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Trip Report

Gambell FUDS and NALEMP Site Visit
Gambell, Alaska
2 – 4 August 2005



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1. General

Lisa Geist (EN-EE) and Carey Cossaboom (PM-C-FUDS) from the Alaska District, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (the District or the Corps) traveled to the Village of Gambell on St. Lawrence Island to conduct a site visit, hold a public briefing, and provide oversight for the ongoing Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program (NALEMP) project. The team traveled to Nome, Alaska on August 2, 2005 and continued on to Gambell in the afternoon. The team returned to Anchorage on August 4, 2005.

2. Purpose

The primary objective of the August 2005 trip was a public briefing regarding the signed Decision Document for performing the final remedial actions in Gambell under the FUDS program. A second objective of the trip was to perform ongoing oversight of the NALEMP debris excavation activities being conducted by the Native Village of Gambell IRA.

3. Background

The Gambell site was used by the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Air Force from approximately 1948 until the late 1950s, but was largely dismantled in the early 1960s. Various facilities around the village of Gambell were constructed to provide housing, communications, and other functions. All DOD structures were demolished, burned, or scavenged and debris buried on-site.

A Phase I Remedial investigation was started at Gambell in 1994. A Phase II investigation was completed in 1997. A removal action was conducted by Oil Spill Consultants during the summer of 1999 to remove surface debris and contaminated soils. A Supplemental Remedial Investigation was conducted during 2001. A removal action was completed in 2003 by Montgomery Watson Harza under the NALEMP program to excavate buried drums and debris. The Native Village of Gambell (NVG) conducted additional debris removal activities in 2004 and continuing in 2005 under the NALEMP program. The Corps of Engineers completed a Feasibility Study in February 2004, a Proposed Plan in July 2004, and received approval for the planned remedial actions through a Decision Document signed in July 2005.

4. Field Activities

The major on-site tasks for the 2005 site visit were:

- a. Hold a Public Briefing regarding the signed Decision Document for Remedial Action in Gambell
- b. Observe the ongoing debris excavation activities being performed by the Native Village of Gambell under a Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Defense NALEMP program.
- c. Provide oversight to the Native Village of Gambell staff conducting the NALEMP debris excavation activities.

On Tuesday, August 2, 2005, Carey Cossaboom and Lisa Geist arrived in Gambell around 1:00 pm. They met with Gerald Soonagrook, field supervisor for the Native Village of Gambell NALEMP project to discuss the status of the debris removal activities. Robert Tungiyon, the NVG Project Manager, was currently on leave.

Edmond Apassingok mentioned that the village needs more people trained in 40 hour HAZWOPER, at least 5 more people plus the 8 hour refresher training for the existing crew. The village had difficulty finding enough qualified workers for this summer's work and two of the crew members are actually from Savoonga. One crew member was currently traveling to Anchorage for an 8 hour HAZWOPER refresher class.

Carey and Lisa visited the work site in the afternoon and observed the field crew. Gerald Soonagrook showed them the various work areas. Debris was being temporarily stored within the fenced area next to the washeteria. Also within the fenced area was an open excavation (18B) that was recently sampled by Travis Peterson Environmental Consultants (TPECI). The excavation pit at 18B will be backfilled once the NVG receives the sampling results from TPECI. The open excavation was observed to contain debris protruding from the western sidewall. Gerald explained that additional excavation could not be conducted because they were restricted from digging closer than 30 feet to the existing water storage tanks. Carey suggested cutting off the exposed debris before backfilling the hole. A large metal safe or rectangular storage unit was observed adjacent to the 18B excavation. The large metal tank pulled from the 18B excavation last year was also observed just outside the fenced area. The tank will be shipped off-site this year by Northland Barge Services. The barge company does not require the tank to be containerized in a connex. See photos in appendix.

Carey and Lisa viewed Site 19, where the diatomaceous earth had been excavated earlier in the field season. An exposed water pipe is still present and may pose an impediment to future expansion of the water treatment plant and washeteria. This concern should be added to the Strategic Project Implementation Plan (SPIP) and can most likely be removed in the future through the NALEMP project. Gerald showed the team the location of the staged supersacks awaiting off-site transport, the connex with tools, scales (one scale has a broken LED and can only read some of the numbers), spare tires, and other equipment for the project. The team also visited the gravel pit where the non-hazardous, inert diatomaceous earth was placed, as well as the gravel soils excavated during the 2004 field season which were determined to be non-contaminated soil based on laboratory sampling results. This pit, several hundred feet east of the school, is a gently-sloped depression in the ground (gravel can't hold steep sidewalls) about 30 feet across and 6 feet deep.

