

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOR
OIL SPILL CONTINGENCY PLAN ACCESS ROAD

APPLICANT:

ALYESKA PIPELINE SERVICE COMPANY
1835 S BRAGAW STREET
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99512

RIGHT-OF-WAY APPLICATION
~~RF~~ - 035642
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. BPM 92-012

PREPARED BY:

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ALASKA STATE OFFICE
BRANCH OF PIPELINE MONITORING
411 W. 4th AVENUE, SUITE 2B
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501

July 17, 1992

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, ALASKA
BRANCH OF PIPELINE MONITORING (983)

I. NEPA REQUIREMENTS

(A) Introduction

Alyeska Pipeline Service Company (Alyeska) has requested authorization to reopen, resurface, extend, or construct 28 pipeline access roads as part of the Oil Spill Contingency Plan (OSCP), approved by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the State of Alaska on April 3, 1991. The roadwork will be authorized by right-of-way grants under the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act, 97 Stat. 584 (1973). This assessment addresses 1 of the access roads which will involve new construction. The site was field examined in July, 1992.

(B) Issues

BLM staff members have raised the following issues and concerns: (1) potential impacts to wetlands, (2) potential impacts from hazardous and solid wastes, (3) fisheries impacts, and (4) public access.

(C) Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or other Environmental Analyses

The statute that applies to this proposed action is the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act. Alyeska holds a Federal right-of-way grant for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS). The project area is located within the Tiekel Block managed by BLM. The relevant planning document is the Southcentral Management Framework Plan (MFP) approved in 1981. A Resource Management Plan (RMP) which will include the Tsina River area, is being written but has not been published in draft at this time. The proposed action is in conformance with the land use plan as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

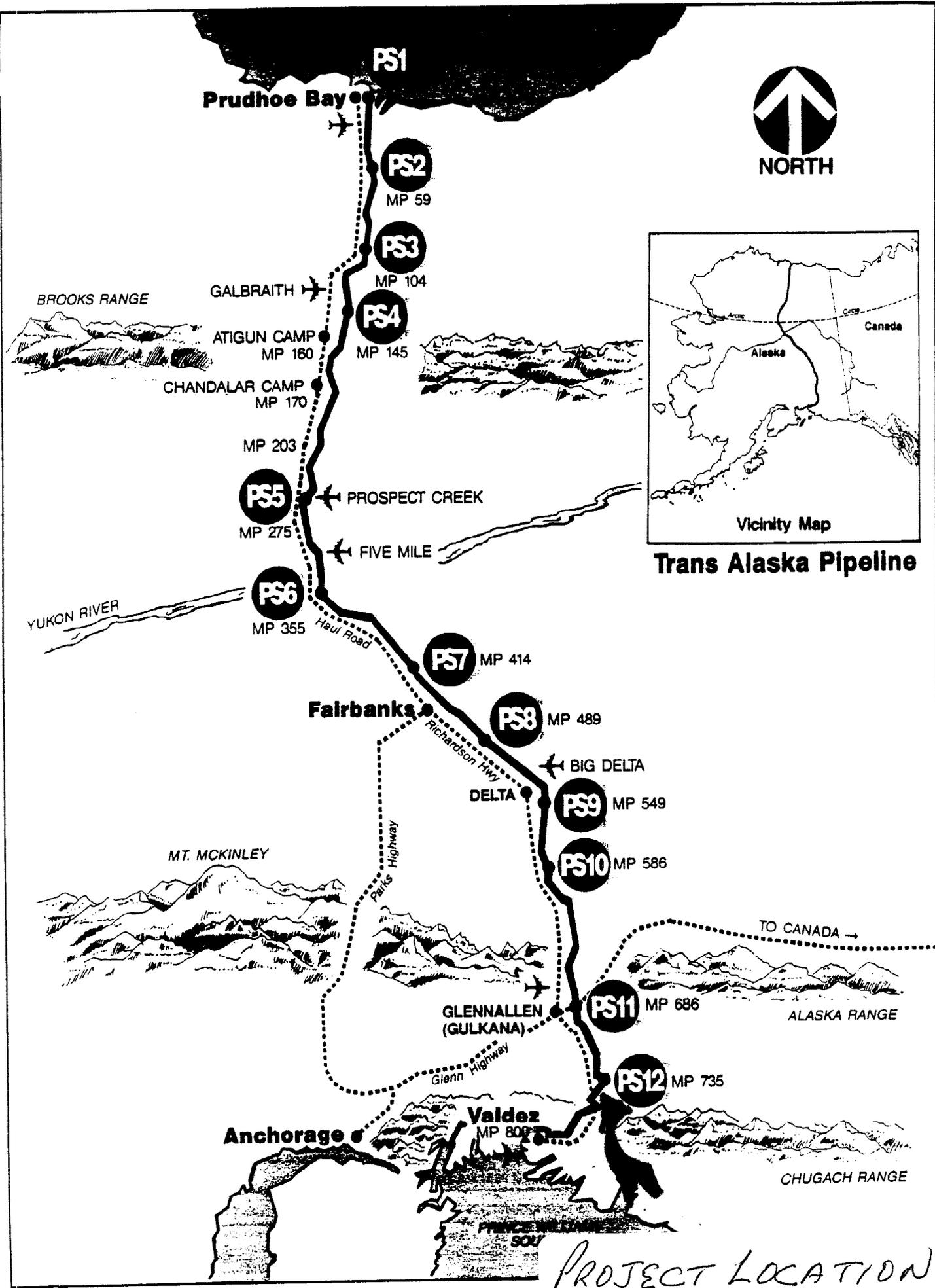
The proposed action is a requirement of Alyeska's Oil Spill Contingency Plan for the TAPS, Stipulation 2.14 of the Agreement and Grant of Right-of-Way for TAPS, and the National Oil And Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan 36 FR 16215, August 20, 1971.

