



**National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Lake Clark National Park and Preserve
Interior Region 11 – Alaska**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT PORT ALSWORTH HOUSING REPLACEMENT

Recommended:

Susanne Green
Superintendent, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve

Date

Approved:

M. Sarah Creachbaum
Regional Director, Interior Region 11 – Alaska, National Park Service

Date

1. Introduction

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Park Service (NPS) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to examine alternative actions and environmental impacts associated with the proposed project to develop the Port Alsworth Housing Replacement in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve (LCNPP, the park), Lake and Peninsula Borough, Alaska.

The statements and conclusions reached in this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) are based on documentation and analysis provided in the EA (NPS 2023), Non-Impairment Determination (Appendix A), and associated decision file. To the extent necessary, relevant sections of the EA are incorporated by reference below.

Two alternatives were analyzed in the EA: 1) the No Action Alternative, where the NPS will not remove 0.6 acres of vegetation, disturb 0.6 acres of soil, construct two triplexes, and install associated utilities (electrical, sewer, and water connections); and 2) the Proposed Action Alternative, and NPS Preferred Alternative, to construct two triplexes each 2,919 square feet (SF) for a total of 5,838 SF, install associated utilities (electrical, sewer, and water connections), and construct a gravel driveway, removing up to 0.6 acres of vegetation and disturbing up to 0.6 acres of soil.

This project is available on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at: [ParkPlanning - Rehabilitate Housing in Port Alsworth \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/planning/rehabilitate-housing-in-port-alsworth)

2. Selected Alternative, Rationale for the Decision, and Mitigations

The Authorized Officer, Regional Director of the Alaska Region, NPS, has decided to authorize the Proposed Action as described in the EA (NPS 2023, p. 1) and summarized below, because it best meets the purpose and need for action without causing significant impacts on park resources. The selected alternative is based on consideration of impacts to vegetation and soils and wildlife, and in consultation with tribes and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA) Corporations, and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

The selected alternative will construct two triplexes, each 2,919 SF, for a total of 5,838 SF, install associated utilities (electrical, sewer, and water connections), and construct a gravel driveway. The NPS will clear a total of up to 0.6 acres of vegetation and disturb a total of up to 0.6 acres of soil in preparation for construction activities.

The triplexes will be constructed for arctic conditions with an arctic entry and raised foundations. The units and access to them will be designed to follow all accessibility standards and guidelines, including the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standard (ABAAS).

The NPS will install and connect associated utilities including electrical, sewer, and water connections to existing systems. Arctic pipe will be utilized to reduce the depth and width of the

trench. The trench for the electrical system will be 2 feet wide and approximately 3-4 feet deep. The sewer will vary from 3 feet to 12 feet deep at the deepest areas (connecting to the existing sewer line with a width of 3 feet to 8 feet. The water line will be approximately 6 feet deep and will require a trench 3 feet wide.

Additionally, the NPS will construct a driveway and parking area, to be connected to an existing road. The driveway will have a tread 14 feet wide, with 5 feet of brushing on each side of the tread. Of the approximately up to 0.6 acres total of soil that will be disturbed, 0.45 acres will be replaced with a combination of suitable soil, geotextile, and stone to create a durable tread. The remaining 0.15 acres will be the footprint of the triplexes.

Rationale

The selected alternative best meets the project purpose to provide quality, year-round employee housing in the park field headquarters and the project need for housing shortages to be addressed to improve park operations and services in Port Alsworth (NPS 2023, p. 2-3). Construction of the housing units will address housing shortages for staff in Port Alsworth. With construction of the housing units, the park can hire key positions such as a district ranger, maintenance lead, one additional law enforcement staff, and one additional interpretation staff (NPS 2023, p. 4). Increased LCNPP staff presence will improve the park's ability to manage the area to respond to safety incidents and increase visitor contacts in Port Alsworth.

Construction is expected to take six months if funding is secured concurrently for both triplexes. If the triplexes are funded at different times, the total construction time would be 12 months (NPS 2023, p. 8).

