PUBLIC NOTICE

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
Wastewater Discharge Authorization Program/§401 Certification
555 Cordova Street, Anchorage AK9501-2617
Phone: 907-269-6285 | Email: DEC-401Cert@alaska.gov

Notice of Application for State Water Quality Certification

Public Notice (PN) Date: December 1, 2023
PN Expiration Date: December 18, 2023
PN Reference Number: POA-2020-00370 v1.0
Waterway: Sitka Harbor

Any applicant for a federal license or permit to conduct an activity that might result in a discharge into navigable waters, in accordance with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1977 (PL95-217), also must apply for and obtain certification from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation that the discharge will comply with the CWA, the Alaska Water Quality Standards, and other applicable State laws.

Notice is hereby given that a request for a CWA §401 Water Quality Certification of a Department of the Army Permit application, Corps of Engineers' PN Reference Number indicated above has been received for the discharge of dredged and/or fill materials into waters of the United States (WOUS), including wetlands, as described below, and shown on the project figures/drawings. The public notice and related project figures/drawings are accessible from the DEC website at https://dec.alaska.gov/water/wastewater/.

To comment on the project or request for a public hearing with respect to water quality, submit comments electronically via the DEC public notice site at https://water.alaskadec.commentinput.com/?id=eYHuVaNcE on or before the public notice expiration date listed above.

Applicant: City and Borough of Sitka, Michael Harmon, 100 Lincoln Street Sitka, AK 99835; (907) 747-1804; michael.harmon@cityofsitka.org.

Agent: DOWL, Josh Grabel, 5015 Business Park Blvd #4000 Anchorage, AK 99503; (907) 562-2000; jgrabel@dowl.com.

Project Name: New Sitka Seaplane Base

Location: The proposed activity is located within Section 34, T. 55 S, R. 63 E; Copper River Meridian; in Sitka, Alaska. Project Site (Latitude, Longitude): 57.05589, -135.36470. With potential discharge locations of fill and structure placement in Sitka Harbor -135.359500, 57.056800.

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to construct a new Sea Plane Base (SPB) on Japonski Island in Sitka Channel and address capacity, safety, operational, and condition deficiencies at the existing Sitka SPB. This project is needed to support critical seaplane operations and transportation in Southeast Alaska, to resolve existing seaplane and boat conflicts, and to replace the existing base (A29) which is 65 years old and in poor condition. The current Sitka SPB located off Katlian Street, A29, is at the end of its useful life and has several shortcomings, including limited docking capacity. A29 has only eight spaces, four of which cannot be accessed during low tide. The facility also is expensive. to maintain, has wildlife conflicts with a nearby seafood processing plant, and requires pilots to navigate a busy channel with ship traffic.

The new SPB would improve the safety of seaplane operation in the channel, along with reducing traffic and congestion in Sitka Channel. The proposed SPB should reduce conflicts with marine vessels during landing and takeoff with a relocated seaplane lane. The relocated seaplane lane moves taxi operations into a wider, less congested section of Sitka Channel.

Project Description: The project would construct a 2.6 acres pad in uplands, wetlands, and waters of the U.S. including bridge abutment, approach, vehicle turnaround, parking, basic amenities, curb, vehicle driveway, security fencing, and landscape buffer. (Note: certain components would be installed out of the water). Material would be excavated from the side slopes above Sitka Channel to level the proposed fill pad, including from a wetland mapped during the 2020 wetland delineation.

Excavation and fill material in waters of the U.S. for construction includes:

- Above mean high water (MHW)- excavation of 0.06 acre of wetland for pad leveling and placement of fill between High Tide Line (HTL) and MHW- discharge of 0.06 acres of fill between HTL (+13 feet) and MHW (+9.16 feet relative to mean lower low water (MLLW)
- Below MHW- Discharge of 1.3 acres of fill
  - Side slopes of fill would have ratio of 2 horizontal to 1 vertical (2H:1V) slopes with heavy open graded armor rock and interstitial spaces.
- Rock blasting and excavation of about 10,100 cubic yards of material would occur, extending from about 16 to 60 vertical feet above MLLW (0.00 datum) located at the end of the Seward Avenue in the southwest corner of the project.
  - All blasting and excavating would occur above HTL (+13 feet).
  - Rock blasting and excavation would extend from shoreline approximately 200 horizontal feet inland.
  - Following blasting and excavating, excavated materials, armor rock, and underlayment would be placed on land to develop the SPB bridge abutment, approach, vehicle turnaround, parking, basic amenities, curb, and vehicle driveway totaling 34,650 cubic yards. The fill would be placed using an excavator and dozer and then compacted using a vibratory soil compactor.

The proposed project would construct the following structures in Sitka Channel, a Section 10 water of the U.S.:

- Construct and install the following pile-supported components:
  - 80-foot by 24-foot approach dock
  - 120-foot by 12-foot pedestrian and vehicle transfer bridge
  - 128-foot by 68-foot bridge landing and drive-down float
  - 417-foot by 46-foot seaplane ramp float to support 10 Cessna and 4 Beaver seaplane berths
- Install and remove 12 temporary 16-inch-diameter steel piles as templates to guide proper installation of permanent piles (these temporary piles would be removed prior to project completion).
- Install 10 permanent 16-inch-diameter galvanized steel piles and 16 permanent 24-inch-diameter galvanized steel piles to support the approach dock, pedestrian and vehicle transfer bridge, bridge landing and drive-down float, and seaplane ramp float.
- Install other SPB float components such as electricity connections, waterlines, lighting, passenger walkway, handrail, and mast lights.