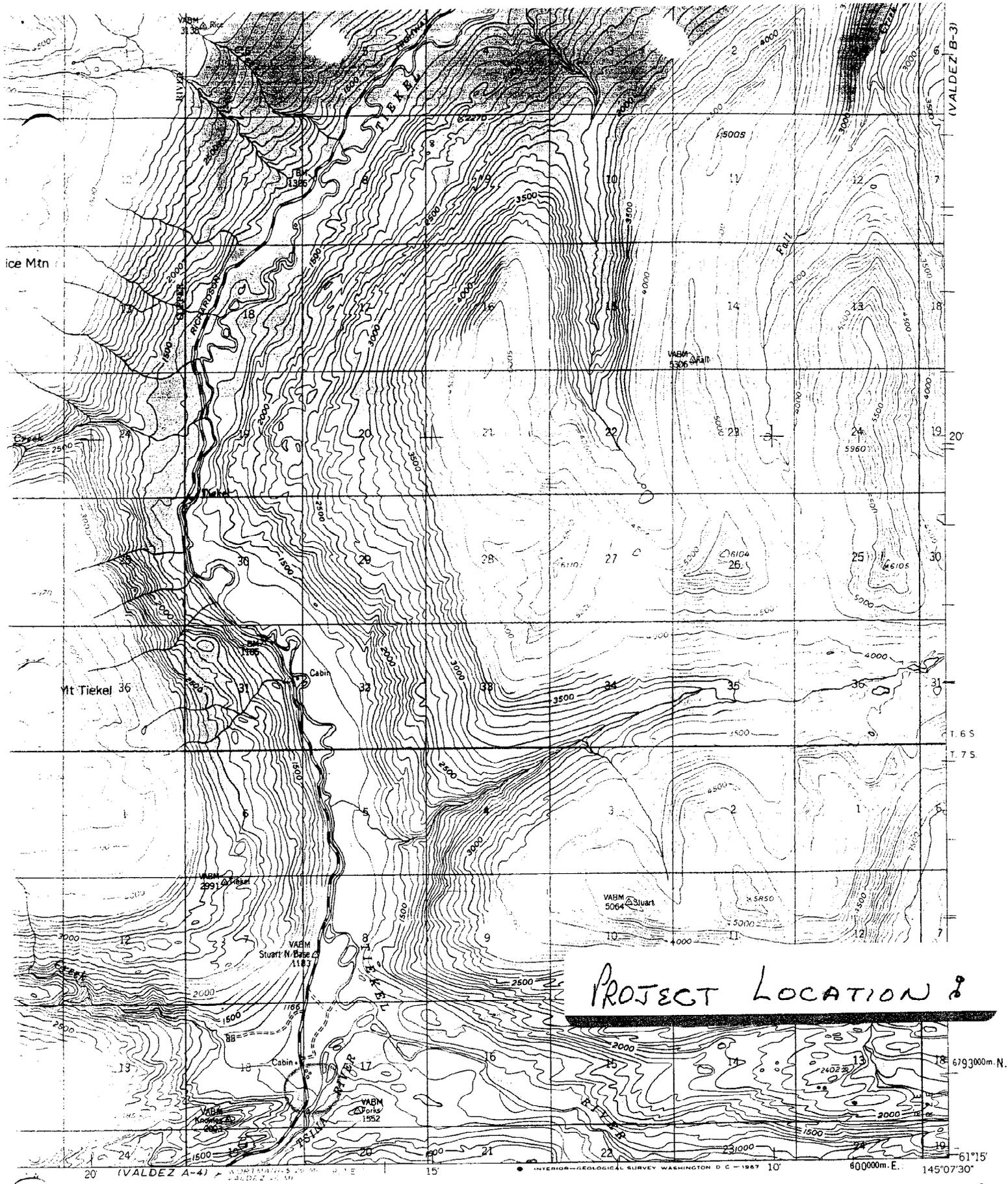
Two environmental impact statements have been completed for separate pipeline projects, each of which cover this application area.

