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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Sitka National Historical Park  
Russian Bishops House Property

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## **City of Sitka Monastery Street Right-of-Way Permit**

### **Environmental Assessment**

**July 2011**

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## **Note to Reviewers**

If you wish to comment on this document, you may mail comments to:

Craig Smith  
Sitka National Historical Park  
103 Monastery Street  
Sitka, AK 99835

You may also comment online. Go to <http://parkplanning.nps.gov> and retrieve this document on the website to provide comments electronically.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including the personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee we would be able to do so.

Cover Photograph: Monastery Street

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## **PURPOSE AND NEED**

The City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) has applied to the National Park Service (NPS) for a right-of-way permit to construct and maintain a sidewalk and two storm drains adjacent to Monastery Street on the western edge of the Russian Bishop's House property (RBH Property) in Sitka National Historical Park (Figure 1). The permit would allow drainage improvements in the northwestern and southwestern corners of the RBH Property and a sidewalk along the western edge of the property.

The permit is needed for the Monastery Street Water and Sewer Improvements Project which consists of installation of new water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer utilities; curb and gutter; sidewalk and pavement for Monastery Street. Monastery Street is 12 feet wide and would need to be widened to accommodate the project. The permit would allow the necessary widening. The primary purpose of the project is to address public health concerns by relocating the water and sewer systems which do not currently comply with Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation required separation distances.

A concrete gutter across the back of the RBH Property currently directs runoff onto Monastery Street, where it likely contributed to the significant deterioration of the asphalt pavement surface. Water draining across the street freezes in the roadway during winter, posing a hazard to vehicles and pedestrians. Should the valley gutter remain as is, runoff would continue to spill onto the street causing accelerated deterioration of the new asphalt pavement and leading to continued icing of the roadway during winter. The construction of a sidewalk along the eastern side of Monastery Street would improve public safety, particularly for school children walking to and from Baranof Elementary School, by providing a sidewalk so that pedestrians no longer have to walk in the roadway.

This environmental assessment (EA) analyzes the preferred alternative, a no-action alternative and related impacts. This EA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9).

### **Statute, Regulations, and Policy**

**Statute:** Title 40 United States Code Section 1304 (40 USC 1304) provides NPS authority to issue a Right-of-Way Permit (permit) for the sidewalk. Title 16 United States Code Section 79 (16 USC 79) provides the NPS with authority to issue permits for storm drains. The permit would be issued in accordance with the regulations at Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 14 (36 CFR 14). NPS policy limits permits to a ten-year term and are renewable. Because this is a municipally operated project, there would be no charge for the use and occupancy of the property.

**Management Policies:** In addition to determining the environmental consequences of implementing the preferred and other alternatives, NPS *Management Policies 2006* (section 1.4) requires analysis of potential effects to determine whether or not proposed actions would impair a park's resources and values.

An impact on any park resource or value may, but does not necessarily, constitute impairment. An impact would be more likely to constitute impairment to the extent that it affects a resource or value whose conservation is:

- necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park, or
- key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park, or
- identified in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents as being of significance.

The determination of impairment for the preferred alternative is found in Appendix A.

## ALTERNATIVES

**Alternative A, No Action.** A right-of-way across the western boundary of the Russian Bishop's House Property would not be issued to the City of Sitka. Pedestrian traffic would continue along the present Monastery Street roadway and the adjacent gravel. Water would continue to drain into Monastery Street from the valley gutter along the northern edge of the Russian Bishop's House Property, resulting in icing of the roadway during winter.

**Alternative B, Grant Right-of-Way Permit for Monastery Street Improvements (Preferred Alternative).** A right-of-way permit would be issued to the City of Sitka to construct a sidewalk along the eastern side of Monastery Street across the western edge of the Russian Bishop's House Property and drainage improvements in the northwestern and southwestern corners of the property (Figure 2).

