



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, ALASKA
P.O. BOX 6898
JBER, 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

NOV 28 2011

Dear Ms. Bittner:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), as contractors for the Denali Commission, propose to construct a boat launch ramp at the southwest corner of the community of Nondalton, Alaska during the 2012 construction season (Sect. 31; T2S; R32W; Seward Meridian; USGS Quad Iliamna D-5; figure 1). The purpose of this letter is to notify your office of a federal undertaking with the potential to affect historic properties and seek your concurrence on the assessment of effect.

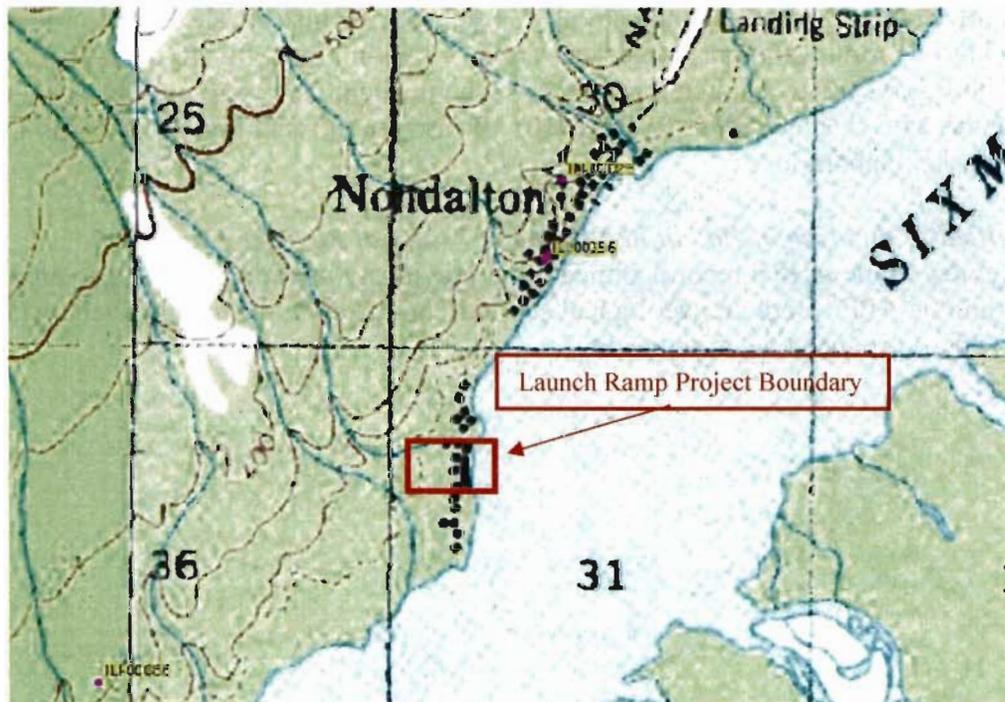


Figure 1: Nondalton Project Area

Description of Undertaking and Area of Potential Effect:

The Corps is planning to install a 28-foot-wide by 120-foot-long concrete boat launch ramp along the western shoreline of Six-Mile Lake bordering the southernmost juncture of the extant J and Hill Streets. Approximately 167 cubic yards of rock and gravel fill will be used to construct the launch ramp, which will be surfaced with 16-foot-wide pre-cast concrete planks. The width of the westernmost section of J Street will be increased to 20 feet and connected to a 100-foot by 100-foot gravel staging area bordering the existing shoreline. The launch ramp will extend from the gravel staging area 120 feet into the lake. Approximately 563 cubic yards of sediment will be excavated from the lake bed around the base of the ramp. Work at this site will be completed using an excavator, bulldozer, and compactor. These vehicles will be transported to the site using existing roads. Considering this, the area of potential effect (APE) for the installation of the boat launch ramp will include the southernmost portion of Hill Street, J Street, the single existing gravel pathway to the south of J Street, the shoreline, and a 100-meter corridor on either side (see attachments 1 and 2).