The applicant has applied with The U.S. Army Corps Of Engineers for a permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344) to authorize discharge of fill materials into waters of the United States.

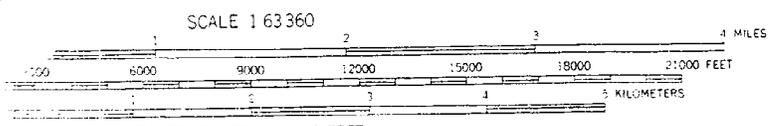
II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

(A) Purpose and Need for Action





PROJECT LOCATION 8



CONTOUR INTERVAL 100 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
 Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt - - - - -
 State Route ———



VALDEZ (B-4), ALASKA

VALDEZ

The proposed action is needed to provide surface access as part of Alyeska's OSCP. This plan consists of General Provisions and 12 Section Plans which delineate specific response actions for spills located between pump stations. Contingency Area Plans, mapped and described in each Section Plan, give response actions for pipeline spill within specific drainages. Containment sites were selected within the 12 Contingency Areas to enable rapid response to oil spills thereby minimizing the amount of oil that could reach sensitive areas. Most of these preplanned sites have been located on small drainages and points of confluence. Permanent vehicle access is needed at the site served by the access road in this right-of-way action.

(B) Proposed Action

The proposed action is construction of a pipeline access road to provide access to a waterway served by a site. The road will link the Richardson Highway to the Tsina River floodplain located in Sections 17 and 18, T. 7 S., R. 1 E., C.R.M. It will be open to public access.

(C) No Action Alternative

The no action alternative would be denying Alyeska's request to utilize the public lands. If the proposed action can be mitigated through standard operating procedures, denying of a permit (no action alternative) would be inconsistent with Bureau policy formulated in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (43 USC 1701). FLPMA directs the Secretary of the Interior to manage the public lands on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

(A) Introduction

The affected environment for the area of the proposed action is discussed in the following documents: Alyeska's Oil Spill Contingency Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System and Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Trans-Alaska Gas System.

The proposed road will be 892 feet in length. The first 260 feet will traverse a former material site adjacent to the Richardson Highway. This segment is level unconsolidated alluvium with scattered trees and shrubs less than eight feet in height. The second segment, roughly 400 to 450 feet in length, travels through a mature forest adjacent to the river floodplain. This is a forested area typical of river margins in the southcentral Alaskan region. It contains mature trees (cottonwood, white spruce, and birch) and shrubs (alder, willow) with relatively sparse understory vegetation (primarily equisetum). This area may experience temporary flooding during extreme high water events. The final segment of the road traverses open floodplain which is sparsely vegetated with shrubs (willow and alder) and dry site riverine plants such as dwarf fireweed (*epilobium latifolium*) and *hedysarum* subspecies.

(B) The following critical elements of the human environment are subject to requirements specified in statute, regulation or Executive Order. These critical elements have been analyzed for the proposed action and no significant impacts are likely to occur:

<u>Critical Elements</u>	<u>May Be Impacted</u>	<u>Can be Mitigated</u>
1. Air Quality	No	
2. ACEC's	No	
3. Cultural and Historic	No	
4. Farmland, Prime or Unique	No	
5. Floodplains	No	
6. Nat. Amer. Rel Concerns	No	
7. Paleontological	No	
8. Threatened/Endangered	No	
9. Visual Resources	No	
10. Waste, Hazardous/Solid	No	
11. Water Quality	No	
12. Wetlands/Riparian Zones	Yes	Yes
13. Wild & Scenic Rivers	No	
14. Wilderness Values	No	

No ACECs are affected.