Additional Information: Certifications and/or approvals needed for the project would include: Tideland Conveyance by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Section 401 and Section 402 Certification by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Zoning, Building, & Floodplain Permits by the City and Borough of Sitka Alaska, Section 106 Review/Concurrence by the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office, Section 7 Review/Concurrence by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Essential Fish Habitat Review/Concurrence by NMFS, and a Fish Habitat Permit by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

Applicant Proposed Mitigation: The applicant proposes the following mitigation measures to avoid, minimize, and compensate for impacts to waters of the United States from activities involving discharges of dredged or fill material.

a. Avoidance: Avoiding impacts to waters of the U.S. is not practicable. Wetlands and tidal waters are unavoidable due to the size requirements of the fill pad in proximity to deeper waters to meet the project purpose and need. In addition, the existing parcel size above the High Tide Line is not sufficient to accommodate project infrastructure and must be expanded into Sitka Harbor.

b. Minimization: Emphasis has been placed on minimizing unavoidable impacts to waters of the U.S. by limiting fill discharges to the minimum amount and size necessary to achieve the project purpose.

c. Compensatory Mitigation: Approximately 1.46 acres of Section 404 wetlands and waters of the U.S. would be impacted by the proposed fill and excavation activities. Compensatory mitigation would be provided by purchasing credits from a mitigation bank or in-lieu fee program to replace functions lost from impacts to the aquatic resources.

After reviewing the application, the Department may certify there is reasonable assurance the activity, and any discharge that might result, will comply with the CWA, the Alaska Water Quality Standards, and other applicable State laws. The Department also may deny or waive certification.

The permit application and associated documents are available for review. For inquires or to request copies of the documents, contact dec-401cert@alaska.gov, or call 907-269-6285.

Disability Reasonable Accommodation Notice

The State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. If you are a person with a disability who may need special accommodation in order to participate in this public process, please contact ADA Coordinator Megan Kohler at 907-269-4198 or TDD Relay Service 1-800-770-8973/TTY or dial 711 prior to the expiration date of this public notice to ensure that any necessary accommodations can be provided.

ATTACHMENT 1 – Proposed Project

Proposed Project

Nature of Activity

The project would construct a 2.6 acres pad in uplands, wetlands, and waters of the U.S. including bridge abutment, approach, vehicle turnaround, parking, basic amenities, curb, vehicle driveway, security fencing, and landscape buffer (Figure 2) (Note: certain components would be installed out of the water). Material would be excavated from the side slopes above Sitka Channel to level the proposed fill pad, including from a wetland mapped during the 2020 wetland delineation.

Excavation and fill material in waters of the U.S. for construction includes (Figure 3A):

- **Above mean high water (MHW)-** excavation of 0.06 acre of wetland for pad leveling and placement of fill (Figure 3B)
- **Between High Tide Line (HTL) and MHW-** discharge of 0.06 acres of fill between HTL (+13 feet) and MHW (+9.16 feet relative to mean lower low water [MLLW])
- **Below MHW-** Discharge of 1.3 acres of fill
    - Side slopes of fill would have ratio of 2 horizontal to 1 vertical (2H:1V) slopes with heavy open graded armor rock and interstitial spaces.
- Rock blasting and excavation of about 10,100 cubic yards of material would occur, extending from about 16 to 60 vertical feet above MLLW (0.00 datum) located at the end of the Seward Avenue in the southwest corner of the project.
    - All blasting and excavating would occur above HTL (+13 feet).
    - Rock blasting and excavation would extend from shoreline approximately 200 horizontal feet inland.
    - Following blasting and excavating, excavated materials, armor rock, and underlayment would be placed on land to develop the SPB bridge abutment, approach, vehicle turnaround, parking, basic amenities, curb, and vehicle driveway totaling 34,650 cubic yards. The fill would be placed using an excavator and dozer and then compacted using a vibratory soil compactor.

The proposed project would construct the following structures in Sitka Channel, a Section 10 water of the U.S. (Figure 2; Table 1):

- Construct and install the following **pile-supported components**:
    - 80-foot by 24-foot approach dock
    - 120-foot by 12-foot pedestrian and vehicle transfer bridge
    - 128-foot by 68-foot bridge landing and drive-down float
    - 417-foot by 46-foot seaplane ramp float to support 10 Cessna and 4 Beaver seaplane berths
- Install and remove 12 temporary 16-inch-diameter steel piles as templates to guide proper installation of permanent piles (these temporary piles would be removed prior to project completion) (Table 2).
- Install 10 permanent 16-inch-diameter galvanized steel piles and 16 permanent 24-inch-diameter galvanized steel piles to support the approach dock, pedestrian and vehicle transfer bridge, bridge landing and drive-down float, and seaplane ramp float (Table 2).
- Install other SPB float components such as electricity connections, waterlines, lighting, passenger walkway, handrail, and mast lights.