Previous Research:

Two surveys of separate sections of the APE have been performed. Allan DePew surveyed the area between Main Street and the shore of Six-Mile Lake as well as the surrounds of the sewage lagoon in 1999. DePew (1999) located no cultural remains, additionally concluding both locales exhibited heavy disturbance resulting from previous construction. In 2010 Erin Ryder, Corps archaeologist, conducted an intensive inspection of the Russian Orthodox-era grave site, adjacent grounds, and the burned building south of J Street (see 2010 Trip Report Map). This survey revealed the grave site to be well outside the perimeter of the proposed project area. No surface indications of prehistoric or historic site use or properties potentially eligible for the National Register were noted within the APE (Ryder 2010). Moreover, both surveyors consulted local experts who posited there were no significant cultural sites within the APE (DePew 1999; Ryder 2010). Please see the enclosed 2010 Corps Trip Report for further elaboration.

Sites Identified in the Area of Potential Effect and National Register Eligibility:

A review of the AHRS records indicates no previously-documented historic properties present within the APE. Both archaeological surveys conducted in the area by DePew (1999) and Ryder (2010) produced negative results.

Assessment of Effect:

The 2012 Denali Commission project activities include the widening of J Street, installation of a gravel staging area, and construction of a concrete plank boat launch ramp at the southwest corner of the community of Nondalton. Examination of the AHRS database coupled with negative archaeological surveys and verbal consultation with Nondalton elders by DePew (1999) and Ryder (2010) reveals that there are no prehistoric or historic properties within the APE. A Russian Orthodox gravesite exists outside of the southern border of the APE. However, this gravesite is well-marked and site coordinates have been plotted on project maps. The gravesite will not be approached, marred, or altered during site proceedings hence there will be no effect on its integrity. Given these factors, it is the assessment of the Corps that there will be **no historic properties adversely affected** by work in the community of Nondalton. If you have any questions please call me at 753-2690 or Erin Ryder, archaeologist at 753-5670.

