DISTRICT TRIP REPORT

Project: Denali Commission Moorings Points Phase 3 – Kuskokwim River

Description: Upper and Lower Kalskag, Alaska Trip Report

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George Kalli and Marcus Palmer traveled to Upper and Lower Kalskag, Alaska on September 10th to conduct a site visit and scoping meeting related to potential installation of barge mooring points in the communities. Each community has both Tribal and city governments. The two communities are connected by a 4.2-mile, State maintained road. Margaret Alexie, Administrator for the City of Upper Kalskag picked us up at the airstrip and transported us to the landing sites in both villages. One joint public meeting for both Upper and Lower Kalskag was conducted at noon in the bingo hall in Lower Kalskag. A total of eighteen residents participated in the meeting. A summary of the meeting follows this site visit summary.

Following is a summary of the information learned during the site visit.

GENERAL

A total of five landing sites were identified during our site visit. Four are located in Upper Kalskag and one is in Lower Kalskag. Inspections of four of these sites were completed. The remaining site was eliminated for consideration of mooring points and was not inspected. The fuel header at the Upper Kalskag School Landing site is currently not in use and was eliminated as a location; further discussion follows.

Larry Lau, larry@tantikilunlimited.com, is a point of contact regarding land ownership in both villages.

The primary freight landing site appears to be the Upper Kalskag Landing Site, although the community expressed that they did not want to continue using that site. The Lower Kalskag Landing appeared to be able to support cargo operations with some difficulty, but did look as if it is primarily used for fuel. There was discussion of adding access at the Tank Farm, but it consists of a high eroding bank and lacks a suitable landing area. Knik Construction leases a freight barge landing in Upper Kalskag. Upper Kalskag is in planning to develop a new freight landing site.

UPPER KALSKAG UPSTREAM LANDING SITE

This landing area is the upstream landing area illustrated in Figure E27 of the barge landing report.

This landing area has a ramp and banks protected by haphazardly placed armor stone and cement rubble (Photos 1 – 3). Water depths were shallow during our site visit.

There is a cemetery located on the top of the bank adjacent to the access ramp on the downstream side of the ramp. Placement of any mooring points will have to take the location of the cemetery into consideration (Photos 3 – 4).

A former school now used as teacher housing is located across the street from the ramp to the landing area (Photo 5). Staging area at this site is limited hence any staging activities occurring atop the ramp would be close to the teacher housing. This was expressed as a safety concern during the subsequent public meeting.

There are two fuel headers near the teacher housing. One is to a 1000 gallon tank located adjacent to the teacher housing. Another is for a 8000 gallon tank located behind the teacher housing.

Margaret was not sure of the land ownership for this location. It could be owned by the city or the school.

In order to provide some distance between the downstream mooring point and any graves at the cemetery, the best location for the downstream mooring point appears to be 175 feet downstream from the centerline of the access ramp atop the slope of armor stone and concrete as opposed to the top of the river bank (Photo 1). This should be an above grade installation.

Potential conflicts with buried utilities are a concern for the upstream mooring point at this site. There is a well head and a concrete/plywood box contraption with a pipe and metal cap and an electrical lead attached to it (Photo 4). Location of buried utilities at this site may be required. In order to minimize any such conflicts, the mooring point would be best placed downstream and inland of the visible utilities (Photo 5), approximately 25 feet upstream from the centerline of the access ramp. This should be a below grade installation.

If there are no buried utility conflicts, both mooring points should be shifted 50 feet upstream.

Photo 1: Upper Kalskag Upstream Landing Site Looking Downstream with Marcus Standing in Proposed Mooring Point Location

Photo 2: Upper Kalskag Upstream Landing Site Looking Upstream

Photo 3: Upper Kalskag Upstream Landing Site Access Road. Note cemetery atop bank.

Photo 4: Mystery Utility Box

Photo 5: Marcus Standing at Potential Location for Upstream Mooring Point in Front of School. Note Well Head to his Left.

UPPER KALSKAG KNIK CONSTRUCTION LEASED LANDING SITE

Knik Construction is currently leasing and actively using one of the landing areas in Upper Kalskag as a staging area to transport gravel from the village via river barges. This landing area is the downstream landing area illustrated in Figure E27 of the barge landing report. When we visited this site, a 150' x 50' barge was moored to an I-beam deadman installed into the bank adjacent to the staging area (Photos 6 – 7). According to Neal Scott (907-471-2427) of Knik, there are no other deadmen at the site and the existing one has been in place all summer.