Table 1. Sitka SPB Project Construction Components

Construction Component	Material	Dimensions (feet)
Approach Dock	Treated timber and galvanized steel	80 x 24
Pedestrian and Vehicle Transfer Bridge	Painted steel w/ galvanized steel grating	120 x 12
Bridge Landing and Drive Down Float	Treated timber, galvanized steel, coated polystyrene billets, and polyethylene floatation tubs	128 x 68
Seaplane Ramp Float	Treated timber, galvanized steel, coated polystyrene billets, and polyethylene floatation tubs	417 x 46
Parking Area	Gravel, concrete, riprap	2.6 (acres)
Piles	Galvanized Steel	See Table 2

Table 2. Sitka SPB Project Pile Installation and Removal Summary

Project Component	Temp. Pile Install (Steel)	Temp. Pile Remove (Steel)	Permanent Pile Install (Steel)	
Diameter of Piles (inches)	16	16	16	24
Approach Dock (count)	12	12	6	--
Bridge Abutment (count)			4	--
Drive Down Float (count)			--	6
Ramp Floats (count)			--	10
Total	**12**	**12**	**10**	**16**

Type of Material Being Discharged and the Amount of Each Type in Cubic Yards

Table 3. Approximate Fill and Structure Quantities

Construction Component	Cut/Fill Type	Area (Acres)	Total Volume (CY)*
Excavation of Wetland	*Cut*	*0.06*	*Cut*
Fill in intertidal waters (Section 404: Area Between HTL ~13' and MHW ~9.16')	*Armor Rock, Underlayment, and Class B Shot Rock*	*0.06*	*330*
Fill in marine waters (Sections 10/404: Area below MHW ~9.16')	*Armor Rock, Underlayment, and Class B Shot Rock*	*1.34*	*21,340*
Total		***1.46***	***21,370***
Structures below MHW	*Transfer Bridge, Seaplane Ramp Float*	*0.62*	

Description of Avoidance, Minimization, and Compensation

Site selection alternatives: Several design alternatives were considered. FAA seaplane base planning criteria and aviation user input were used to evaluate 12 sites in 2002 for a safe takeoff, landing, taxiing, and docking operations and to accommodate facility needs to adequately address forecast operations capacity.

The 2002 study evaluated sites in four steps:

- Site identification
- Fatal Flaw Screening (including topography, wind characteristics, wave characteristics)
- Conceptual Layouts and Evaluation
- Preferred Alternative Recommendation

Nine sites were determined to have fatal flaw due to topography, wind and wave conditions, and other marine traffic congestion issues. Three sites were identified as reasonable alternatives all located on Japonski Island's northeast shore. Additional site selection analyses conducted in 2012 and 2016 recommended the site at the northeast end of Japonski Island as the Proposed Alternative (DOWL HKM).

Design alternatives:

On-site fill pad alternatives included (Figure 4):

Concept A- is a large fill pad footprint at approximately 2.4 acres in overall size. Concept A included a 2,400 square feet office, waiting shelter, restrooms, and shop. Also included was a 2,400 square feet building expansion option and 20 vehicle parking stalls. Concept A consists of 0.06 acre of wetland and 1.0 acre of waters of the U.S. Impacts.

Concept B- is the smallest fill pad footprint at approximately 1.1 acres in overall size. The majority of the fill footprint is restricted to the existing parcel with the exception of the seaplane haulout ramp. This concept avoided impacts to the historic bunker. Concept B included only 9 vehicle parking stalls and no waiting shelter. Concept A consists of 0.05 acre of wetland and 0.2 acre of waters of the U.S. Impacts.

Concept C- is a mid-range development footprint at approximately 2.0 acres in overall size. Concept C included a 2,400 square feet office, waiting shelter, restrooms, and shop. Also included was a 2,400 square feet building expansion option and 11 vehicle parking stalls. Concept A consists of 0.06 acre of wetland and 0.9 acre of waters of the U.S. Impacts.

Concept D- is the largest upland development footprint at approximately 3.1 acres in overall size. Concept D included a 600 square feet terminal building with covered shelter, waiting, and restrooms. It included 30 vehicle parking stalls. Concept A consists of 0.06 acre of wetland and 2.1 acres of waters of the U.S. Impacts.

Concept E is the 2nd largest footprint at approximately 2.6 acres in overall size. Concept E included a 200 square feet covered shelter and 15 vehicle parking stalls. Concept A consists of 0.06 acre of wetland and 1.5 acres of waters of the U.S. Impacts.

Concept F is the preferred alternative with 2.6 acres in overall size. Concept F consists of 0.06 acre of wetland and 1.4 acres of waters of the U.S. Impacts. The preferred alternative is the only practicable

alternative that meets the project purpose and need, minimizes impacts to intertidal waters between the HTL and MHW, and reaches deeper water necessary for seaplane access. The preferred alternative would improve the safety of seaplane operation in the channel, along with reducing traffic and congestion in Sitka Channel. The preferred alternative would reduce conflicts with marine vessels during landing and takeoff with a relocated seaplane lane. The relocated seaplane lane moves taxi operations into a wider, less congested section of Sitka Channel. Concept F would balance excavation and fill and expand into the channel to shorten the required marine elements, reducing the costs of site development and maximizing the operational and cost efficiency of the site as a self-sustaining SPB.

Different marine concepts included **(Figure 5):**

Marine Concept 1- was originally prepared in 2016 prior to more recent wind and wave studies, thus no wave protection included in concept. Concept 1 consists of 1.35 acres of waters of the U.S. footprint.

Marine Concept 2- entire facility moved offshore into deeper water to eliminate dredging requirement. Floating wave attenuators added. Concept 2 consists of 1.54 acres of waters of the U.S. footprint.

Marine Concept 3- facility has been rotated and located in deeper water to eliminate dredging. Contains floating wave attenuators. Concept 3 consists of 1.97 acres of waters of the U.S. footprint.