Mitigations

The NPS places strong emphasis on avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating potentially adverse environmental impacts. Therefore, LCNPP will implement multiple mitigation measures and best management practices to protect natural and cultural resources as well as the visitor experience. These measures and practices are described in detail in the EA and are incorporated by reference.

- During construction the area will be closed to the public.
- There will be clear identification of construction areas and if needed, implementation of necessary fencing and other closure methods during construction activities.
- The project will adhere to 29 CFR Part 1926 Safety and Health Regulations for Construction (Occupational Safety and Health Administration [OSHA]), and a jobsite specific Accident Prevention Plan will be completed prior to initiating construction outlining each phase of work, associated hazards, and methods proposed to ensure property protection and safety of the public, NPS staff, and contractor employees.
- Construction activities will be prohibited on weekends when visitor use is expected to be the highest.
- Housing units will be screened by trees and shrubs, further reducing any visual impacts.
- All soil and stone will be locally sourced, and any heavy equipment used will be cleaned to minimize the risk of introducing exotic plant species.

- Any equipment and materials stored by the NPS and its contractor/s must be clean, free of dirt and/or seeds, and inspected prior to storage or use on park lands to prevent the introduction of invasive species.
- Staging, storage, and parking will occur on hardened surfaces.
- During project implementation, if cultural resources are exposed, construction will stop, the park archeologist will be notified immediately, and archeological testing will be conducted.
- Construction activities will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the International Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (NPS 2023, p. 14).

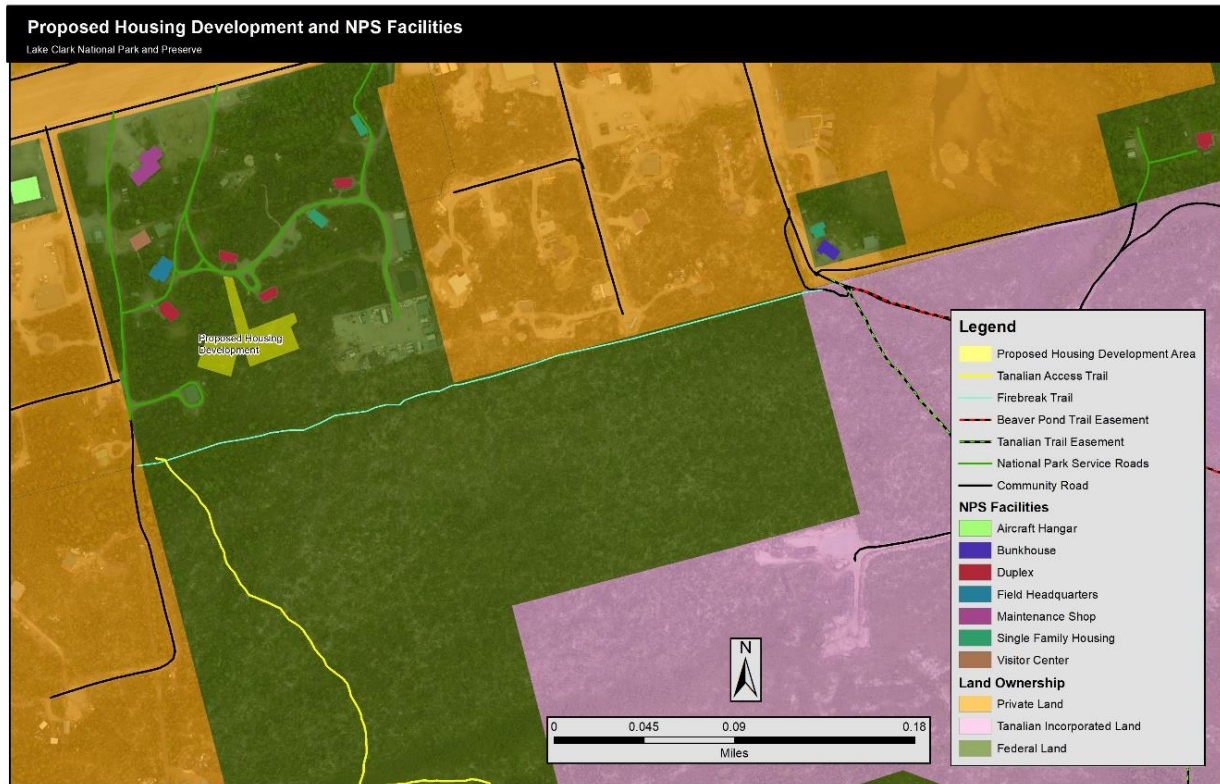


Figure 1 Selected Alternative: Construct Housing Units and Associated Utilities.

