

# City and Borough of Sitka

100 Lincoln Street • Sitka, Alaska 99835

---

March 30, 2010

MEMO TO: Jim Dinley, Municipal Administrator  
Mayor and Assembly

FROM: Marlene Campbell, Government Relations Director (Coastal Management  
Coordinator)

SUBJECT: Status of Airport Safety Enhancement Projects at Sitka Airport

Administrator Dinley requested I provide a summary of the airport improvement projects which have survived the Federal Environmental Impact Statement review and are now beginning the review process for consistency with the Alaska Coastal Management Program. These projects are:

- Additional Runway Safety Areas
- Expanded Partial Parallel Taxiway
- Relocated Seaplane Pullout

The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF) plans to begin construction of the Runway Safety Area in FFY 2010. This is a large project with a preliminary budget of \$43 million, primarily funded through Federal Airport Improvement Project (AIP) funds. All in-water work to extend the runway runout area would be constructed at the end of runway 29. The Parallel Taxiway and Seaplane Pullout projects would be designed, funded, and constructed in the future.

Attached for your information is a Project Summary of the Sitka Airport Safety Improvement Projects, as well as a Projects Overview drawing. If you have any questions, please contact me at 747-1855 phone or [campbell@cityofsitka.com](mailto:campbell@cityofsitka.com) e-mail.

**Project Summary**  
**Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport, Sitka, Alaska**  
**Sitka Airport Safety Improvement Projects**

ADOT&PF Project No. 69298

March 5, 2010

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) proposes construction of three safety enhancement projects at the Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport: a Runway Safety Area (RSA), a Partial Parallel Taxiway, and a Seaplane Pullout. RSA construction would begin during FFY 2010. The parallel taxiway and seaplane pullout ramp would be designed, funded, and constructed in the future.

The DOT&PF requests U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approval to discharge up to 804,035 cubic yards of fill material over as many as 3.60 acres of intertidal marine areas, 13.41 acres of subtidal marine areas, and 0.07 acres of wetlands (Table 1) to complete the three safety enhancements. Identified project impacts include burial of approximately 3,063 feet of shoreline (Table 2) but only a net loss of 2,223 feet. There would be a permanent loss of 10.28 acres of Waters of the United States (Table 3). The three completed projects would fill 14.51 acres of Waters of the United States (Table 4). The safety enhancement projects would create 170 feet of shoreline, one acre of intertidal rocky habitat, and 5.8 acres of subtidal rocky habitat. A summary of the acreages affected is provided.

Project	Acreage of Section 404 Jurisdiction	Acreage of Section 404/10 Jurisdiction	Acres habitat affected	Acres habitat lost	Ending habitat acreage
RSA	0.14	10.17	10.31	3.51	6.8
Taxiway	0.74	5.59	6.33	6.33	0
Seaplane Pullout	71 sq ft	0.44	0.44	0.44	0
Total	0.89	16.39	17.08	10.28	6.8

The DOT&PF also proposes a transfer of property rights from the United States government to the State of Alaska for selected land parcels that are necessary for existing and future aviation and airport uses.

Background

The Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport is located in the City and Borough of Sitka, on Japonski and Charcoal Islands, in Township 55S, Range 63E, Section 34, and Township 56S, Range 63E, Sections 2, 3 and 4, at Latitude 57.047444 N and Longitude 135.360611 W.

ADOT&PF and the Federal Aviation Administration initiated an EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) process in 2004 to consider aviation safety improvements to Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport. The *Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport Aviation Safety Enhancements Record of Decision* (ROD), September 28, 2009, selected a runway safety area, a taxiway extension, and a seaplane pullout for construction. The ROD also selected land transfer alternatives for land occupied by current and proposed airport facilities. Considerable information about the project is available online, at <http://sitkaeis.com>.

Compensatory mitigation for the runway safety area, taxiway extension, seaplane pullout projects would be completed separately. Tables 1 through 4 include the taxiway extension and seaplane pullout projects to illustrate cumulative impacts of the three safety improvement projects.