The sidewalk would run northerly along Monastery Street for the full length of the property. It would abut an existing wooden fence on the property. The fence would not be disturbed or relocated during construction. Design of the new sidewalk would be determined in collaboration between park staff, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and CBS. It would comport with the historic nature of the property. The sidewalk would be about 137 feet long and six feet wide. About 4.6 feet of the sidewalk width would be on the RBH Property; the remainder would be off the property and within the CBS's Monastery Street right-of-way. On the property, the total area of the sidewalk would be approximately 625 square feet. Total depth of sidewalk excavation would be 24 inches.

At the northwest corner of the property two 4-inch pipes would be installed to connect the concrete channel to the flowline of the new curb and gutter on Monastery Street. The pipes would collect runoff water from the end of a NPS-owned concrete valley gutter which runs along the northern boundary of the property and drain it under the sidewalk to the curb of Monastery Street (Figure 3). The total excavation depth would be approximately 1 foot. The area needed for the storm drain is approximately 5 by 7 feet occupying a total area of about 35 square feet.

On the southwest corner of the property, the existing 12 inch diameter corrugated metal pipe storm drain which crosses the corner of the parcel would be removed to be replaced with a

slightly realigned 12 inch PVC pipe. This new PVC pipe would direct the storm water runoff to a new underground Oil/Grit Separator. Half of the man hole cover for the separator would be on NPS administered lands within the sidewalk along Lincoln Street. The excavation for this structure would be shored up so as to not impact the existing Bishop's house fence. The required excavation depth is assumed to be 1 foot below the bottom of the structure. The area needed for the storm drain is a triangle measuring approximately 8 feet by 12 feet occupying an area of approximately 48 square feet. Figure 4 is an overhead view of the storm drain.

Work on the Monastery Street Water and Sewer Improvements Project would begin in August 2011. Completion is expected by October 2011. The storm drains would be installed before the sidewalk.

### **Mitigation Measures**

**Cultural Resources:** In order to minimize any impact on cultural resources NPS and City of Sitka would work together to develop a side walk that is historically consistent with other structures on the property.

If previously unknown Cultural Resources are encountered the appropriate cultural personnel and/or Park superintendent will be notified, work will pause or stop, assessments will be made and mitigation taken, etc., according to the Secretary of the Interior standards as set forth in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

### **Alternatives Considered But Dismissed from Further Consideration**

Constructing the sidewalk on the western side of Monastery Street was deemed impractical because the current street right-of-way is very narrow, and the roadway would need to shift east onto the RBH Property to allow room for sidewalk on the western side of the street. NPS owns property on both sides of Monastery Street. A sidewalk on the west side of the street would also impact NPS property. Students would have to cross Monastery Street to use a sidewalk on the western side of the street.

## **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

The Russian Bishop's House Property is located at the corner of Lincoln and Monastery Streets in Sitka Alaska (Figure 1). The Russian Bishop's House buildings and grounds are part of the Russian Bishop's House National Historic Landmark, which includes the restored Russian Bishop's House and the Old School on the eastern side of Monastery Street and The Priest's Quarters, another building on the western side of Monastery Street. The site's features are managed as a cultural landscape to preserve the historical integrity of the site. They are actively interpreted through guided tours and on-site informative displays for the enjoyment and education of the public.

The western and northern elevations (as well as the eastern and southern) of the Russian Bishop's House have a replica, elevated wooden boardwalk running parallel to their base.

Beyond the boardwalk is a non-historic grassy lawn about 3 feet wide ending at a wooden fence (also non-historic.) Beyond the fence, lies about 3-4 feet of graveled alleyway. The majority of the proposed construction would take place in this ally way along the western side of the Bishop's House fence. At the northwestern and southwestern corners of the property construction with excavation is proposed. Both of these areas are previously disturbed and have little likelihood of archeological recovery.

There is a concrete valley gutter along the northern boundary of the RBH Property that captures drainage from the property north of the RBH and drains out into Monastery Street. In the winter, this drainage results in a sheet of ice covering sections of the street. There is a concrete sidewalk along the southern boundary of the property on Lincoln Street. No sidewalk is present along the western boundary of the property on Monastery Street. In this area pedestrians either walk in the gravel where the proposed sidewalk would be constructed or walk in the paved portion of Monastery Street.