Marine Concept 4- is similar to marine concept 3, but with the north wave attenuator detached and moved further from the seaplane float. Concept 4 consists of 1.65 acres of waters of the U.S. footprint.

Marine Concept 5- is similar to marine concept 4, but facility located closer to shore to reduce the access trestle length. Concept 5 consists of 2.44 acres of waters of the U.S. footprint.

Marine Concept 6- is similar to marine concept 4, but transient float relocated to the west side of the facility. Concept 6 consists of 1.67 acres of waters of the U.S. footprint.

Marine Concept 7- is similar to marine concept 6 with a longer and narrower trestle to avoid dredging and north and west floating wave attenuators. Concept 7 consists of 1.65 acres of waters of the U.S. footprint.

Marine Concept 8- is the preferred alternative. This is the 2023 65% design. Concept 8 consists of 0.62 acres of waters of the U.S. footprint. Concept 8 has the smallest structure footprint in Section 404/10 waters and removes the use of wave attenuators.

The 2018 Memorandum of Agreement between USACE and EPA is being followed for avoidance, minimization, and compensation in Alaska for the proposed project.

Avoidance: Avoiding impacts to waters of the U.S. is not practicable. Wetlands and tidal waters are unavoidable due to the size requirements of the fill pad in proximity to deeper waters to meet the project purpose and need. In addition, the existing parcel size above the High Tide Line is not sufficient to accommodate project infrastructure and must be expanded into Sitka Harbor.

- The gravel topped fill pad size requirement is based on the proposed seaplane parking, vehicle parking, and maneuvering requirements of multiple vehicles with seaplane operations.
- The wetlands identified during the 2020 wetland delineation are centrally located within the parcel and avoidance is not practical.

- FAA planning criteria for seaplane bases recommends at least 4 feet of water for seaplane bases, necessitating structures out to the required depth in Sitka Harbor.
- Designs included 6 fill pad concepts and 8 marine concepts. No design alterative completely avoided waters of the U.S.

Minimization: Emphasis has been placed on minimizing unavoidable impacts to waters of the U.S. by limiting fill discharges to the minimum amount and size necessary to achieve the project purpose.

Design Methods

- The proposed fill material and seaplane floats in Sitka Harbor are the minimum fill and structures needed to meet the project purpose.
- For fill pad concepts, Concept D had the largest fill footprint in waters of the U.S. while concept B had the smallest fill footprint in waters of the U.S. Ultimately, Concept F was selected based on the size and layout of the fill pad features required to meet the project purpose. All of the features would not fit within a smaller landward footprint and still meet FAA requirements.
- Concept F removed a 2,400 square feet building and covered shelter from the fill pad to reduce impacts to Sitka Harbor. This design change further reduced the fill footprint in waters of the U.S.
- The majority of the parcel 19208000 at 1190 Seward Avenue is uplands except for 0.06 acres of wetlands.
- Marine Concept 8 removed breakwater features and minimized structures in Sitka Harbor.

Construction Methods

- Construction activities would be conducted according to the APDES Alaska Construction General Permit including a SWPPP identifying appropriate BMPs to use during construction to prevent erosion and untreated runoff from reaching nearby waterbodies.

Compensation: The project has been designed to minimize impacts to waters of the U.S. to meet the project purpose and site selection criteria.

- Approximately 1.46 acres of Section 404 wetlands and waters of the U.S. would be impacted by the proposed fill and excavation activities.
- Compensatory mitigation would be provided by purchasing credits from a mitigation bank or in-lieu fee program to replace functions lost from aquatic resources.

References

DOWL HKM. 2012. Sitka Seaplane Base. Siting Analysis. Sitka, Alaska. Prepared for City and Borough of Sitka.

DOWL. 2016. Sitka Seaplane Base. Siting Analysis. Sitka, Alaska. Prepared for City and Borough of Sitka.