The crew took 2 coffee breaks and a lunch break each day of our visit. They traveled from the worksite back to the office during coffee breaks which lasted 30 minutes. The crew also started wrapping up tasks around 4:30-4:45 pm in the afternoon before heading back to the office before 5:00 pm.

Carey Cossaboom confirmed the meeting room arrangements with Sivuqaq, Inc. The Public Briefing started at 7:25 pm, approximately 5 people attended. Attendees also viewed a large format map prepared by the Corps which showed the areas planned for cleanup and summarized progress over the past several years. Additional details on the meeting are highlighted below.

Attendees: Aaron Irrowigan, Jesse Lowrey, Winnie James, Rodney Unglowook, Sr., another community member, and Steve from ADEC, a visiting Village Safe Water representative in town for water/sewer work.

Carey explained that the Corps of Engineers has 2 major projects on St. Lawrence Island. Bristol Environmental & Engineering Services is currently finishing demolition and debris cleanup and excavation of PCB-contaminated soils at

Northeast Cape. There is also work ongoing in Gambell under the NALEMP program, which is the NVG crew digging up debris by the school building. Each project has a different funding source, with FUDS having a much larger budget – \$30 million/year in Alaska compared to a nationwide budget of \$10 million for NALEMP. Gambell’s project is one of the highest funded NALEMP projects in the country and has been for the past 2 years.

The FUDS program will be coming to Gambell to complete final cleanup actions, maybe this summer. Bristol Construction has been hired to perform the work, and they are making plans to mobilize here after finishing at Northeast Cape. The job is fairly short, and is projected to last about 2 weeks. However, there is the possibility Bristol will not finish before the last barge departs and their contract has an option to store their equipment in Gambell over the winter. If Bristol doesn’t get here this summer, they will mobilize from Nome or Anchorage next summer.

The work includes picking up runway matting left by the airstrip which wasn’t completed during an earlier cleanup effort because of lighting and electrical cables in the way. Two other areas are scheduled for cleanup, including one at the south end of Troutman Lake where batteries had been previously disposed and residual lead and chromium remain in a small area of soil. The soil will be dug up and hauled away.

Jesse Lowrey commented that this area (south of Troutman Lake) is where community members harvested greens for many years. Winnie James mentioned that a communications site was bulldozed at the south end of the lake, too, including towers with guy wires and 5-10 Quonset huts. Carey replied that the Corps is always open to new information and the work being done by the IRA outlines community priorities and identifies new sites. At the next RAB meeting, Carey plans to go with Winnie and Jeff Brownlee from the ADEC to visit the area previously identified by Winnie (at the base of Sevuokuk Mtn) as missed by the ordnance investigation team. They will do some digging based on Winnie’s direction using the backhoe from the NALEMP project.

The last site planned for cleanup activity is in town, identified as Site 7. In 2003, Montgomery Watson removed a large concrete slab from this area. The concrete was supported by creosote-treated timbers. Discolored gravel associated with the timbers had elevated levels of arsenic, a chemical used as a preservative in the timbers. This soil will be dug up and removed.

Also under Bristol’s contract, they will test the groundwater at Site 5, near the village water supply. Three separate monitoring events are planned, spanning different seasons and water levels.

The small arms ammunition on the ground at the south beach was initially proposed for cleanup under FUDS, but now the Corps hopes to do this with NALEMP funding.

Bristol hopes to conduct the work this summer, maybe during the 2nd or 3rd week in September. However, if the barge schedule doesn’t work out, they could start early next summer instead. The NALEMP cleanup will take several more years to complete.

Jesse Lowrey asked if the soil associated with the debris excavation by the washeteria was contaminated? Carey replied that soil samples collected for analysis were clean. Jesse asked if monitoring was being conducted as the crew dug up debris? Carey replied that the crew notes areas where there may be contaminated soils, and often bag up soil that appears contaminated. These are then tested when the consultants come to Gambell, about every 2 weeks. Monitoring is not being conducted as they dig because not a lot of dust is created and there has been very little contamination.