No known cultural resource sites are located in the immediate project area. Road construction will require overlay of materials after leveling and removal of vegetative matter. No excavation is planned.

Although ADF&G expressed interest in fisheries impacts, field inspection shows that fish habitat will not be affected as the construction will not occur in a waterway nor will it affect drainage on adjacent lands.

Work on the floodplain of the river will consist of grading of the existing surface to level it for vehicle access. This may cause minor loss of vegetation on the floodplain, primarily alder shrubs.

There is no reasonably foreseeable restriction to subsistence activity or effect on the availability or productivity of resources for subsistence use which will result from the proposed action. Substantial benefits to subsistence resources would occur if the site was successful in the rapid containment of spilled oil.

No refueling or storing of hazardous materials would occur on site.

This is not a wilderness area. No wilderness values would be affected by the proposed action.

Road related impacts are further discussed in the Environmental Impact Statement for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. This includes visual resources.

The area may be classified as wetland, and is pending a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determination. Field inspection indicated that the area to be developed includes a developed material site, a forested tract subject to extreme high water flooding and finally a sparsely vegetated gravel floodplain which is also subject to temporary flooding.

The general area has been subject to severe spruce beetle infestation, and the surrounding mature spruce forest is badly damaged. Spruce logs cut and left on the ground can provide critical habitat for beetles thereby affecting surrounding healthy trees.

Not having access to preconstructed containment sites next to the waterways (the no action alternative) may result in extensive environmental damage should an oil spill occur, as response time would be longer. Upgraded access may make the difference of whether or not an oil spill is contained.

(C) Mitigation

1. Prior to commencement of surface disturbing activities, the right-of-way limits, as well as the construction zone limits, shall be staked.
2. The finished width of the road surface shall not exceed 28 feet.
3. This road will be open to public access, and therefore should not be gated.
4. Spruce logs cut during road construction, which are in excess of 4 inches diameter shall be removed from the site to prevent spruce beetle infestation.
5. The road surface will not be raised with gravel fill material on the active floodplain of the Tsina River.
6. If, during the course of construction, or during the life of the right-of-way grant, it is determined that the road or ramp block the flow of water to ponds lying along the perimeter of the Tsina River to the north, the grantee will be required to make changes to the road or provide for drainage as determined by the Authorized Officer.

(D) RESIDUAL IMPACTS

No long term residual impacts are expected to occur.

IV. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Persons and Agencies Consulted.

Stan Bronczyk, BLM BPM (983)
Janelle Eckland, BLM(050)
Gene Keith, BLM (050)
Phil Brna, ADF&G JPO
Gary Stackhouse, USF&WS JPO

V. ANILCA REQUIREMENTS

Section 810 Subsistence Evaluation

This action is not likely to cause any significant restriction to the subsistence resources of the area. The surface disturbance will be confined to a small area, less than one acre in total. At least one-third of the road development will occur on previously disturbed ground in a material site. Public access will be developed, but will be confined by natural features to a very small, specific area, and is unlikely to have an effect on subsistence resources or users.

VI. LOCATION REFERENCES

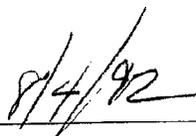
Preliminary design drawing, Access Roads Prudhoe Bay to Valdez Terminal,
Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, 1/92.

G-100 series, Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, Prudhoe Bay to Valdez, sheet 135,
as revised.

Preparer: _____



Date: _____



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT AND DECISION RECORD

Decision: It is my decision to grant a right-of-way to authorize construction of an access road as part of the Oil Spill Contingency Plan. Individual site requirements, including mitigation as necessary, will be incorporated into the Notices to Proceed written for each action. These actions are authorized pursuant to the Pipeline Authorization Act, 87 Stat. 584 (1973). A rental fee based upon fair market value appraisal will be collected for the rights-of-way.

I have selected the proposed action as the environmentally preferred alternative provided with the mitigation measures identified in this environmental assessment.

Finding of No Significant Impact: Based upon the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, I have determined that the impacts on the human environment are not expected to be significant and that an environmental impact statement is not required.

The evaluation and finding done to comply with Section 810 of ANILCA found no significant restrictions to subsistence use.

Rationale for the Decision: The decision to allow this proposed action does not result in undue or unnecessary environmental degradation, will not restrict subsistence activity or resources, and will offer the benefit of watershed protection in the event of an oil spill. The proposed action is necessary to complete the requirements of Oil Spill Contingency Plan.

Chief, Branch of Pipeline Monitoring

Date