ATTACHMENT 2 – FIGURES

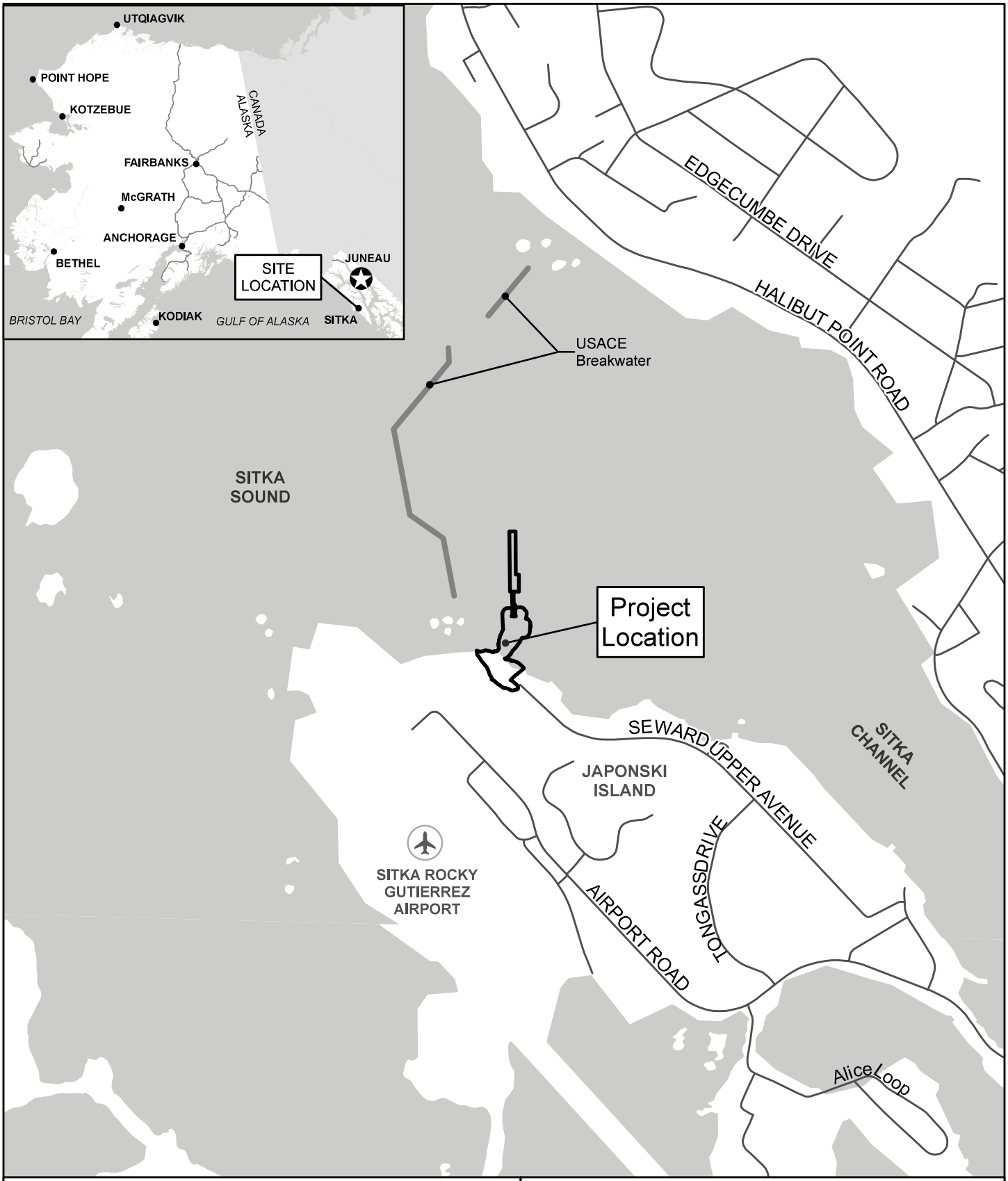

FIGURE 1: Vicinity Map

POA-2020-00370
Applicant: City and Borough of Sitka
Proposed Activity: Sitka Seaplane Base
Section 34-35 T 55 S, R 63 E Copper River Meridian USGS
Lat.: 57.055868° N Long.: 135.364283° W
Sheet: 1 of 6 Date: 7/6/2023

Project Outline
DOT&PF Road

N

0 0.1 0.2 Mile

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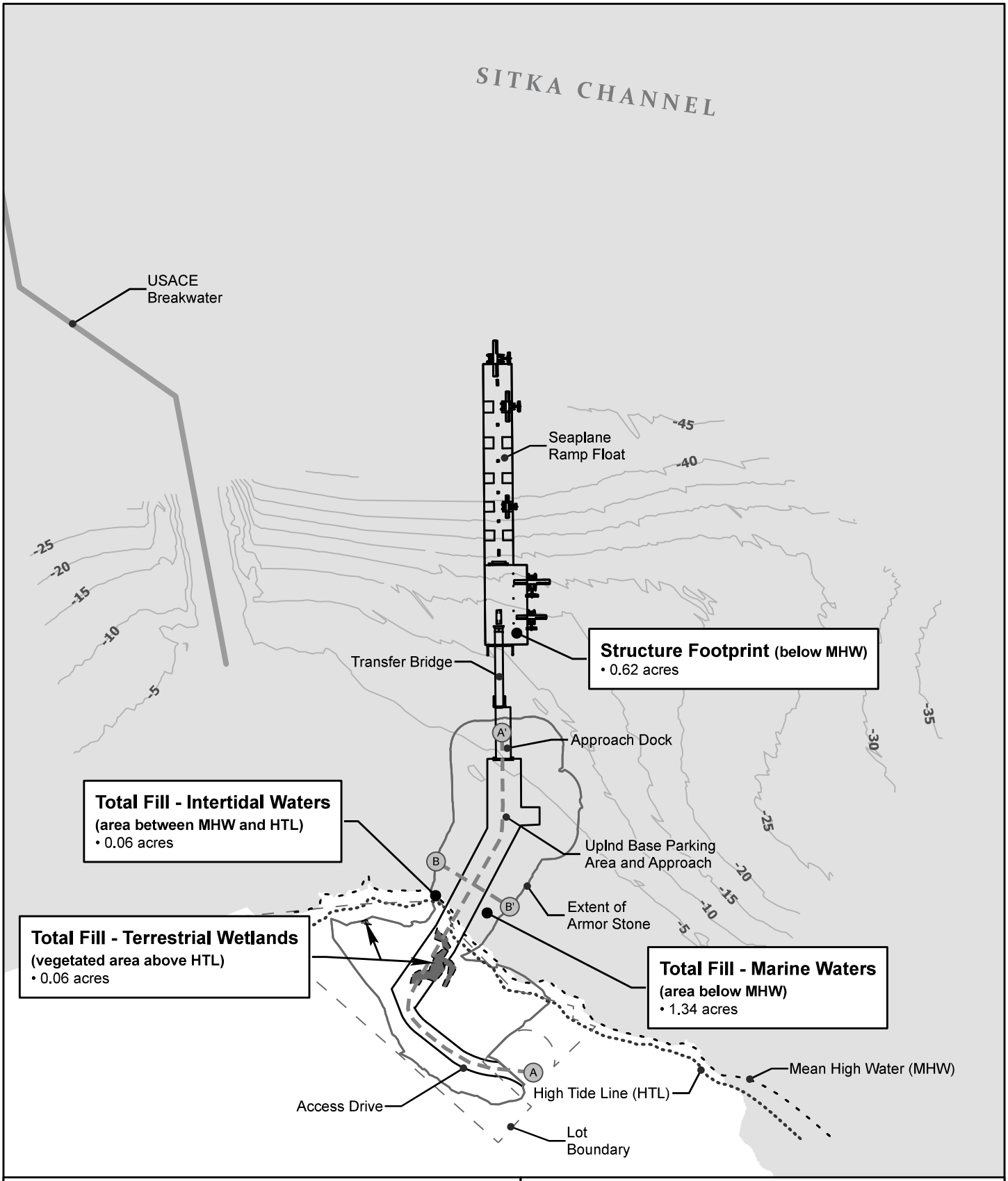