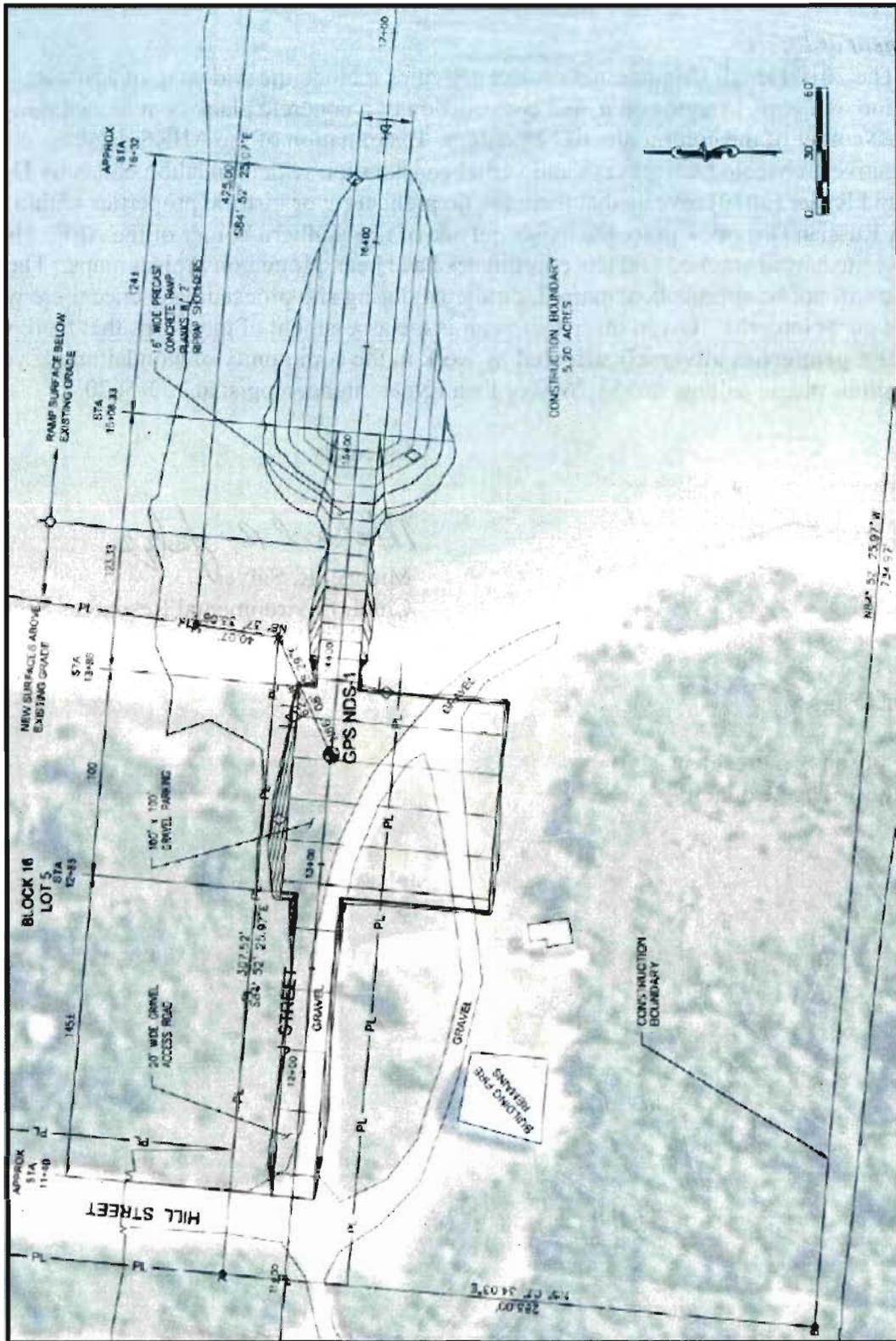
Sincerely,



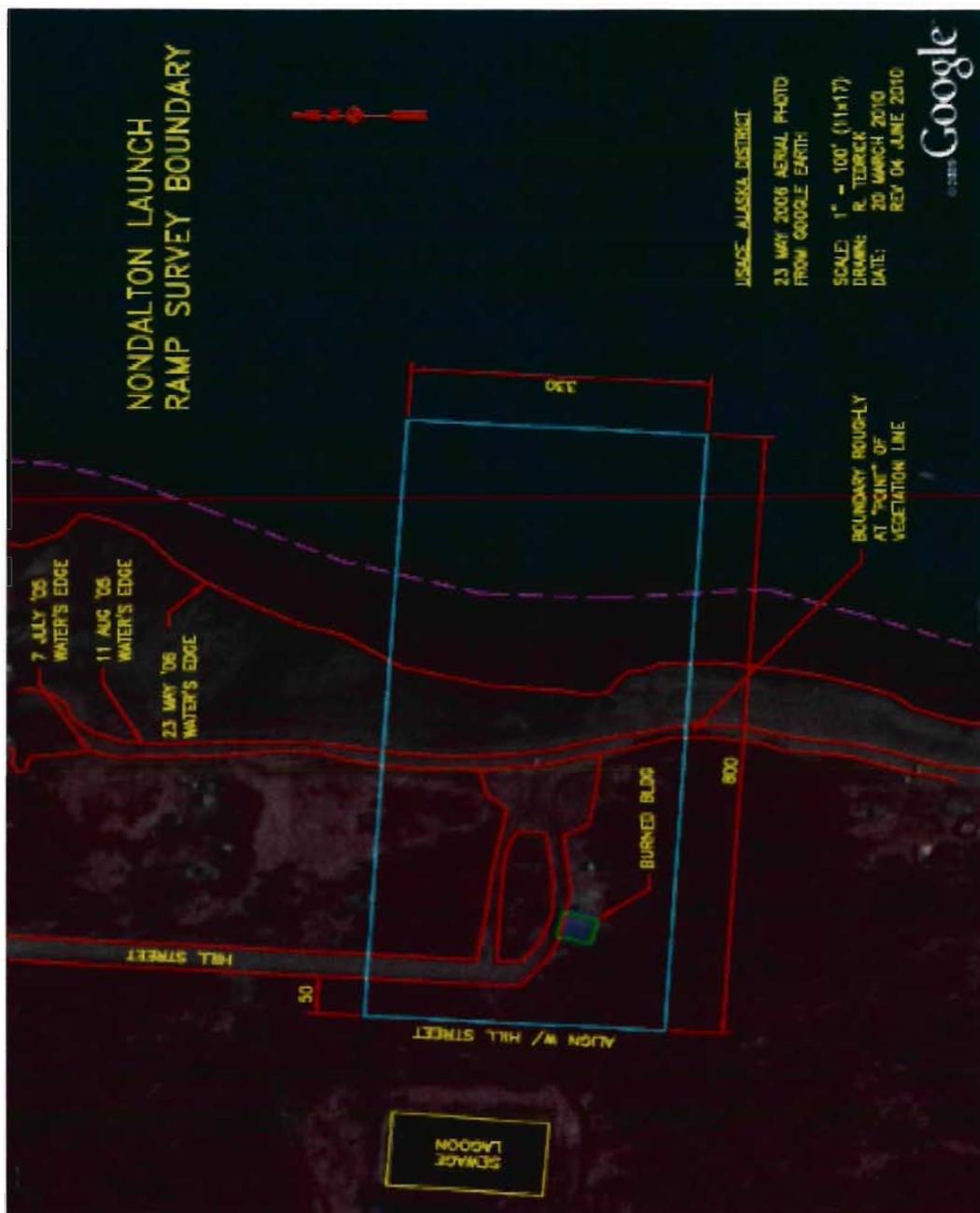
Michael R. Salyer
Chief, Environmental Resources Section