Rodney asked if the runway matting would only be removed adjacent to the runway, or anywhere? There are jagged pieces in the road south of the runway which pose a hazard to ATV traffic. Carey replied that the intent was to remove all hazards in the immediate vicinity and he would make sure Bristol was aware of that debris.

The meeting concluded by 9 pm.

On Wednesday, August 3, 2005, Lisa Geist and Carey Cossaboom attended the Job Safety Tailgate meeting at the NVG Environmental Office. The field crew arrived between 8:00 and 8:15 am. Gerald Soonagrook conducted a brief safety meeting at 8:30 am. The crew departed for the excavation site at 8:55 am. The field technicians voiced many complaints about the need for maintenance supplies and the process for ordering items. Carey stressed that the NVG Project Manager should approve any necessary purchases, Denise can place the orders, but the NVG needs to devise a routine process for ordering supplies. There appears to be a breakdown in communications between various personnel of the NVG. The crew needs maintenance supplies for the heavy equipment such as filters, coolant, and grease. Carey stressed that the heavy equipment must be maintained in good working order according to the user manuals – it needs to be used for the duration of the project. Richard Ooseva, the loader operator, mentioned that one tire on the loader is low on air, has a gash, and needs to be replaced. It appeared the correct size valve was not available to utilize the City of Gambell's air compressor equipment to attempt a repair. The backhoe also needs a new window on the lower left side of the operator's cabin. The crew suggested that fueling the heavy equipment was a lengthy process (20 minutes to drive one-way to the village tank farm) and wondered if a fuel bladder or other temporary storage closer to the work site(s) would be possible. Gerald Soonagrook said that Robert Tungiyon didn't leave any detailed instructions for him before going on leave. Gerald was aware of the need to order items, but didn't know what had already been arranged.

The trailer being used to move debris from the excavation sites to the washeteria storage area is rented from Edmond Apassingok at a rate of \$25/day. It was unclear from the FY04 Cooperative Agreement if a trailer was originally planned for purchase. [Post-Meeting Note: Page 6 of the CA shows two ATVs with trailers were to be purchased.]

Two pieces of window glass for the heavy equipment were ordered last year and are still in crates at the office – apparently they are the wrong pieces of glass (wrong side of cab). Carey suggested that they should analyze whether or not it would be cost-effective to ship them back. If it costs as much to ship them back as they are worth, don't bother. A box of blades for the sawsall was also at the office, but were not the right ones according to the crew. Carey volunteered to bring the box back to Anchorage and return them to AIH for a credit to the NVG.

Carey emphasized that the project must be run efficiently. The NVG needs to plan their activities and coordinate ordering supplies, waste transport, connexes, etc. The NVG will be expected to make a good presentation at next year's annual NALEMP meeting. There are many people in Washington, DC who are interested in this project and may scrutinize it since Gambell is one of the highest funded sites in the country. The NALEMP program manager (Pat Roth) may also come to Gambell later this summer/fall to conduct an audit of the project expenses/books.

Denise stated that the project could really use a big site map for Gambell. Lisa left 2 large maps at the NVG office for them to use, but can send a larger one showing all the sites on one sheet.

After the crew left for the worksite, Carey and Lisa participated in the Northeast Cape weekly teleconference at 9 am. Then they went to the IRA Office to meet with Cheryl Koonooka, Bookkeeper and Tyler Campbell, General Manager.

Carey offered any assistance with the invoices and requests for advance they prepare and obtained receipts for the saw blades. While at the IRA Office, Gerald arrived to inform Tyler that the crew had severed a buried power line at the worksite.