Because the RBH is located in the City of Sitka no natural or subsistence resources are located on the property.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

### **Impacts of Alternative A (No-Action)**

*Public Safety:* The current problems of drainage across the roadway, roadway icing in winter, and pedestrian safety would continue under this alternative.

Pedestrians would be forced to continue to walk in the roadway, which would remain too narrow to accommodate a sidewalk. Icing due to freezing of water draining across Monastery Street from the concrete gutter would continue to be hazard for vehicles and pedestrians.

*Cultural Resources:* Cultural resources of the RBH Property would not be affected.

### **Impacts of Alternative B (Grant Right-of-Way Permit for Monastery Street Water and Sewer Improvements)**

*Public Safety:* Water from the concrete gutter at the northern end of the RBH Property would drain through an underground pipe into a catch basin, preventing the water from draining across the roadway of Monastery Street and greatly reducing wintertime icing of Monastery Street, which improves public safety. Pedestrian safety would be greatly increased by the provision of an improved walkway along Monastery Street. Pedestrians would no longer be forced to use the street to access the Baranof School and other from Lincoln Street. The project would also improve public safety, particularly for school children walking to and from Baranof Elementary School, by providing a sidewalk along the east side of Monastery Street.

*Cultural Resources:* The loss of the strip of land to create the Alternative B right-of-way would have a conditional No-Adverse Effect {36 CFR 800.5(b)} on the Russian Bishop's House

*National Historic Landmark. This determination is made through analysis of the landscape as contributing to the historic significance of the property. However, archeological monitoring would lessen the chance of adverse effect to the archeological resources and a negative impact to the cultural landscape by ensuring that the new sidewalk would be historically consistent with other structures on the property.*

## **CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

Park staff held conference calls with the City of Sitka Engineer on several occasions, met with him on July 18, 2011, and exchanged numerous emails to discuss the proposed project and right of way. The city provided drawings illustrating the project and the proposed right of way.

The Park archeologist held five conference calls with the Alaska SHPO during the months of May through July 22, 2011, describing the project, the historic property, previous investigations, and the recommended conditions for a No Adverse Effect recommendation. SHPO concurred by phone but requires reports and documentation of elements discussed during phone conversations between Park Archeologist, Ana Dittmar, Ph.D., and SHPO Architectural Historians, Summer Rickman and Doug Gasek; SHPO Archeologist, Shina duVall. NPS Regional Archeologist Ted Birkedal and Regional Historian Janet Clemens were also consulted.

## **PREPARERS**

### **National Park Service**

#### **Sitka National Historical Park**

Craig S. Smith, Natural Resource Specialist

#### **Alaska Regional Office**

Glen Yankus, Environmental Protection Specialist

Martin Hansen, Reality Specialist

## **LITERATURE CITED**

National Park Service. 2011. Sitka National Historic Park 106 Compliance, National Historic Preservation Act, as amended" NPS-Sitka N.H.P.; 103 Monastery Street; Sitka, AK 99835.

## **Appendix A: Impairment of Park Resources**

A determination of impairment is made for each of the resource impact topics carried forward and analyzed in the environmental impact statement for the preferred alternative. The description of park significance in chapter 1 was used as a basis for determining if a resource is:

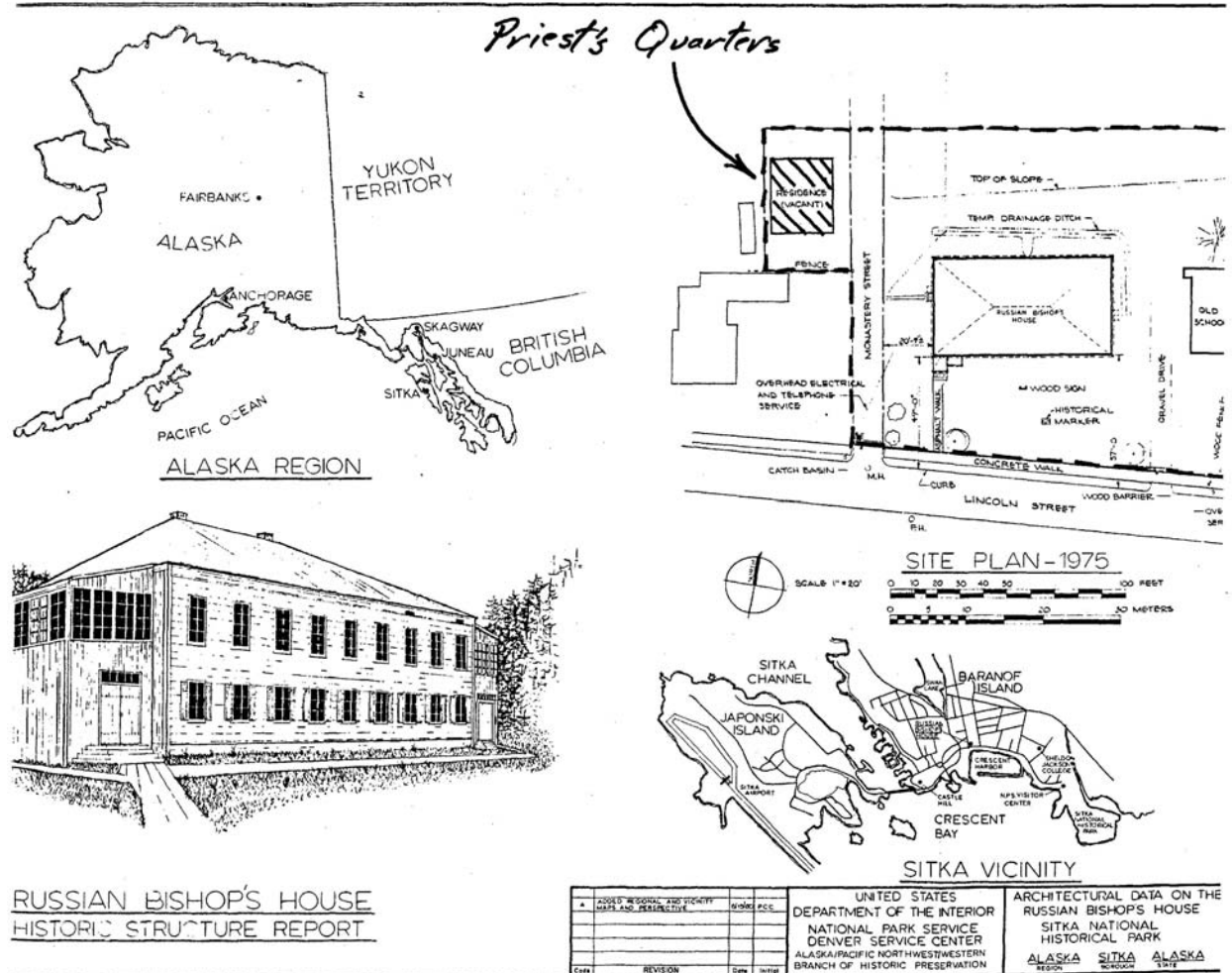
- necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park, or
- key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park, or
- identified in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents as being of significance.

Impairment determinations are not necessary for visitor experience, socioeconomic, public health and safety, environmental justice, land use, and park operations, etc., because impairment findings relate back to park resources and values. These impact areas are not generally considered to be park resources or values according to the Organic Act, and cannot be impaired the same way that an action can impair park resources and values.

Cultural Resources: The loss of the strip of land to create the Alternative B right-of-way would have a conditional No-Adverse Effect {36 CFR 800.5(b)} on the Russian Bishop's House *National Historic Landmark*. The mitigation would lessen the impact by ensuring that the new sidewalk would be historically consistent with other structures on the property. Because there would be no adverse effects, the preferred alternative would not result in impairment.



Figure 1. Russian Bishop's House National Historic Landmark



way.



Figure 3. Drainpipe connection to concrete gutter.