Cf w/ enclosures:

Jackie Hobson Sr., President
Nondalton Village Council



Attachment 1: Plan of Proposed Boat Launch Ramp and Parking Area



Attachment 2: Nondalton Project APE

References:

DePew, Allan. 1999. *1999 Archaeological Survey for the Village of Nondalton, Alaska Water and Sewer Project*. Prepared for the Village of Nondalton. Anchorage. Walking Dog Archaeology. On file at the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, Anchorage.

Ryder, Erin. 2010. *Trip Report Nondalton Dock and Boat Launch Grave Site Inspection*. September 23, 2010. On file at the Alaska District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Trip Report

Nondalton Dock and Boat Launch Grave Site Inspection

September 23, 2010

Participant:

Erin Ryder, EN-CW-ER

Summary:

This trip report documents the site visit to Nondalton, Alaska to assess the proximity of a known grave site to the project area of the AKV291 (326047) Nondalton Dock and Launch Ramp Denali Commission Project.

Photos taken during the site visit are located at:

O:_Projects by Location\Nondalton\AKV291 (326047) Nondalton Dock and Launch Ramp Denali Commission\06 Photos-Maps-Drawings\Photos\Ryder_23SEP2010_Grave Site

Corrected Trimble GeoXH GPS data and GIS shapefiles are located at:

O:\EN\Public\CW\EN-CW-ER\Ryder\Nondalton

Trip Report:

Ms. Ryder traveled to Nondalton via regularly scheduled service with Iliamna Air Taxi. Upon arrival she was met by Fawn Silas, Nondalton Tribal Council (NTC) Acting Administrator & Secretary/Enrollment Clerk who acted as guide for the visit.

City Concerns:

Community members want to ensure the grave site adjacent to the project area remains undisturbed during installation of the dock and boat launch.

