

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

NORTHERN REGION PRECONSTRUCTION

FRANK H. MURKOWSKI, GOVERNOR

2301 PEGER ROAD
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99709-5399
TELEPHONE: (907) 451-2243
TDD: (907) 451-2363
FAX: (907) 451-5103

October 11, 2006

RE: Deadhorse Airport ARFF Bay Addition with
Sand Storage
Project No. 61447
Agency Scoping Letter

To Whom It May Concern:

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in cooperation with the Alaska Division of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), is seeking comments and information on a proposal to make improvements to the Deadhorse Airport facilities in Deadhorse, Alaska (Figure 1).

The project would construct a building with three equipment bays and a sand storage bay as well as upgrades to the existing combined Airport Rescue and Firefighting Facility and Snow Removal Equipment Storage Building (ARFF/SREB). To ensure potential impacts of the project are identified and factors to help minimize or avoid impacts are considered, your agency's input at this time is important. Early identification of environmental concerns will facilitate efficient project development.

Existing Facility Description

Deadhorse is accessed by vehicle via the 500+ mile James Dalton Highway or by airplane. The Deadhorse Airport is located five miles south of Prudhoe Bay, off the James Dalton Highway (Figure 1). It is a State-owned asphalt airstrip, 6,500' long by 150' wide.

The Deadhorse Airport operates year-round and provides vital supply and commuter transport services. The airport is essential to work force crew changes and medical evacuations, as well as transport of vital cargo and supplies that can not await overland haul.

The existing ARFF/SREB, shown on Figure 2, is a 164' by 80' building constructed in 2000. This building is a DOT&PF and FAA combined facility.

Purpose and Need

The airport supports jet service and is certified under Federal Aviation Regulations – Part 135. This certification mandates maintenance, firefighting, and security requirements that are ever increasing the demand for manpower and equipment.

The purpose of the project is to upgrade the Deadhorse ARFF/SREB building to accommodate equipment needed to maintain the airport and provide space to store sand and deicing chemicals; space may also be provided to accommodate FAA needs. Currently, several pieces of vital airport maintenance equipment are stored in older buildings away from the airport. Sand and deicing chemicals are stored outside. The sand and deicing chemicals are brought into the heated facility to dry and thaw as needed, and then emptied into the appropriate distribution vehicles.

DOT&PF is also proposing to add rooms for workers, to meet current needs. Wastewater for the workers' facilities is currently stored in a holding tank and then pumped and hauled to a treatment facility.

The inadequate space 1) to store equipment in a single location, 2) for warm storage of sand and deicing chemicals, and 3) for workers' living quarters, combined with the lack of on-site septic facilities, makes maintenance and operations at the airport inefficient and costly.

Proposed Action

The proposed project would construct an 80' by 100' extension of the current ARFF/SREB, connected to the existing building by a corridor. The new building would consist of:

- Three 25' by 80' equipment bays in order to store maintenance equipment in a centralized location
- A 25' by 80' sand/chemical storage bay to enable the storage of sand indoors
- A 175' by 640' gravel pad for snow storage, through traffic, and maneuvering equipment

Additional rooms for workers would also be added to the facility.

Building Pad

This alternative requires a larger footprint than a contiguous expansion (see alternatives considered but dismissed below). However, the existing pad (constructed in the early 1970's) is already well settled, so there would be some risk of differential settlement if a new pad were placed adjacent to it and the building spanned from the old pad to the new. The likelihood of a thaw bulb at the edge of the existing pad increases this risk. The proposed alternative avoids the settlement problem by connecting the new building to the original with a corridor, which would be designed to accommodate any differential settlement between the two foundations. This option also avoids relocation of the airport beacon (and its massive concrete foundation) and associated power and communications utilities.

Domestic Waste Water Disposal

At this time two options for handling the domestic waste water generated by the workers living quarters are under consideration:

- An on-site treatment plant
- (No-Build) Continued use of the holding tank and pump-and-haul operation

The on-site treatment system being considered is a pre-engineered three-chambered unit with different treatment processes occurring in each chamber. The treatment processes include 1) settling, 2) aeration, and 3) UV disinfection and chlorination. When operating within the design parameters, the effluent from the proposed treatment unit would meet or exceed surface water discharge requirements set by ADEC, so that it would not require a leach field for disposal but could be discharged to the surface or into a small infiltration bed. The proposed on-site system is being compared to the existing holding tank/pump/haul operations for cost, reliability, environmental, and land use considerations.

Material Source

Fill material would be obtained from a material source south of the airport (MS 102, shown on Figure 1, Vicinity Map). There is an existing permit for the material site, which is currently being used for expansion of the Deadhorse Airport Safety Area Expansion Project #62644. The COE permit is POA-1984-180-U Beaufort Sea. Modification of the permit currently in progress to accommodate other project work (under #62644) also includes material volumes needed for this SREB building project (#61447).

Alternative Considered but Dismissed

An alternative considered was to expand the existing pad and extend the west end of the building directly, without the corridor spanning the buildings. This alternative was dismissed to avoid the differential settling and airport beacon and utility relocation discussed in the proposed action section.

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative is still under consideration. This would make no changes to the M&O facilities and operations. Equipment, sand, and chemical storage space deficiencies would remain. Deficiencies in housing for workers would remain a challenge, and the expensive pump and haul for wastewater would continue.

Preliminary Research Results

Preliminary research results on environmental resources in the project area are described in Appendix A. A project website has been set up at www.pdcprojects.info to provide project information and allow you to comment.

In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues your agency might have with the proposed project, the links on the website identify agency-specific information that we need from you. Please go to the website and click on your organization to find a list of questions specific to your purview and a link that allows you to provide comments directly to me and our environmental consultant, PDC Inc. Engineers, via e-mail.

To ensure that all factors are considered in the Environmental Assessment, **we request that you send your comments by November 10, 2006.** If you have any questions or require additional

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information, please feel free to contact me, at (907) 451-5129 or by e-mail at Ryan_Anderson@dot.state.ak.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ryan Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "A".

Ryan Anderson
Project Manager

Links: Figure 1 – Project Location and Vicinity Map

Figure 2 – Site Plan

Figure 3 – Typical Section

Appendix A

cc: Mathew Freeman, FAA, Alaskan Region, Northern Region Engineer
Katrina Moss, FAA, Alaskan Region, Northern Region Planner
Andrew Niemiec, Northern Region Director
Howard Thies, Northern Region M&O Director
John F. Bennett, Northern Region ROW Chief
Patricia D. Miller, Northern Region Aviation Design Chief
Becky Iles, Northern Region Airport Leasing Officer
Dwight Stuller, Northern Region M&O Area Manager
Chuck Howe, Northern Region Environmental Coordinator