FIGURE 2: Plan View - Proposed

POA-2020-00370
Applicant: City and Borough of Sitka
Proposed Activity: Sitka Seaplane Base
Section 34-35 T 55 S, R 63 E Copper River Meridian USGS
Lat.: 57.055868° N Long.: 135.364283° W
Sheet: 2 of 6 Date: 7/6/2023

Lot Boundary
Waterbody
Wetland Impact
High Tide Line (HTL)
Mean High Water (MHW)
Water Depth (feet)

N

0 100 200 Feet

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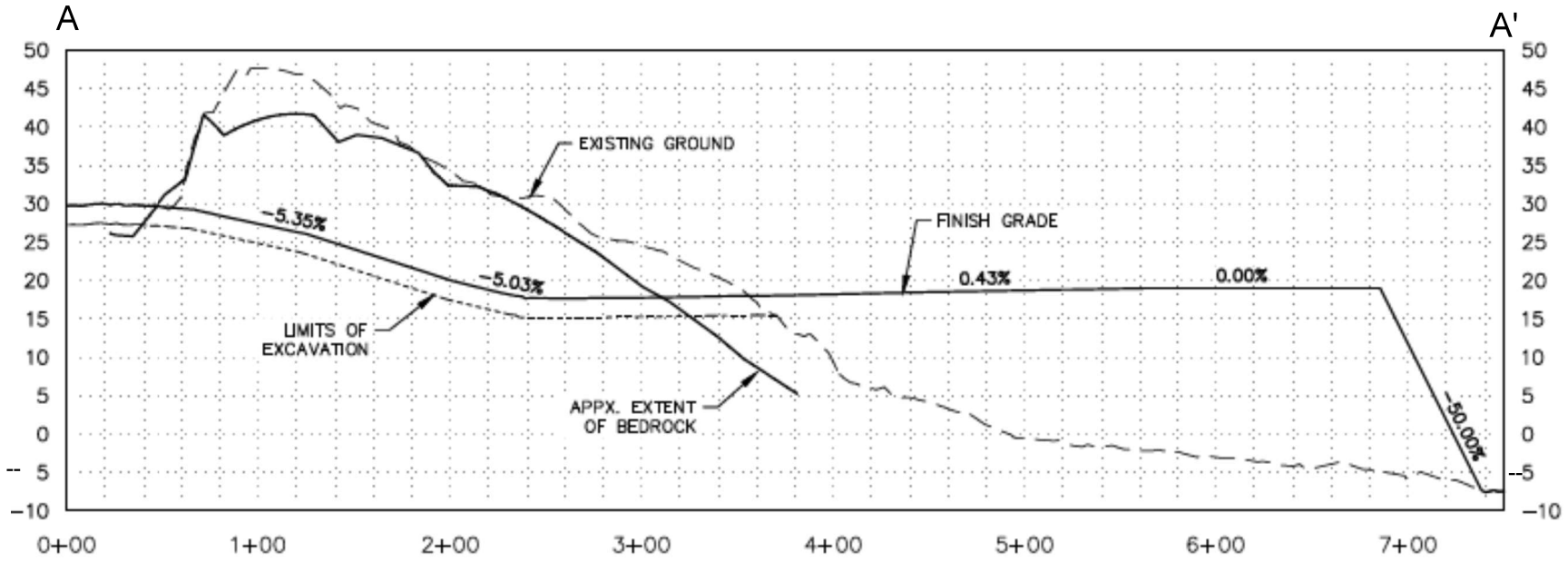

Site Centerline (A-A')

FIGURE 3A: Elevation View

POA-2020-00370
Applicant: City and Borough of Sitka
Proposed Activity: Sitka Seaplane Base
Section 34-35 T 55 S, R 63 E Copper River Meridian USGS
Lat.: 57.055868° N Long.: 135.364283° W
Sheet: 3 of 6 Date: 7/6/2023

