

# STATE OF ALASKA

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

*NORTHERN REGION PRECONSTRUCTION*

June 6, 2008

Re: Coldfoot Airport Improvements Project

Project No. 60851

**Agency Scoping Letter**

Dear Agency Representative:

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is proposing to complete an erosion control and airport improvements project at Coldfoot. Coldfoot is located approximately 260 miles north of Fairbanks at Milepost 175 on the Dalton Highway. The community lies at approximately 67.26° North Latitude and 150.18° West Longitude. (Section 16, Township 28N, Range 12W, Fairbanks Meridian.) (USGS Quadrangles Wiseman A-1 and B-1) (Refer to Figure 1). Access to Coldfoot is by road along the Dalton Highway and by air. Coldfoot provides the only commercial fuel, lodging, and food services between the Yukon River and Prudhoe Bay. The area is strategically located near the Trans-Alaska Pipeline (TAP) and a major State road maintenance facility. The community also serves as the gateway to the Gates of the Arctic National Park and is home to the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center.

The proposed improvements include protecting the existing Runway Safety Area (RSA) and a portion of the left bank of the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River at the north end of the runway to prevent further erosion and loss of the RSA. The project would reinforce the existing river dike whose installed armor has partially washed away, by building a riprap revetment that will extend a distance of 1,400 feet from the existing revetment upstream. A new gravel surface course would be added to the runway, taxiway and apron and new gravel pads would be constructed to house an automated weather observation system (AWOS), Precision Approach Path Indicators (PAPI's), and runway threshold lights. The project is in the scoping phase of design with construction funding programmed beyond 2008.

### **Existing Conditions**

The existing airport facility consists of a 4,000-foot long by 100-foot wide gravel surfaced runway with a 4,600-foot long and 150-foot wide runway safety area (RSA). The 200-foot by 700-foot aircraft apron is connected to the runway by a 250-foot long by 35-foot wide taxiway within an 80-foot wide safety area. Navigational aids consist of medium-intensity runway and taxiway lights and markers, a rotating beacon, and a lighted wind cone with a segmented circle. There are currently no vertical guidance navigational aids or weather reporting systems, which are required to support instrument approaches. The airport supports only Visual Flight Rules (VFR) operations. This limits aircraft

operations to conditions when the visibility is greater than one mile and the ceilings are greater than 3,000 feet.

### **Purpose and Need**

The Alaska State Troopers base aircraft at this facility to employ security activity and needed medivac and emergency services. The airport is vital to these services, since transport via the Dalton Highway takes up to 8 hours to reach Fairbanks. The airport is also an important facility for hunters and for tourists accessing the nearby Gates of the Arctic National Park. The airport is located adjacent to the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River. The river is rapidly eroding areas adjacent to the north end of the airport and there is an imminent threat of erosion of the RSA in this area. The project will protect and stabilize the riverbank, from the existing riprap area to Slate Creek. In addition to the riverbank stabilization, the airport's gravel surfaces are thin, in need of replenishment and the airport lighting system has outlived its useful life, and needs to be replaced. A PAPI system and AWOS would be added to support instrument approaches.

### **Proposed Action**

The proposed improvements consist of the following (Figure 2):

- Protect the RSA from the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River erosion by constructing a riprap revetment that will extend 1,400 feet to Slate Creek.
- Add a new gravel surface course to the runway and apron.
- Construct new gravel pads for the AWOS, PAPI's, and runway threshold lights.
- Replace existing runway and taxiway lighting systems.
- Expand Taxiway to 50-foot wide gravel surface and a 118-foot wide safety area.

Fill materials for the repairs would be mined from existing, permitted material sites located along the Dalton Highway, near the airport. These material sites are expected to be sufficient to provide the materials needed for the proposed improvements. Materials would be transported to the project area by truck along existing access roads and the Dalton Highway. Staging is expected to occur on previously filled areas at the airport and at the material sites.

### **Preliminary Research Results**

This project is being planned and constructed in compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, and Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898.

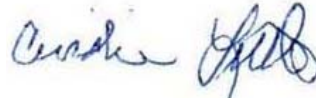
In accordance with Wetlands and Floodplains Executive Orders 11990 and 11988, notice is hereby given that this project may result in wetlands fill. As presently envisioned, no substantial impacts are anticipated as a result of this project.

Preliminary research results on environmental resources in the project area are described in Appendix A. Below is a list of federal, state, and local entities that we are requesting input from. Please click on the organization that you represent. This will take you to a list of questions specific to your purview, as well as a "comments" link that can be used to submit comments electronically.

ADEC	ADF&G	ADNR-POR	ADNR-RAD	ADNR-NRO
ADNR-OPMP	ADNR-OHMP	Air Carriers	BLM	Local and Regional
Organizations City and Village Governments	USACE	USEPA	USFWS	USNMFS

To ensure that all factors are considered in the environmental document, your comments are requested by July 9, 2008. If you have any questions regarding the project feel free to call our environmental consultant, Kristen Hansen, at DOWL Engineers, at 562-2000, or by e-mail at khansen@dowl.com. Comment letters can be sent to Ms. Hansen at 4041 B Street, Anchorage, AK, 99503. Should you have any questions on the design of the proposed project, please contact me at 451-2284 or by e-mail at cindie.little@alaska.gov.

Sincerely,



Cindie Little, P.E., Project Manager  
Northern Region DOT&PF Design

Attachments: Appendix A  
Figure 1 - Location and Vicinity Map  
Figure 2 - Proposed Airport Improvements