After lunch, Carey and Lisa visited the site, observed the newly built weather observation tower north of Site 6, and walked to the base of Sevuokuk Mountain. A pile of marston matting and other debris was noted near the base of the guy wires, which had apparently been exposed when the weather station was installed. The power line was fixed by about 2 pm in the afternoon. The crew took a break at 3:00 pm and returned to the site at 3:30 pm. The crew was worried about hitting another power line and expensive phone line on the north side of the excavation at Site 18A. Carey and Lisa observed the general work operations. The backhoe removes a scoop of gravel from the pit, apparently to expose the large debris pieces, dumps it on a pile next to the pit, which the laborers then hand-pick out smaller pieces of debris from it. The larger Quonset hut pieces appeared more difficult to extract from the excavation. Gerald explained that the crew had attempted to use chains to pull the larger debris from the excavation, but they typically didn't work. The loader was used to backfill the area where the power line was exposed, and also flattened the gravel pile created by the backhoe. Mostly Quonset hut framing was excavated today.

Carey and Lisa met with the IRA Council at 3:30 pm at the NVG Environmental office. Council members present included Edmond Apassingok, Chris Koonooka, Branson Tungiyon, Wayne Booshu, and Susie Booshu. Carey started the discussion stating that it was not clear how well the crew was doing because they didn't have any connexes to place the debris in, and therefore, the crew did not have an estimate of the weight of debris excavated. One of the keys to assessing the progress of the team is knowing how much tonnage is excavated. The crew essentially met last year's projected total of 85 tons. The Council was concerned about spending \$2000/connex, which was not part of the original budget, so they had instructed Robert Tungiyon to look for other sources of connexes from different projects in town. The Council was under the impression they couldn't afford an extra \$28,000 for connexes if they needed to purchase them from Northland. Carey congratulated the team on getting connexes at no cost last year, but also said that there would be no objections to paying for them. The Council was also concerned that there may be more debris under the playground and satellite dish located adjacent to the School. They have requested that Bering Straits relocate the playground and satellite dish so the NVG crew can remove the debris underneath. The community is also concerned that the debris dug up from the expansion of the High School had been reburied next to the landfill. Carey replied that site was on the list to be addressed by NALEMP in the future.

Edmond requested that the NVG be able to train substitute or on-call workers in 40 hour HAZWOPER. Carey will bring up the issue of training extra workers with the NALEMP program managers. However, Carey didn't think that NALEMP would train a lot of workers who didn't actually work on the project. Edmond mentioned that NVG wants to create a limit liability corporation (LLC), similar to one created by the Evansville Tribal Council. The NVG would like to perform other cleanup jobs in the state, they are proud of their crew and want them to succeed. Currently there are 7 crew members, but they would like to get an additional 5 to 10 people trained. The goal of the NVG is to have their project be a priority for cleanup like their village was a strategic, priority location 50 years ago during the war.

Carey stressed that the ordering process needs to improve and the heavy equipment needs to be adequately maintained. Carey was concerned about the apparent lack of communication between the project manager, crew, and IRA office. Edmond feels that Robert Tungiyon is doing a good job. Carey mentioned that schedules are important and the project needs to get back on time. Carey asked if the NVG had a written contract with TPECI, Edmond replied no, just a notice to proceed. Carey said a written scope/contract protects both parties. [Post meeting note: Carey remembers reviewing a TPECI proposal that incorporated the SOW.]