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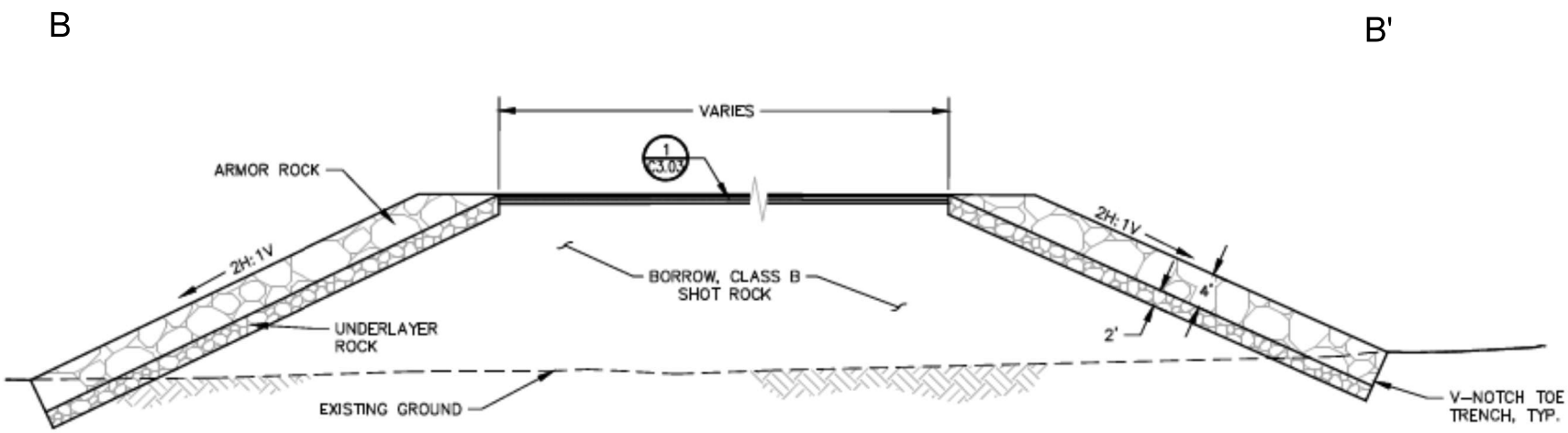

Uplands Section - Typical (B-B')

FIGURE 3B: Elevation View

POA-2020-00370
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Proposed Activity: Sitka Seaplane Base
Section 34-35 T 55 S, R 63 E Copper River Meridian USGS
Lat.: 57.055868° N Long.: 135.364283° W
Sheet: 4 of 6 Date: 7/6/2023

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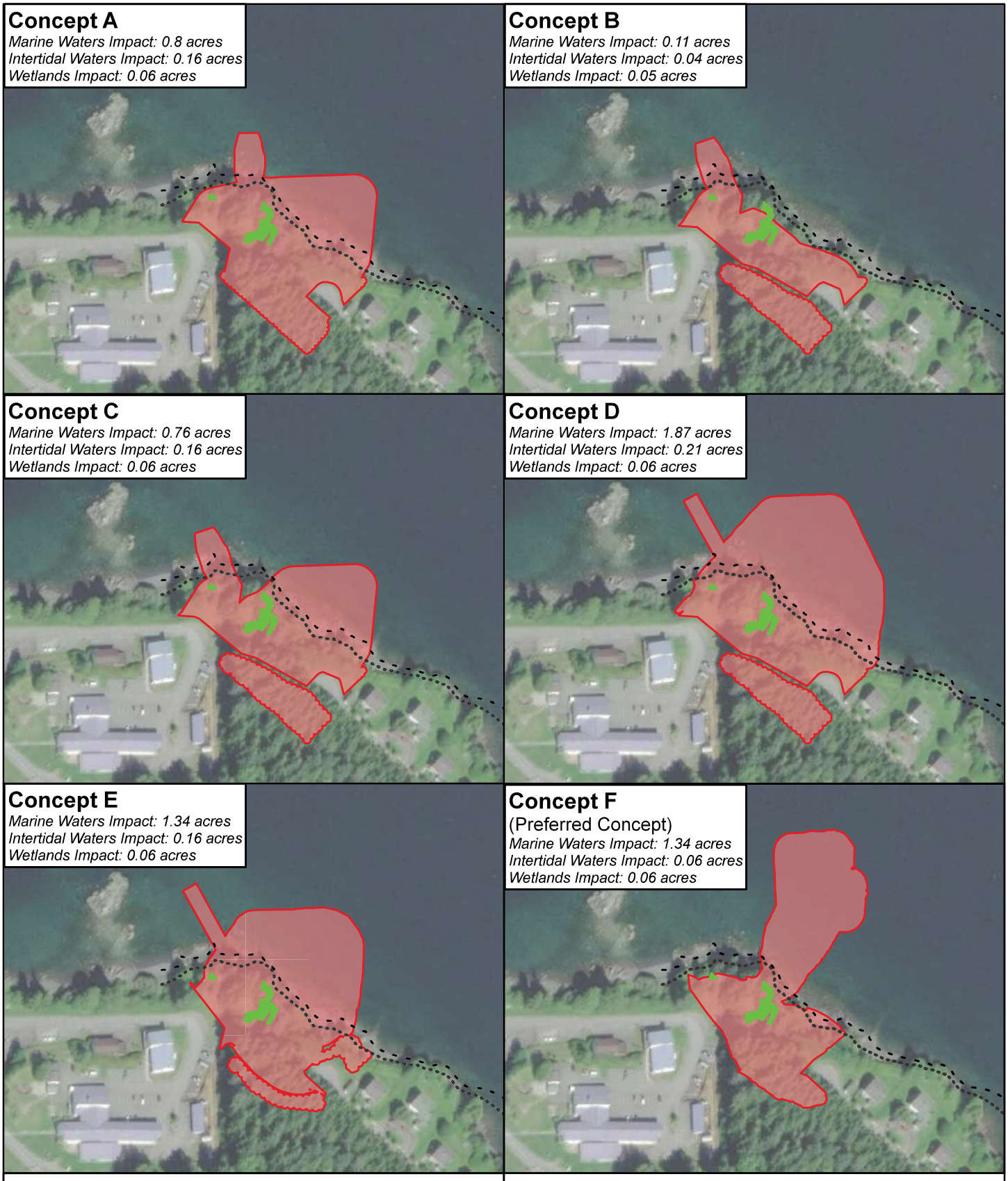