3. Potentially Affected Environment and Degree of the Effects

The selected alternative will not have a significant adverse impact on the human environment. This conclusion is based on the following examination of the relevant significance criteria defined in 40 CFR Section 1501.6. The NPS reviewed each of these criteria given the environmental impacts described in the EA (NPS 2023, Chapter 4).

3.1 Potentially Affected Environment

The proposed project area is composed primarily of mixed-spruce forest and birch-ericaceous shrub, with over 60 percent of the area classified as forested, with the remainder classified as birch-ericaceous shrub. Ground cover is dominated by tundra matting, forest/leaf litter with scattered grass, forbs, and mosses. Soil texture is uniform in the area and classified as ashy-loamy-rocky. There are no wetlands in the proposed project area (NPS 2023, p. 12).

The forest and shrub communities in the project area support a variety of bird species. Other wildlife that may inhabit the project area include red fox and various small mammals including porcupine, shrews, and voles. There is also occasionally larger wildlife including moose, brown bear, black bear, and wolves that travel through the area but do not permanently inhabit the area (NPS 2023, p. 14)

Construction of the housing facilities and associated utilities, and driveway will remove up to 0.6 acres of vegetation, resulting in loss of ground cover, understory species, and mature trees, thus altering vegetation communities and potentially introducing and spreading invasive species. The project will disturb up to 0.6 acres of soil. Both the soil types and vegetation are typical of the area and the removal of up to 0.6 acres of vegetation will not be expected to impact plant species at a population level as the disturbance will be localized to the construction site and the species affected are common throughout the Port Alsworth vicinity. Soil function will not expect to be altered beyond the boundaries of the project (NPS 2023, p. 13). There could be permanent displacement of insects and small mammals, as well as temporary displacement of small and large animals during construction activities, but there will not be impacts to population levels (NPS 2023, p. 15).

3.2 Degree of Effects

As described in the EA, (NPS 2023, p. 6-7), the selected alternative has potential beneficial and adverse impacts—both short and long-term—associated with vegetation and soils and wildlife. There are no wild and scenic rivers, ecologically critical areas, wetlands, or floodplains in the project area (NPS 2023, p. 9).

No significant impacts to resources that will require analysis in an environmental impact statement (EIS) were identified.

The selected alternative does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. All elements of the selected alternative are common management actions conducted in NPS units.

In the context of determining significance, “controversial” refers to circumstances where a substantial dispute exists as to the environmental consequences of the proposed action and does not refer to the existence of opposition to a proposed action, the effect of which is relatively undisputed (43 CFR Part 46.30). Throughout the EA process, no environmental impacts associated with the selected alternative have been identified as controversial. The NPS conducted internal and external outreach and provided a public comment period on the EA (September 18- October 3, 2023).

Comments were solicited from tribes, Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations, and the public. The NPS received and responded to zero substantive comments.

As analyzed in the EA, the anticipated impacts to the human environment are not highly uncertain or unique and do not involve unknown risks. Resource conditions in the project area are well known and the anticipated impacts from implementing the selected alternative are understood based on NPS experience with similar projects.

Vegetation and Soils. Removal of approximately 0.6-acres of vegetative cover will likely result in long-term adverse impacts to the local plant community, although the impacts will have a negligible impact on overall species survival of affected vegetation and the vegetative communities in which they are found.

