vicinity. BTH-00007 (Napaskiak, Napaiskak, or Napaiskagamut) was established as early as AD 1800 and encompasses most of the community. The site includes a variety of resources, such as a kashgi mound and extant structures (ICRC 2004; Pipkin 2002). BTH-00009 (St. Jacob's Russian Orthodox Church) and an associated Russian cemetery are also in Napaskiak. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Many cultural resources surveys have taken place in Napaskiak. The Alaska Army National Guard conducted two surveys in Napaskiak but did not encounter new cultural resources (ICRC and Hart Crowser 2001; ICRC 2004). Pipkin (2002) examined boardwalk corridors, where he reported several possible historic structures. Cook excavated five test pits in Napaskiak but did not identify any cultural resources (BIA 1979). Oswalt (1963) conducted a yearlong study of Napaskiak in 1956-1957. It is probable that the project area will need to be examined for cultural resources prior to driving the mooring piles at Napaskiak.

Crooked Creek Cultural Resources

Three mooring points will be driven along the shore near the existing barge landing in the “upper” portion of Crooked Creek. Two cultural resources are listed in the AHRS in the project area. The site SLT-00004 (Crooked Creek, Khottylno, Kvikhchagpak, or Portage Village) includes most of Crooked Creek, now called the Middle and Upper villages, which are upstream of the creek. SLT-00004 spans the precontact period to the mid-twentieth century and was first noted in written records by Zagoskin (1967), who described it as a summer camp. SLT-00004 was also used as a camp for prospectors from 1908 to 1910. In 1914 or 1915, a trading post was established in the Upper Village. Parent's Trading Post or Crooked Creek Roadhouse (SLT-00064) once had a log house, sawmill, barns, gardens, and other outbuildings. A cemetery (SLT-00089) is associated with the trading post but is outside of the area of potential effect for the proposed project.

A modest amount of archaeological work has occurred in Crooked Creek. Most recently, NLUR (2006) surveyed the vicinity for water and sewer improvements. Because there is a potential for broadly distributed cultural material in Crooked Creek, the Corps will conduct cultural resources reconnaissance surveys to locate and evaluate cultural resources in the project areas.

Assessment of Effect

As a whole, the driving of mooring pilings at these seven communities has little potential to affect cultural resources. The footprint of this project is very small, smaller than most standard archaeological test units. Access to the sites is along existing routes or along frozen rivers or tundra—no ground disturbance from site access is expected and no stockpiling of material is needed.

Literature searches and discussions with the community have been conducted at each location to determine the possibility of additional, unreported sites. In Akiachak and Kongiganak, there is a low potential for cultural material in the project areas, thus the Corps seeks your concurrence that installing moorings at these locations will result in **no effect to historic properties**. There is a moderate potential for cultural material in Upper and Lower Kalskag, Crooked Creek, Napaskiak, and Goodnews Bay. The Corps proposes a pre-construction surface and subsurface (shovel test) survey of the five piling locales. If no cultural material is encountered, the Corps seeks your concurrence that the undertaking will result in **no adverse effect to historic properties**. If material is encountered, the Corps will either move the proposed locale to avoid the material or contact your office to discuss how to proceed. In the event cultural material is encountered, the Corps will also update the AHRS with any additional information.