It has not been confirmed whether Knik Construction has exclusive use of this landing area as a condition of their lease. Based upon the amount of activity witnessed during our site visit, it would not be practical for others to effectively use the site while Knik Construction is exporting gravel.

Active bank erosion is evident both upstream and downstream of this landing (Photo 6).

Two mooring points, one in the vicinity of the existing deadman and the other 200 feet downstream both 50 – 60 feet in from the river, seem appropriate at this landing site.

This site is the most favorable to offloading and staging freight.

Photo 6: Barge Tie Down Rope Leading to Knik Landing Deadman

Photo 7: Moored Knik Gravel Barge

UPPER KALSKAG SCHOOL LANDING SITE

There is a new school being constructed near the downstream end of Upper Kalskag. There are two 10,000 tanks in place for the school.

There is a fuel landing site historically associated with this site. This site is indicated on some maps of the community. Fuel offloaded at this site had to be pumped approximately 1700 feet to the previous school.

There was some uncertainty where fuel deliveries to the new school would take place. We spoke to both the school principal, Greg Wolman, and the supervisor of the construction, Dan Ellen. According to Dan, due to deteriorating pipes and the lack of a right-of-way, the fuel header for the new school will be collocated at the existing tank farm landing site.

This eliminates this landing site for consideration for mooring point installation.

A site visit to this site was not conducted.

UPPER KALSKAG TANK FARM LANDING SITE

Maps from DCRA that we brought with us to the villages indicate that the tank farm is within Lower Kalskag. During our public meeting we were informed that the boundary between the two villages is displayed incorrectly on the maps. The maps indicate the tank farm to be in Lower Kalskag but we were told it is actually in Upper Kalskag.

The tank farm is located approximately 600 feet inland from the river. A nicely graded gravel road leads to the river from the downstream side of the tank farm.

The banks at the landing area are highly erodible and steep due to the swift current along the bank (Photos 8 – 9).

Due to the current, we think that barges would prefer to moor broadside at this site.

There is no staging area available for cargo at this site. The ramp down to the river from the road is currently too steep to support cargo operations (Photo 10).

Two above grade mooring points spaced 150 – 200 feet apart placed just on the river side of a chain link fence seem appropriate here (Photos 11 – 12). This site is bound both on the upstream and downstream sides by shallow slough depressions – the actual spacing between the mooring points will be dictated by these sloughs.

Photo 8: Tank Farm Landing Site Looking Upstream. Note Active Erosion.

Photo 9: Tank Farm Landing Site Looking Downstream. Note Active Erosion.

Photo 10: Tank Farm Landing Site. Note Lack of Staging Area and Fuel Header at Top.

Photos 11 & 12: Marcus Standing at Proposed Locations on Downstream and Upstream Mooring Point Locations

LOWER KALSKAG LANDING SITE

This site consists of a broad and shallow beach. There were many skiffs beached at this site (Photos 13 – 14).

A sand bar that could impede access is evident upstream of this site. The landing area in general appears to be shallow (Photo 15).

There is a fuel header approximately 300 feet upstream of the landing area access road located 12 – 15 feet above the river atop an eroding bank bluff (Photo 16).

Although this site appears suitable for offloading of freight, it is apparently not used often for this purpose.

Two mooring points, each 20 feet in from the top of bank and 75 feet on each side of the fuel header, seem appropriate here. Below grade mooring points may be difficult to locate here. Above grade mooring points should be installed if they are acceptable to the community.

Photo 13: Lower Kalskag Landing Site Looking Downstream

Figure 14: Lower Kalskag Landing Site Looking Upstream

Figure 15: View of Sandbar Upstream of Lower Kalskag Landing Site

Figure 16: Fuel Header is Atop Eroding Bank

SUMMARY OF ITEMS DISCUSSED DURING PUBLIC MEETING

According to members of the two villages, there are a total of five barge landing sites between Upper and Lower Kalskag. The five sites correspond with the five sites discussed above in the site visit summary.

Upcoming construction in the villages includes an Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium project to install a water plant and wells. A contact at the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation for this project is Mark Spafford at 907 729 3600.