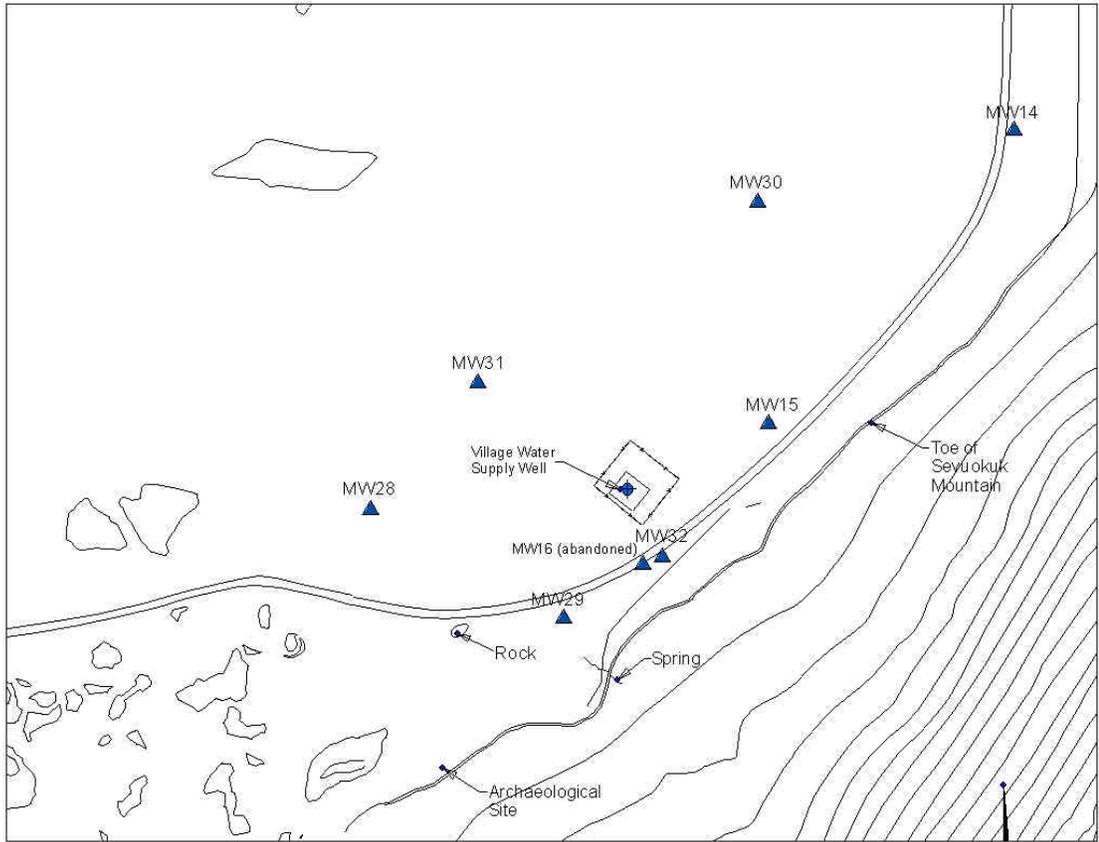
The crew arrived back at the office at 4:40 pm. The meeting ended at 5:00 pm.

Thursday, August 4, 2005

The NALEMP crew was observed to arrive at the NVG office by 8:00 am. The crew did not depart the office until 8:50 am. Lisa and Carey met with the ADEC Village Safe Water representatives at Sivuqaq Lodge and discussed the status of the monitoring wells at Site 5. The VSW personnel recommended recapping and locking all the monitoring wells to ensure the safety of the community's water supply. The aquifer is very vulnerable to contamination and the wells must be secured. The VSW personnel had also observed the debris protruding from the open excavation inside the washeteria fence, adjacent to the large water tank. They were quite surprised that the water tanks had been apparently built on top of a buried debris pile. Carey explained that the NVG field crew planned to cut off the protruding debris and fill in the excavation. They could not excavate more debris, however, due to restrictions on digging less than 30 feet from the tank.

Carey and Lisa visited Site 5 and checked on the status of the groundwater monitoring wells. See photos in appendix and figure, below. MW28 was observed to contain gravel between the inner and outside well casing, but the well itself didn't contain visible gravel. The well was unlocked, but an interior cap was present on the PVC piping. MW31 was locked (rusted in place). MW29 was locked (rusted in place). MW32 was not locked, the outer casing cap could be lifted off, an inner cap on the piping was present. MW15 was not locked, but an inner cap was present. MW14 was not locked, and the inner cap was partially wedged between the casing the piping, from apparent frost jacking. MW30 was locked (rusted in place).

Back at the jobsite, the crew was observed to go on break at 10:30 am, and headed back to the site at 11:00 am. Carey and Lisa checked back in at the IRA Office to see if Cheryl had a new invoice ready, which she later delivered to the Sivuqaq Lodge. The field team left Gambell at 1:30 pm, arrived in Nome and then Anchorage by 11:45 pm.



5. Conclusions and Recommendations

During this trip, the District team visited with community members, the IRA Council, and members of the NVG NALEMP crew. The team provided oversight to ongoing NALEMP debris excavation activities, checked the status of the Site 5 groundwater monitoring wells, and conducted a public briefing regarding upcoming FUDS cleanup activities.