#### Project Description, Runway Safety Project

The Department proposes creation of a 280-foot landmass to extend Runway end 29 (southern end) of Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport into Middle Channel. The project includes a number of components that do not affect Waters of the United States, including paving existing uplands on both ends of the runway, reconfiguring existing lighting, and installing new lighting. Construction of the RSA is planned for FFY 2010, and paving, lighting, and striping is planned for FFY 2011.

The 280-foot Runway end 29 RSA landmass extension would require approximately 342,755 cubic yards of shot rock embankment and 126,695 cubic yards of armor rock. All seaward-facing slopes would be armored to protect the embankment from erosion. The RSA extension requires embankment construction mainly in subtidal marine waters to depths of 90 feet below Mean Lower Low Water.

In order to create a surface above the High Tide Line, approximately 1.16 acres of intertidal marine areas and 9.15 acres of subtidal marine areas would be buried with fill material (Table 1). Approximately 670 feet of coastline (as measured at the plane of Extreme Low Water, or ELW) and 3.51 acres of Waters of the United States would be eliminated, although 840 feet of coastline would be created (as measured at ELW) (Tables 2 and 3). Approximately one acre of intertidal rocky habitat and 5.8 acres of subtidal rocky habitat would be created by the project.

The DOT&PF design for the RSA uses a thicker layer of armor rock to better withstand coastal erosion, and the design includes a “buffer” to accommodate any rock that does not fall into place after being dumped from the transport barge. Consequently, the number of acres and length of shoreline affected by the proposed project described in the USACE permit application is different than described in the ROD.

The anticipated source of fill material for the RSA project is near Sawmill Cove (Township 56S, Range 63E, Section 4), on land owned and managed by the City and Borough of Sitka and the

DOT&PF. If this site is developed and used, the activity would be conducted pursuant to an existing conditional use permit for the site. Ephemeral streams would be placed in culverts under the quarry access road. This activity would be permitted under a USACE nationwide permit for minor discharge (NWP-18). Quarried material would be loaded onto barges at an existing barge loading facility at Sawmill Cove Industrial Park (4600 Sawmill Creek Road, Township 56S, Range 63E, Section 3) and then transported to the RSA construction site.

To minimize impacts, construction of the RSA embankment would include creating a riprap dike along the perimeter of the RSA fill zone. This dike would contain the core rock fill and prevent soft bottom sediments from being released into the water column or pushed out into the surrounding marine habitat. Core rock fill would be dumped into the area contained by the riprap dike. After the core rock has reached the height of the surrounding dike, another layer of riprap would be placed to increase the height of the dike. In this manner, the dike and core rock fill would be built up in subsequent layers until the desired height is reached.

#### Partial Parallel Taxiway Extension

At some future date, a 118-foot wide partial parallel taxiway would be designed and constructed across the Airport Lagoon to extend the taxiway 2,330 feet to Charcoal Island. At Charcoal Island, a connector taxiway would link the runway and the parallel taxiway extension.

Some of the discharge needed to construct the taxiway extension is authorized by existing Department of the Army permit PAO-1998-17-O, Sitka Sound 265, which allows DOT&PF to discharge waste fill material into 10-acres of the 17-acre Airport Lagoon to reduce a bird strike hazard at the airport.

The additional authorized fill area needed to complete the taxiway fill is 0.07 acres of fringe wetland, 2.20 acres of existing intertidal armor rock, and 1.82 acres of natural bottom habitat (total of 6.33 acres of Waters of the United States below the Extreme High Water (EHW)). The taxiway extension would result in the permanent alteration of approximately 2,293 feet of shoreline. When combined, the proposed taxiway extension and the activity authorized by POA-1998-17-O would completely fill Airport Lagoon.

The source of fill for the taxiway extension is not identified, but is expected, in part, to be the same quarry that would supply rock to the RSA project. The project would use Best Management Practices (See Appendix) to minimize adverse impacts.

#### Seaplane Pullout Relocation

A new seaplane pullout would be constructed at some future date on the southeast side of Charcoal Island, and the current seaplane pullout would be abandoned. Moving the activity to

Charcoal Island would reduce the potential for safety compromises on the runway and taxiway, and eliminate the need for airport personnel to provide escorts to vehicles accessing the seaplane pullout and moving aircraft to and from the pullout.