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

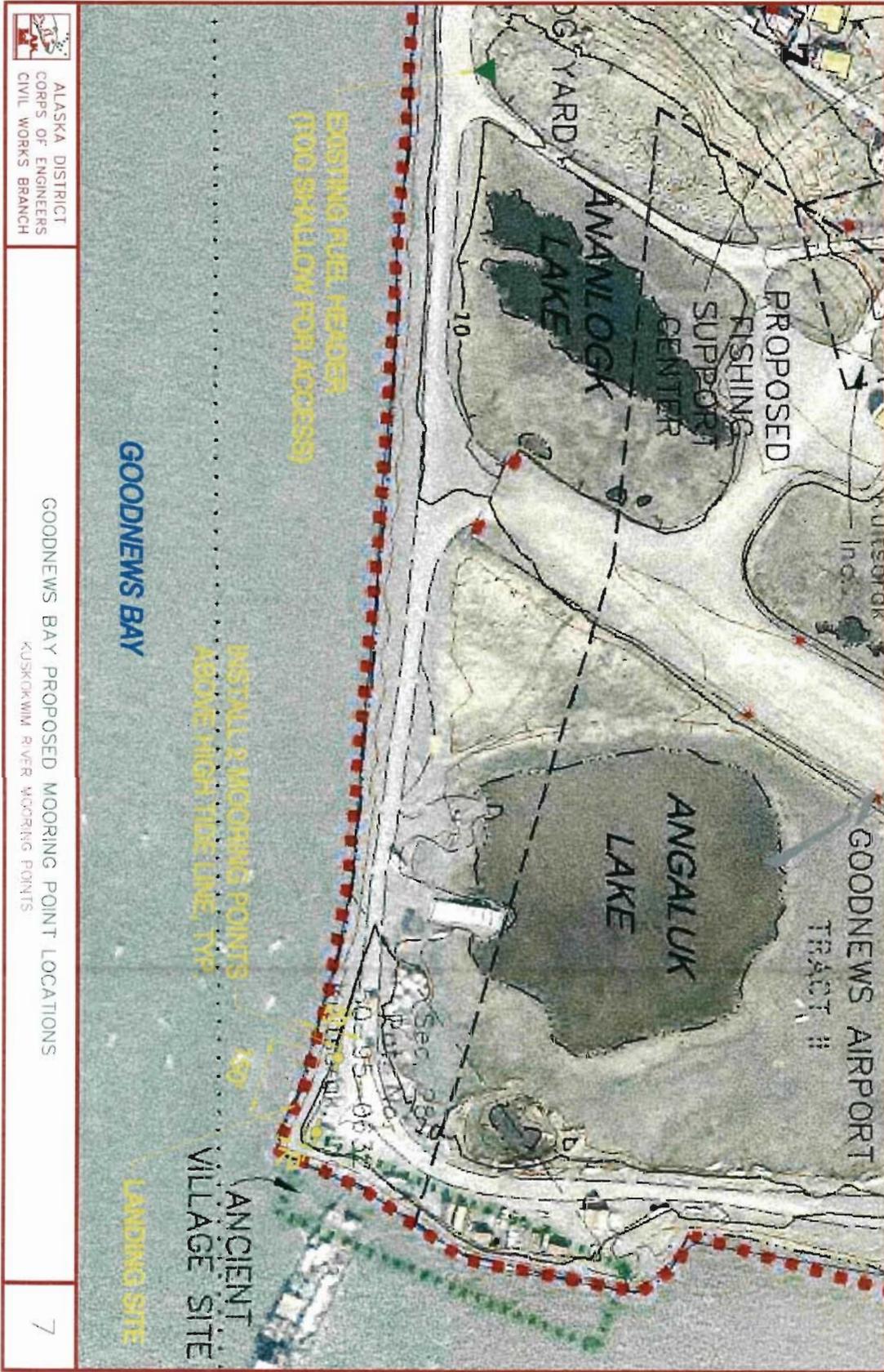
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael R. Salyer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Michael R. Salyer
Chief, Environmental Resources Section

cc w/ enclosures:

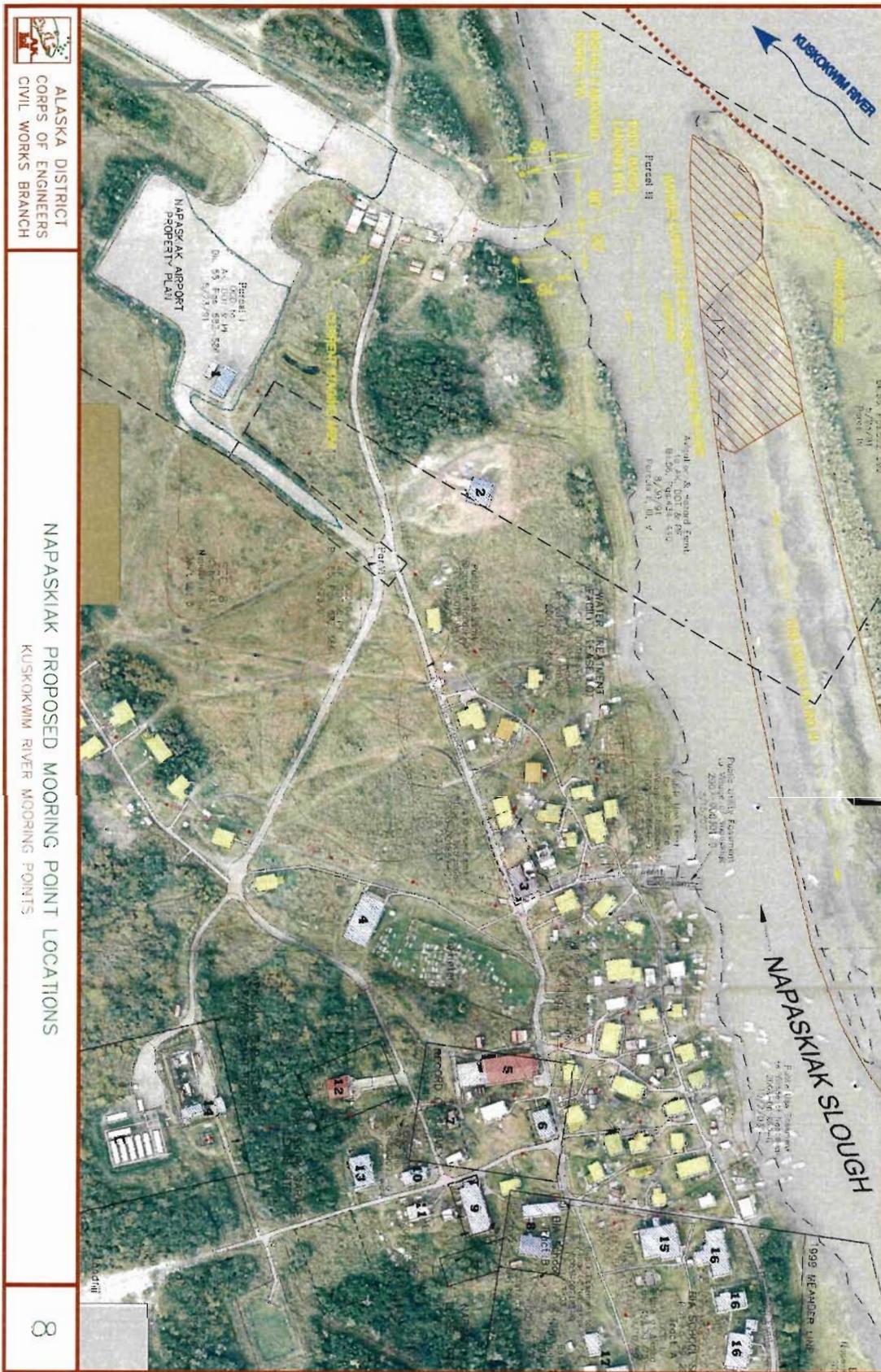
Daniel George, President, Akiachak Native Community
Daniel Shouten, Mayor, City of Goodnews Bay
George Brights, Sr., President, Native Village of Goodnews Bay
Cassius Brown, President, Native Village of Kongiganak
Nick Alexie, Mayor, City of Lower Kalskag
Phyllis Evan, President, Village of Lower Kalskag
William Alexie, Mayor, City of Upper Kalskag
Julia Dorris, President, Village of Kalskag
Joseph Bavilla, Mayor, City of Napaskiak
Chris Larson, President, Native Village of Napaskiak
Johnny John, Jr., President, Village of Crooked Creek



Enclosure 2. Goodnews Bay mooring points



Enclosure 3. Kongiganak mooring points



Enclosure 6. Napaskiak mooring points

CROOKED CREEK PROPOSED MOORING POINT LOCATIONS
KUSKOKWIM RIVER MOORING POINTS



Enclosure 7. Crooked Creek mooring points