Corps Inspection:

The exact location of the grave site was only approximately known so upon arrival in the vicinity a pedestrian survey of the boreal forest was undertaken. The low-lying, uneven terrain exhibited heavy vegetation including blueberry, Labrador tea, mosses and lichen, various grasses, and stands of birch. After a short search a single degraded marker 102 cm in length accompanied by a recent survey stake with flagging was located approximately 83 meters southeast of the remnants of a burned building and 56 meters west of a road running parallel to the shoreline (figures 1 & 2). The marker displayed two graduated-length planks perpendicular to the superior end of the post, characteristic of crosses used by those adhering to Russian Orthodoxy (figure 3). The cross had broken off at the base, likely due to extensive rot, and was lying within a raised mound (approx. 58 meters in circumference) amidst stands of birch (figure 4). There were no additional grave markers visible. There were no surface indications of additional gravesites within the environs. The perimeter of the grave site was marked with flagging tape and coordinates were marked with a Trimble GeoXH 2008 handheld GPS receiver.

As documentation of the grave marker was taking place discussions were held with Charlotte Balluta, Environmental Coordinator; Jackie Hobson Sr., NTC President; Roy Balluta, Nondalton

Community Member; Kristy Jeffries, Environmental Assistant & NTC member; and Nickoli Balluta, Elder and Traditional Chief. Nickolai Balluta noted there was more than one grave in the mound and both graves were from before his time (ca. 1923). Mr. Balluta also recalled that the grave was likely inhabited by Paul Zackar's Great Grandfather who had a last name of Jacko. Jackie Hobson Sr. spent his teen years hunting in the area and observed two graves when passing by, one being from an infant or small child. It was agreed by those present that the graves were likely the resting place of a grandfather and grandchild. No other graves were reported in the immediate area.



Figure 1: Grave Marker, Burned Building, Road



Figure 2: Grave Marker Accompanied by Survey Stake, View North



Figure 3: Overhead view of Russian Orthodox Grave Marker



Figure 4: Survey Stake within Birch Stands

Conclusion:

These graves have been marked with a Russian Orthodox cross. Assuming this symbol was placed at the time of interment a time period for the graves might be discerned from the literature. Lynch (1982) indicates the first Russian Orthodox missionary arrived in the Lake Clark region around 1796. There is little documentation of further missionary activity until the establishment of a mission at Nikolaevskii Redoubt on the Kenai Peninsula in 1845 prompted an increase in missionary visits to the Lake Clark region. Russian Orthodox confessionals and travel reports from 1854 indicate clergy began “baptizing, chrismating, presenting liturgies, taking confessions, and gathering parish statistics” in the village of Kijik (Ellanna and Balluta 1992:294). Nevertheless, Russian Orthodoxy was a nascent trend only becoming more culturally entrenched after the construction of a church in Kijik between 1877 and 1881. In 1902 residents began to move south from Kijik to Old Nondalton, located slightly north of the present village. Inhabitants relocated again to the current site of Nondalton in 1940 where they remain today (VanStone and Townsend 1970). Considering the institution of Russian Orthodox practices in the mid to late 19th century and the established Tanaina village of Kijik on the western shore of Lake Clark north of Old Nondalton and Nondalton it is possible that the individuals in this grave may have been interred as early as the mid 19th century. However, the current village of Nondalton was not established until 1940 so it may be that these individuals were not buried in this location until the current site of Nondalton was occupied. Regardless, the gravesite has been clearly marked, is well outside of the current project area, and has been plotted on project survey maps. Thus, there is no potential for disturbance from the placement of the dock and launch ramp.

References:

Ellanna, Linda J., Andrew Balluta

1992 *Nuvendaltin Quht'ana: The People of Nondalton*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

Lynch, Alice J.

1982 The Historic Tanaina Village of Kijik and the Kijik Archeological District. Anthropology and Historic Preservation Cooperative Park Studies Unit. University of Alaska, Fairbanks Occasional Paper No. 32.

VanStone, James W., Joan B. Townsend

1970 *Kijik: An Historic Tanaina Indian Settlement*. Fieldiana: Anthropology Vol 59, January 16, 1970. Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago.

