



# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Anchorage Field Office  
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## **Sitka Trail Works, Fort Rousseau Causeway Repair – New Landing Site DOI-BLM-AK-A010-2013-0028-DNA**

Case File, AA-93208

### **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

#### **Background**

Sitka Trail Works, Inc. (applicant) has proposed to restore four causeways outside of Sitka, Alaska (Lot 84A, 75A, 78A, and 80A of U.S. Survey 3926). The four causeways were built during World War II and have since deteriorated. In March 2013, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed on this proposed action (DOI-BLM-AK-020-2012-0026-EA). The BLM determined that the proposed action would not have significant environmental impacts and, subsequently, the BLM authorized the requested right-of-way and a barge landing site(s) on the south side of the causeways, in Sitka Harbor.

In June 2013, the applicant amended their application to include a portion of Lot 85A of U.S. Survey 3926 on the north side of the causeway in Whiting Harbor. This amendment was necessary as the landing areas on the south side of the causeway, identified by the applicant in the original Plan of Development (POD), had insufficient draft for the barge landing craft to transport rock material for the project. In the amended POD, the applicant has added a portion of Lot 85A as a proposed barge landing site and intends to land the barge craft to off-load rock at the junction of Lot 85A and Virublennoi Island in Whiting Harbor. No other changes have been made to the POD. (The original and amended PODs are on file at the Anchorage Field Office.)

In addition to the newly requested Lot 85A landing site, the proponent still intends to use several other landing sites on the both Sitka Harbor and Whiting Harbor sides of the causeway. Their requested Sasedni Island landing site is on State land and is therefore beyond the BLM's jurisdiction. The Sitka Harbor landing sites (south-side of causeway) have been previously approved by the BLM.

The March 2013 EA disclosed environmental protection measures; these measures will be included with the right-of-way grant as stipulations. The map of the excluded vessel traffic (an exhibit to the Stipulations) has been revised; it now reflects the new barge landing site as well as the no vessel zone area.

## **Finding of No Significant Impact**

This action and its effects have been evaluated consistent with the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for determining *significance*. Per 40 CFR § 1508.27, a determination of *significance* requires consideration of both context and intensity. The former refers to the relative context in which the action would occur such as society as a whole, affected region, affected interests, etc. The latter refers to the severity of the impact.

### *Context*

The addition of a landing craft site on Lot 85A of U.S. Survey 3926, adds approximately 100 feet to the right-of-way being authorized. The project area is essentially the same, but the landing site to off load the rock material for causeway repair is different. No *Didemnum Vexillum* (D. Vex) is known to occur on the new barge landing area. The new landing area is on the north side of Whiting Harbor at the confluence of Lot 85A and Virublennoi Island.

### *Intensity*

#### *1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The new landing area will provide an opportunity to achieve project goals which is to repair the causeways. The causeways form a barrier to keep the known infestation of D. Vex within Whiting Harbor and out of Sitka Sound.

#### *2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.*

The proposed action will allow causeway repairs, add to recreational opportunities, and isolate the known D. Vex infestation. Therefore, overall, this project will benefit public health and safety.

#### *3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

The project area has been identified as a State Park by the State of Alaska (Fort Rousseau State Historical Park). The causeways that are being repaired connect to the State-owned island that contain World War II artifacts and provide the public with valuable recreation and interpretation opportunities.

#### *4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The environmental effects on the human environment are known and have been analyzed in the EA prepared for the original proposal. There are no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks associated with having a new landing area. The D. Vex is not known to occur on the new landing site and environmental protection measures have been incorporated to prevent the spread of D. Vex into new locations.

5. *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The possible environmental effects on the human environment are known and have been analyzed in an EA prepared. There are no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks associated with the additional barge landing area.

6. *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The new barge landing area being proposed as an amendment to the application filed by the applicant will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The right-of-way amendment will add a new barge landing area and approximately 100 feet of additional right-of-way footprint and is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

8. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

The right-of-way amendment allowing for a new barge landing site area will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

9. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

The right-of-way amendment will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

10. *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The right-of-way amendment does not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

## Conclusion

Therefore, on the basis of the information contained in the EA (DOI-BLM-AK-020-2012-0026-EA), and all other information available to me, it is my determination that:

1. None of the environmental effects identified meet the definition of significance as defined by context and intensity considerations at 40 CFR § 1508.27;
2. The alternatives are in conformance with the Record of Decision for the Ring of Fire Approved Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (March 2008); and
3. The Proposed Action and alternatives do not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment.

Therefore, neither an Environmental Impact Statement nor a supplement to the existing EA is necessary and neither will be prepared.

*/s/ Alan Bittner*

July 5, 2013

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Alan Bittner  
Anchorage Field Manager

Date

## Attachments

1. Determination of NEPA Adequacy, DOI-BLM-AK-A010-2013-0028-DNA, including attachments