The ongoing NALEMP project still seems a bit disorganized. The crew appears to work at the job site for an average of 6 full hours per day. The backhoe operation seemed slow and somewhat inefficient. A lot of hand labor was used to pick through debris, and additional time was being spent transporting the debris from the worksite to the temporary staging area within the Washeteria fenced area. The lack of connexes could be a major problem if connexes are not obtained on the next barge shipment scheduled for arrival the week of August 15th. It was difficult to ascertain how much the absence of Robert Tungiyen contributed to the overall confusion, or if the crew in general need better direction/management.

Photos 1-6: Village of Gambell welcoming cruise ship visitors, native dancing performance at Sivuqaq Lodge.

Photo 1: Chris Koonooka (center, with child) Photo 2: Winnie James (seated on ATV)



Photo 3: Native dancing demonstration

Photo 4: Native dancing demonstration



Photo 5: Group invited to dance (Branson Tungiyan, center in white)

Photo 6: Local children



Photo 7: Excavation 18A, adjacent to School, view northeast towards school



Photo 8: Excavation 18A, view northwest towards playground, yellow tape is area transformer was dug up



Photo 9: Gerald Soonagrook NVG Supervisor and Carey Cossaboom, USACE PM



Photo 10: NVG crew sorting through debris



Photo 11: Excavation 18A, view northeast



Photo 12: Excavation 18A, view east



Photo 13: NALEMP Loader



Photo 14: smaller debris excavated and supersacked



Photo 15: view northwest within Washeteria fence, Photo 16: close up view west towards water storage tank limits of Excavation 18B, cannot dig closer than 30 ft to tank.



Photo 17: Excavated safe or other item



Photo 18: Close up of excavated item



Photo 19: stockpiled debris, looking northeast Photo 20: Stockpiled debris, looking east towards Mtn. towards School



Photo 21: Stockpiled debris at Washeteria



Photo 22: Close up of excavated debris



Photo 23: Close-up of stockpiled debris



Photo 24: Trailer of debris being taken to stockpile



Photo 24: Stockpiled supersacks with small debris pieces



Photo 25: Creosoted timbers excavated from Site 18



Photo 27: Protruding buried water pipe at edge of Troutman Lake and near Site 19



Photo 28: Water pipe at Site 19, view east



Photo 29: Cables at Site 19, view north



Photo 29: Close up of cables at Site 19



Photo 30: Platform and concrete, view northeast towards School



Photo 31: Equipment/Supplies connex



Photo 32-33: Gravel pit used dispose of non-contaminated soils and diatomaceous earth from Sites 18 and 19, view west/northwest.



Photo 33: NVG Field crew (from left to right) Quin, Patrick, Levi Seppliu, Gerald Soonagrook, Ladd, Levi, Patrick, Gerald, Regi, Carey, Richard Carey Cossaboom, Richard Ooseva



Photo 35: Excavation 18A, severed power line Photo 36: Excavation 18A, severed power line



Photo 37: Loader tire – back left



Photo 38: Close up view of loader tire with gash



Photo 39: Loader with back tire needing air



Photo 40: Loader, good tires



Photo 41: Trailer rented from Edmond Apassingok



Photo 42: Trailer to transport debris



Photo 43: Loader with broken window



Photo 44: Loader with broken window



Photo 45: Non-military drum north of Site 18A



Photo 46: Non-military drum north of Site 18A



Photo 47: New weather station, north of snow fence and north of extents of Site 6 excavation from 2003



Photo 48: Exposed debris from weather station



Photo 49: Debris exposed from weather station installation, view northeast



Photo 50: Debris exposed from weather station, view east



Photo 51: New weather station, view southwest



Photo 52: Debris pile from weather station installation



Photo 53: Excavation at Site 18A



Photo 54: Excavation at Site 18A



Photo 55: Excavation at Site 18A



Photo 56: Excavation at Site 18A



Photo 57: MW28



Photo 58: MW28



Photo 59: MW 28



Photo 60: MW31



Photo 61: MW31



Photo 62: MW32



Photo 63: MW32



Photo 67: MW15



Photo 68: MW15



Photo 64: MW29



Photo 65: MW30



Photo 66: MW30



Photo 69: MW14



Photo 70: Excavation 18A



Photo 71: Excavation 18A



Photo 72: Excavation 18A



Photo 73: Excavation 18A