FIGURE 4: Concept Alternatives

POA-2020-00370
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Proposed Activity: Sitka Seaplane Base
Section 34-35 T 55 S, R 63 E Copper River Meridian USGS
Lat.: 57.055868° N Long.: 135.364283° W
Sheet: 5 of 6 Date: 7/6/2023

Concept Footprint
Wetland Boundary
High Tide Line (HTL)
Mean High Water (MHW)

N

0 150 300 Feet

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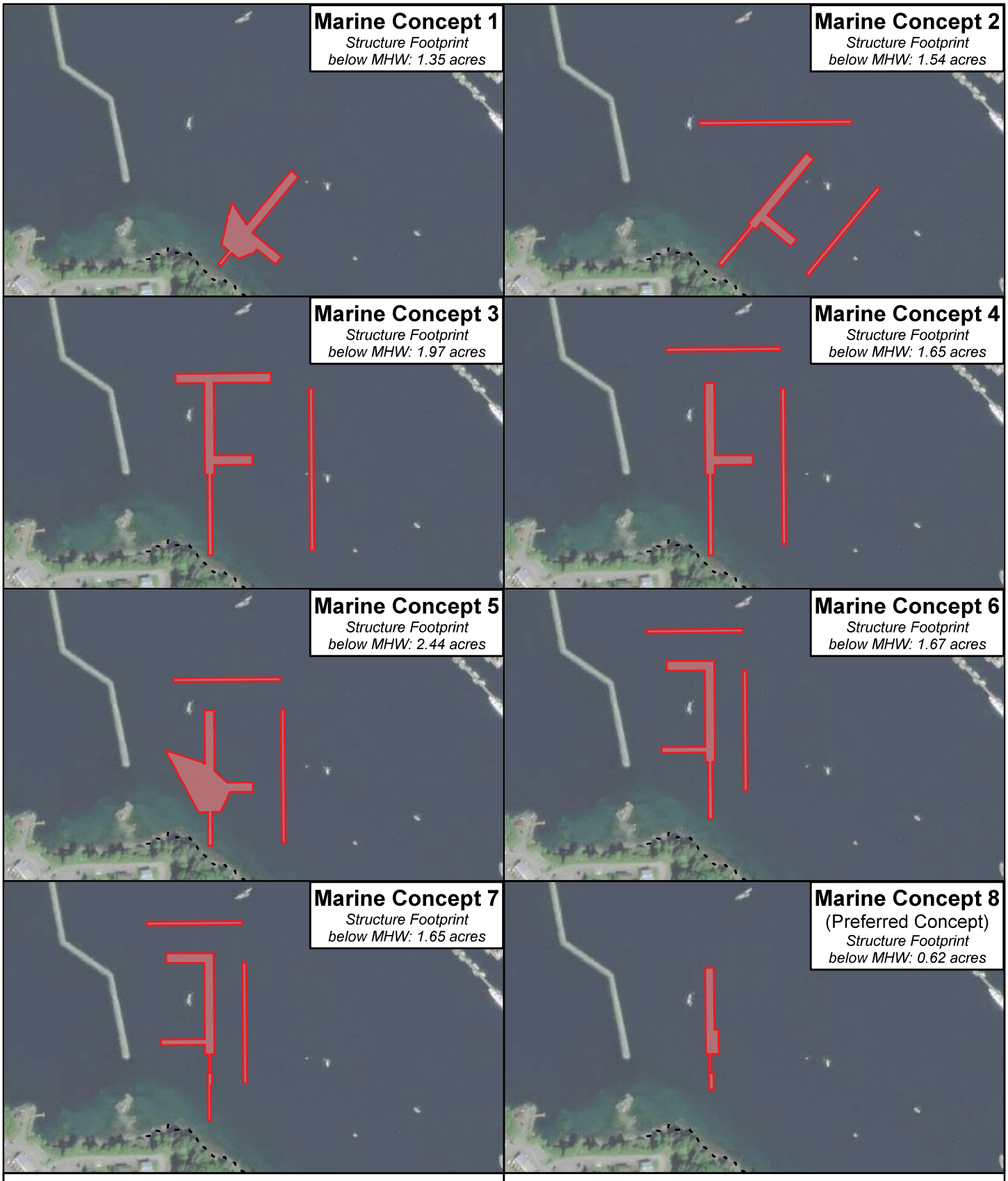

FIGURE 5: Marine Concept Alternatives- Pile Supported Infrastructure

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Sheet: 6 of 6 Date: 7/6/2023

Marine Concept Footprint
Mean High Water (MHW)

N

0 350 700 Feet

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