The short-term impact of up to 0.6-acres of vegetation removal will result in adverse effects to trees and shrubs from loss of ground cover, understory species, and mature trees, thus altering vegetation communities and potentially introducing and spreading invasive species (NPS 2023, p. 13). This effect will not result in significant impacts because these vegetation communities are common across the landscape and there are no sensitive or listed vegetation species that will be adversely affected by this disturbance. The ashy-loamy-rocky soil type is ubiquitous in the area and the altering of up to 0.6 acres will have localized, small-scale effects. Soil function will not expect to be altered beyond the boundaries of the project (NPS 2023, p. 13)

Wildlife. The construction activities will adversely affect wildlife by impacting intact habitat, removing vegetation, impacting wildlife movement, and causing disturbance. This will cause both short- and long-term adverse impacts to some wildlife species, varying in impact depending on their ability to adapt to the habitat alteration. The removal of up to 0.6-acres of vegetation loss will result in long-term adverse impacts to insects, small mammals, and birds through loss of habitat.

The loss of habitat will be up to 0.6 acres and the prevalence of this habitat type in the Lake Clark basin will have a negligible impact on populations of these species. The either 6-month or 12-month construction period will have the short-term adverse impacts, displacing wildlife in the immediate area that will be disturbed by the activity. This disturbance will also include larger mammals using the area, such as bear, moose, and wolves. Displacement is not expected to last beyond the construction period, so no long-term adverse impacts are anticipated from disturbance.

3.3 Effects on Public Safety

Public safety is not expected to be affected by the construction activities from this project. The project area is predominately used by NPS employees and is a mix of housing units and administrative and maintenance facilities. It is not ordinarily closed to the public but is rarely accessed by non-NPS entities. During construction the area will be closed to the public. There may be temporary closures of the road to NPS staff during the installation of utilities; however, this will not impact ingress or egress for people or vehicles as there are multiple points of entry to either side of the proposed construction location. Any road closures will not block emergency services, although emergency services may have to detour approximately 0.6 miles at most. There will be clear

identification of construction areas and if needed, implementation of necessary fencing and closures during construction activities. The proposed project will adhere to 29 CFR Part 1926 Safety and Health Regulations for Construction (OSHA), and a jobsite specific Accident Prevention Plan will be completed prior to initiating construction outlining each phase of work, associated hazards, and methods proposed to ensure property protection and safety of the public, NPS staff, and contractor employees. (NPS 2023, p. 7).

People traveling on the Tanalian Trail may be able to hear noises associated with construction activities; however, construction activities will be prohibited on weekends when visitation is expected to be the highest. Additionally, the proposed project location is in Port Alsworth, which has an existing abundance of human-caused sound. Noise associated with construction activities for this project will be short-term, localized, and will cease after construction is complete (NPS 2023, p. 7).

The selected alternative will result in long-term positive impacts on public safety as park operations will not be hampered due to lack of housing and the park can provide appropriate visitor services and information and increase the park's ability to respond to Search and Rescue (SAR) operations in the backcountry.

4. Public Involvement and Agency Consultation

LCNPP archeologists conducted Phase 1 archeological testing of the area in July 2022 and consulted with the SHPO, per 54 U.S.C. 306108 (formerly known as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act) and its implementing regulation, 36 CFR 800 on August 19, 2022. No evidence of cultural materials was uncovered during the excavation or the pedestrian reconnaissance. It is unlikely that cultural resources will be disturbed by the construction of the housing or associated infrastructure. Concurrence of "No Historic Properties Affected" for this project was received from the SHPO on September 15, 2022. During project implementation, if cultural resources are exposed, construction will stop, the park archeologist will be notified immediately, and archeological testing will be conducted (NPS 2023, p. 8).

The park initiated Tribal Consultation with letters and email correspondence sent to Kijik Corporation, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, Lime Village Traditional Council, Newhalen Tribal Council, Nondalton Tribal Council, Iliamna Tribal Council, Pedro Bay Village Council on August 26, 2022, with a second round of correspondence sent on November 18, 2022. The NPS received no interest in consulting responses from Lime Village and Village of Iliamna. No other responses were received. The park will distribute the FONSI to these parties and will continue to provide them with project updates.

The park provided a public comment period on the EA through the PEPC site from September 18 – October 3, 2023. There were zero submissions or comments received through PEPC or park e-mail.

5. Conclusion

As described above, the selected alternative will affect vegetation and soils, and wildlife. The NPS found these effects will not have the potential for significant impacts, as described above.

Additionally, based on the Non-Impairment Determination, the NPS concluded the proposed action will not result in impacts to park resources and values that constitute impairment (Appendix A).