City and Borough of Sitka  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
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(907) 747-1804 • Fax (907) 747-3158

PROJECT MONASTERY STREET  
LOCATION RUSSIAN BISHOP'S HOUSE  
DRAIN PIPE ALTERNATIVE  
DATE 7/21 BY DT  
SCALE NTS SHEET 1 OF 1

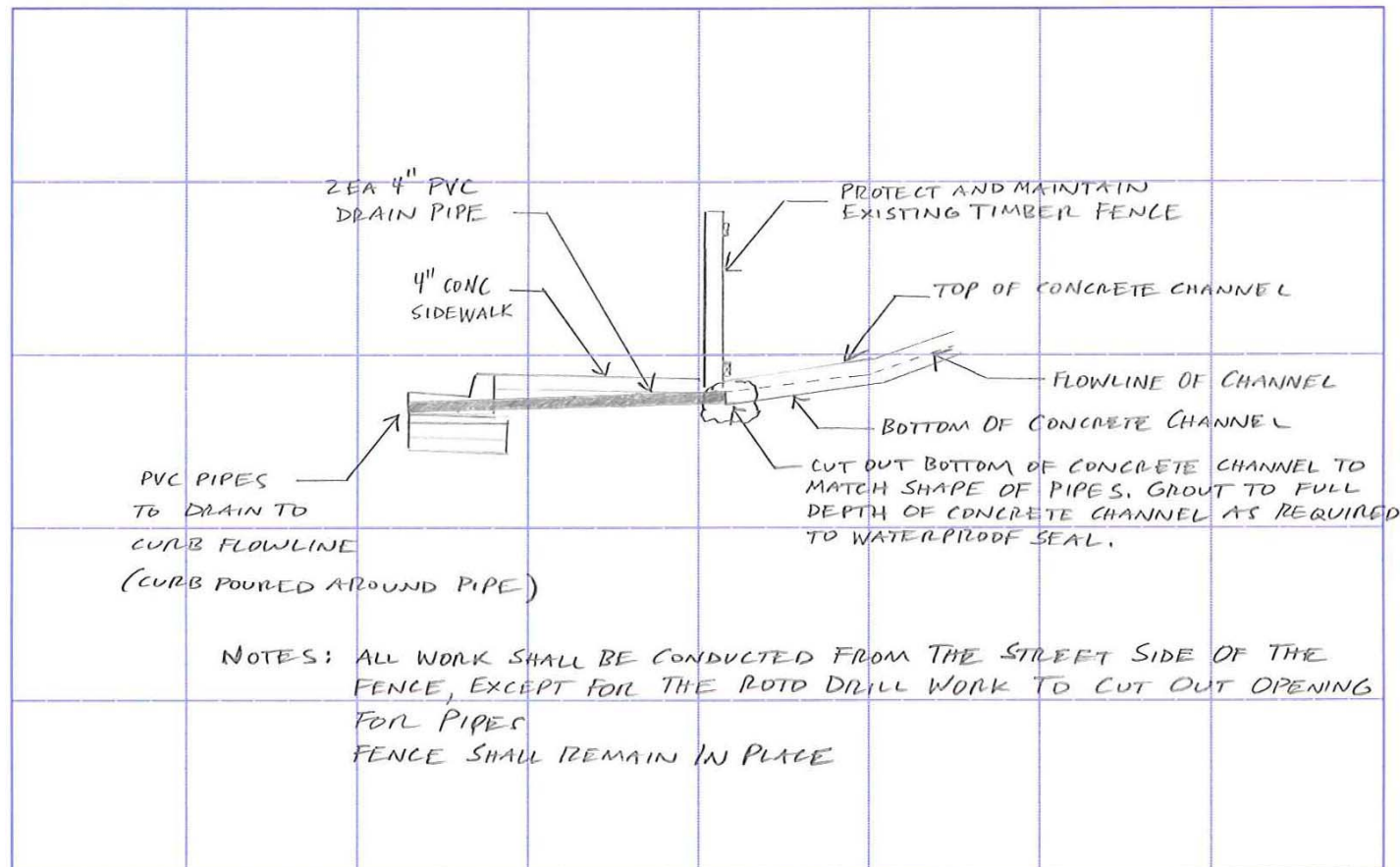


Figure 4. Right of way for drainage improvements in SW corner of RBH Property.