The proposed pullout ramp would be about 200 feet long and 40 feet wide, with a slope between 6:1 and 10:1, and a submerged depth of ten feet at the toe. Construction of the new seaplane pullout would require approximately 1115 cubic yards of fill, primarily in the intertidal area. About 100 cubic yards of material over an area of about 0.28 acre would be dredged in the toe area of the ramp. The Charcoal Island seaplane pullout would affect approximately 0.44 acres of natural bottom habitat and result in the loss of approximately 100 feet of shoreline.

Neither the source of fill for the proposed seaplane pullout nor the disposal site for the dredged material has been identified. The material source and the disposal site would be appropriately permitted before construction. The project would use Best Management Practices (See Appendix) to minimize adverse impacts.

#### Project Schedule

ADOT&PF anticipates RSA construction would begin during the summer of 2010 and continue for two years. Only preliminary design work has been completed for the parallel taxiway and seaplane pullout projects. The permit modification request, as detailed on the ENG Form 4345 application form, provides specific information for the RSA and only general information for the other two projects selected by FAA's ROD. The other two safety projects are likely to be designed and constructed during the following five years.

---

#### Conservation Measures

The ROD commits to protecting marine environments during periods of high ecological sensitivity, and especially, to protection of out-migrating salmon smolts:

- No work would be allowed in the marine environments near the Airport during periods of high ecological sensitivity.
- Work would be restricted between approximately mid-March and the end of May to protect spawning herring and other marine species present for this annual event, including species protected under the Endangered Species Act.
- This timing restriction would minimize construction impacts on spawning herring and out-migrating salmon smolts. The actual start and finish of the spring timing window may shift to accommodate earlier or later herring spawns.

The ROD also commits to protection of birds and bird nests during the breeding and nesting:

- Vegetation clearing associated with any of the projects would not occur during avian breeding and nesting season to avoid the destruction of nests or eggs to comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

### Land Transfer

The DOT&PF would acquire property rights to ensure the State of Alaska has sufficient interest in the area to safely and efficiently operate and improve the airport. The proposed land transfer would transfer property rights for selected parcels from the Federal Government to the State of Alaska for management by the DOT&PF. Long-term lease or easement agreements would be developed for other parcels.