The selected alternative does not constitute an action meeting the criteria that normally requires preparation of an EIS. The selected alternative will not have a significant effect on the human environment in accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of NEPA.

As disclosed in the EA and this FONSI, the selected alternative does not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

Based on the foregoing information, it has been determined that an EIS is not required for this project and, thus, will not be prepared.

6. References

National Park Service (NPS). 2023. Port Alsworth Housing Replacement Environmental Assessment. National Park Service. Anchorage, Alaska.

Appendix A: Non-Impairment Determination

The National Park Service (NPS) Organic Act of 1916 and the General Authorities Act of 1970 prohibit impairment of park resources and values. The NPS Management Policies 2006 uses the terms “resources and values” to mean the full spectrum of tangible and intangible attributes for which the park is established and managed, including the Organic Act’s fundamental purpose and any additional purposes as stated in the park’s establishing legislation (NPS, 2006). The impairment of park resources and values may not be allowed unless directly and specifically provided by statute. The primary responsibility of the NPS is to ensure that park resources and values will continue to exist in an unimpaired condition that will enable people to have present and future opportunities to enjoy them.

A determination of impairment is made for each of the resources carried forward and analyzed in the Environmental Assessment (EA). Impairment is an impact that—in the professional judgement of the responsible NPS manager—will harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise will be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values. An impact will 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,
- key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park, or
- identified as a goal in the park’s general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents.

An impact will be less likely to constitute an impairment if it is an unavoidable result of an action necessary to pursue or restore the integrity of park resources or values and cannot be further mitigated.

The Port Alsworth Housing Replacement EA (NPS, 2023) incorporates mitigation measures and Best Management Practices, therefore reducing effects to several resources.

The NPS has determined that construction of two triplexes and installation of associated utilities will not result in impairment of park resources and values. An impairment determination is made for the resource impact topics analyzed in detail for the selected alternative, except for recreation and visitor use. Recreation and visitor use are not considered park resources and therefore do not apply to impairment determinations. Non-resource topics are not assessed for impairment, and this

determination applies only to NPS lands and resources and has been rendered solely by NPS management.

Vegetation and Soils. Vegetation and soils are not identified as a specific purpose in the establishing legislation of the park and are not specifically mentioned in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve's (LCNPP's) general management plan as central to maintaining the park's significance. Up to 0.6 acres of vegetation will be directly impacted through removal during construction activities. The vegetation in the affected area is common and found throughout the park and does not include any endangered or protected species. The loss of vegetation will not impact the park's ecosystem. Up to 0.6 acres of soil will be disturbed and directly impacted during construction activities. Through mitigation measures, the level of disturbance from the selected alternative will not result in impairment to vegetation and soils.

Wildlife. The selected alternative will have short- and long-term impacts to wildlife. The removal of up to 0.6 acres of vegetation will permanently impact habitat for insects and small animals. The loss of 0.6 acres of relatively common habitat types within the Lake Clark basin will not result in an impairment to wildlife populations.

Wildlife will be disturbed by the noise and activity of construction causing displacement and resulting in short-term negative impacts. To mitigate disturbance to wildlife during sensitive periods, primarily bird nesting, the work will be conducted outside of this period and will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the International Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Through mitigation measures, the short duration of disturbance, and small loss of common habitat, the project will not result in impairment to wildlife.

SUMMARY

The NPS has determined that the construction activities to build the housing units and install associated utilities will not constitute an impairment of the resources or values of LCNPP. As described above, the Port Alsworth Housing Replacement EA is not anticipated to impair resources or values that are essential to the purposes identified in the enabling legislation of the park, key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or identified as significant in the park's relevant planning documents. This conclusion is based on consideration of the park's purpose and significance, a thorough analysis of the environmental impacts described in the EA, the comments provided by the public and others, and the professional judgment of the decision-maker guided by the NPS Management Policies (NPS, 2006).

References

National Park Service (NPS). 2006. Management Policies 2006. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

NPS. 2023. Port Alsworth Housing Replacement Environmental Assessment. National Park Service. Anchorage, Alaska.