

DISTRICT TRIP REPORT

Project: Denali Commission Moorings Points Phase 3 – Kuskokwim River

Description: Napaskiak Trip Report

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George Kalli and Coleman Chalup traveled to Napaskiak, Alaska on September 23rd to conduct a site visit and scoping meeting related to potential installation of barge mooring points in the community. A freight barge landing site, fuel barge landing site, and hovercraft landing site were investigated during the site visit. Forest Jenkins of the Napaskiak Tribe was our escort during the site visit. We also met with Susan Bavilla of the local Native Corporation.

Although requested, a public meeting was not conducted in Napaskiak. In lieu of a public meeting, Forest Jenkins was to escort us and share information regarding our visit with both the local Tribal and city governments.

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

GENERAL INFORMATION

Napaskiak gets 3 – 4 freight barges per year. Crowley, Northland, and Kuskokwim Lighterage all service the village.

Kuskokwim Lighterage uses a smaller, shallower draft barge to access Napaskiak. This is practical since Napaskiak is very close to Bethel

Water levels at Napaskiak are tidally influenced. During our site visit, water levels were low.

Both the barge and freight landing sites are shallow and are only approached at high tide. Barges remaining at the landings outside of optimal high tidal stages are beached by exposed sediment.

Due to the shallow depths, lack of high currents, use of shallow draft barges, and beaching of barges occurring at less than high tides, the level of benefits to be gained by the installation of mooring points may be limited.

We were unable to speak with Phillip Nikolai, general manager of the local Native corporation, during our visit. He may be familiar with barge deliveries to Napaskiak. His phone number is

907-727-7413. We did talk with another employee of the Native Corporation, Susan Bavilla (907-545-2766).

No cultural or archeological concerns were expressed by those we spoke with.

What appeared to be a pile driver was being stored at the landing area during our site visit (Photo 1). Either the local Native Corporation or the Napaskiak Utility Company would know the status of this equipment.



Photo 1: Pile Driver at Freight Landing Staging Area

FREIGHT BARGE LANDING SITE

The landing area is a shallow mud and gravel slope accessing the Napaskiak Slough just upstream of its confluence with the Kuskokwim River near the northeastern end of the airstrip (Photo 2). Tall grasses cover flat river banks both up and downstream from the ramp. There is a line of trees approximately 70 feet back from the high tide line. Beyond this is located a staging area.

According to maps accessed while in the village, this landing site is within an “aviation and hazard easement to DOT&PF.”

Placement of any mooring points at this site should be in the vicinity of the line of trees approximately 70 feet back from the high tide line (Photo 3). If placed close to the trees they

will pose less of a safety hazard and could be above grade installations. From the east the trees are directly adjacent to the access road to the landing site. To the west of the access road, the trees don't begin for 160 feet (Photo 4). Above grade mooring points placed at these two locations where the line of trees start would adequately serve barges that come in nose first to the site.



Photo 2: Freight Barge Landing Area Looking West



Photo 3: Freight Barge Landing Area Looking East. One Mooring Point Could be Placed at Edge of Line of Trees



Photo 4: Freight Barge Landing Area Looking West. One Mooring Point Could be Placed at the Near Edge of the Line of Trees.

FUEL BARGE LANDING SITE

The fuel header is located across the main boardwalk from the slough and to the west of the school (Photo 5).

The fuel barge landing site is located in Napaskiak Slough to the east of the freight landing area and nearly directly north of the school. It is labeled on Figure E25 of the barge landing report as “old landing area.” A smaller slough, which only is submerged during higher tides, must be crossed to access the site from the village (Photo 6).

The area indicated as the landing site was extremely flat and muddy with no current. There were no landmarks to base placement of the mooring points upon, just swamp vegetation (Photos 7 – 8). There was no obvious indication of where past barges had come in to access the site.

There is an obvious landing area located about 600 feet east of the indicated fuel landing site. There were many skiffs beached here (Photo 9). There was a slightly pot-holed and muddy staging area inland from the landing area. It appeared that this site could be a better alternative to the fuel landing site we were shown.

Due to shallow depths, fuel deliveries only occur at high tides.

It can take up to two days to offload the needed fuel and have a high enough tide to be able to leave the site.

Since this site is wide open and along a slough, it is likely a high traffic area, especially in winter. From a safety perspective, below grade mooring points are preferred, however, they would be difficult to locate due to the lack of landmarks and wet and muddy terrain prevalent in the vicinity.

Due to the prevalent shallow depths and proximity to Bethel, Crowley utilizes a skiff sized vessel to deliver fuel to Napaskiak. Mooring points would not greatly improve the efficiency of fuel offloading operations at this site, hence installation of mooring points is not recommended.



Photo 5: Fuel Header



Photo 6: View of Fuel Landing Site from Fuel Header



Photo 7: Looking West from Fuel Barge Landing Site



Photo 8: Looking East from Fuel Barge Landing Site



Photo 9: Barge Landing Site Located East of Fuel Barge Landing Site

HOVERCRAFT LANDING SITE

The hovercraft delivers mail, passengers, and some small freight to Napaskiak.

The hovercraft landing area is a broad, flat, muddy landing with no obvious particular landing spot – there is just a muddy road leading to the river bank that indicates where the hovercraft likely comes in (Photos 10 – 11). It is located on the mainstem of the Kuskokwim River west of the northeastern end of the airstrip.

This site actually has deeper water than the freight landing site but it lacks a suitable upland site to stage and store equipment and freight. With development of an improved landing/staging area, this site could possibly be an improvement upon the existing freight barge landing area.

This landing site is located right near the edge of the “aviation and hazard easement to DOT&PF” noted above.



Photo 10: Looking South from Hovercraft Landing Site



Photo 11: Looking North from Hovercraft Landing Area