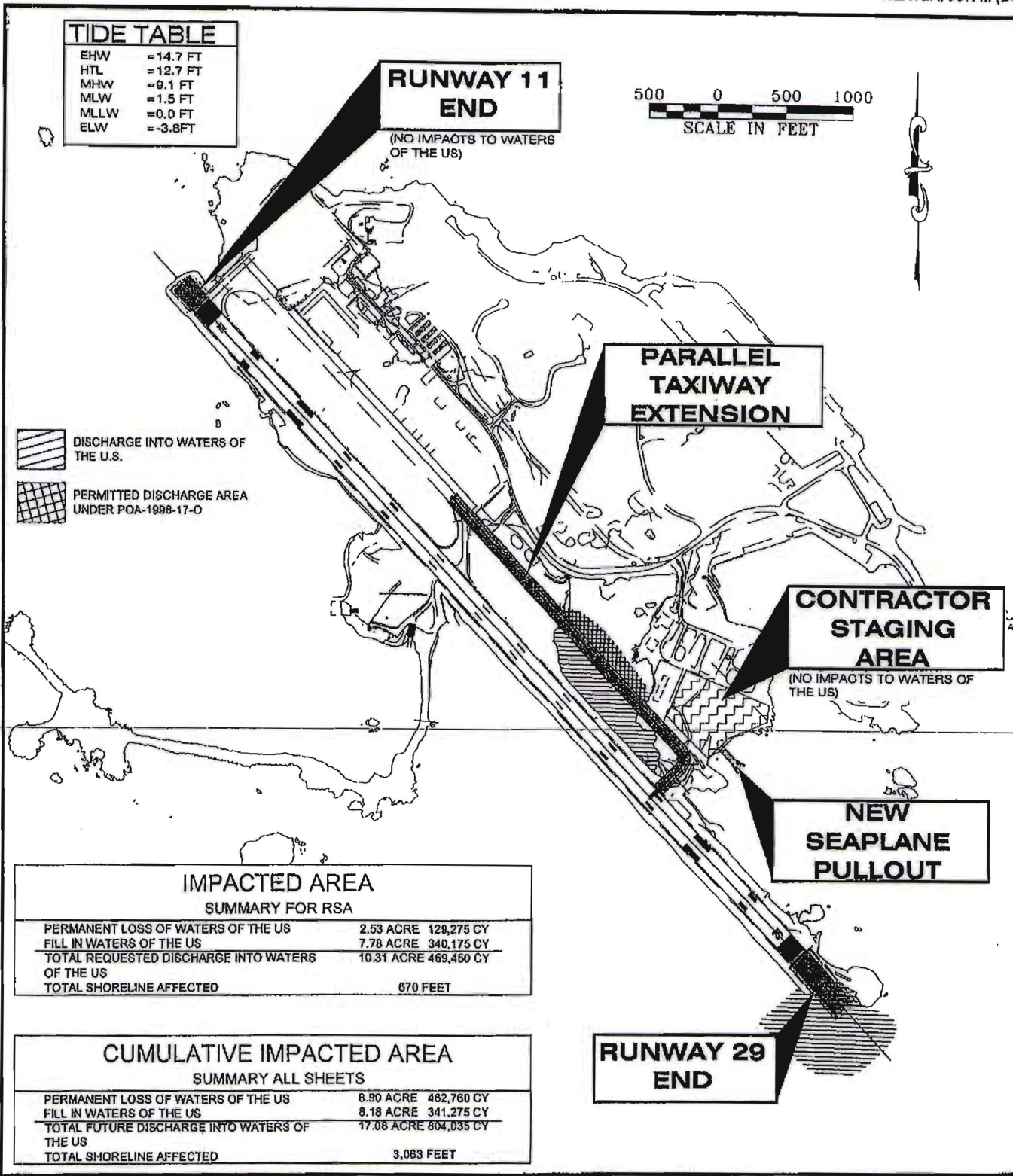
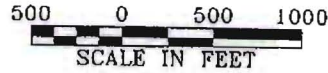
### Permitting Considerations

The safety improvement projects require authorization from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Department of Environmental Conservation; an ACMP consistency finding is also required. The ACMP, DEC, and USACE reviews would occur concurrently.

Mitigation statements for each safety enhancement project supplement this permit application to the USACE; however, DOT&PF would provide compensatory mitigation for the partial parallel taxiway and the seaplane pullout when those projects are funded. The ROD commits the DOT&PF to a monitoring plan for the RSA project. That plan would be developed as part of the required mitigation plan for that project.

The FAA and the DOT&PF are committed to avoiding and minimizing potential environmental impacts to the greatest extent practicable, and the ROD adopts a number of mitigative measures that apply to all three projects (See: Appendix).

TIDE TABLE	
EHW	=14.7 FT
HTL	=12.7 FT
MHW	=9.1 FT
MLW	=1.5 FT
MLLW	=0.0 FT
ELW	=-3.8 FT



**ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS:**  
SEE SHEET 8

**WATER BODIES:**  
SITKA SOUND      MIDDLE CHANNEL  
WESTERN CHANNEL      EASTERN CHANNEL  
SAWMILL COVE      SILVER BAY

**SITKA A/P IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS OVERVIEW**

ALASKA STATE DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION  
AND PUBLIC FACILITIES  
DESIGN & ENGINEERING SERVICES DIVISION  
SOUTHEAST REGION

**LOCATION DESCRIPTION**  
AT: SITKA, ALASKA  
LOCATED IN: TOWNSHIP|RANGE|SECTION  
65S|63E|34;56S|63E|2;  
56S|63E|3  
C.R.M.  
LAT N 57.047444' LONG W 135.360611'  
DATE: FEBRUARY 2010 SHEET 2 OF 8