



U.S. Department
of Transportation

AIRPORTS DIVISION

222 W. 7th Avenue, Box 14
Anchorage, Alaska
99513-7587

**Federal Aviation
Administration**

In Reply Refer To:
Petersburg Airport Rehabilitation
State/Federal Project Number: SFAPT00594/Federal Number Pending
Consultation Initiation and Finding for Geotechnical and Contaminant Investigations

July 28, 2026

Bob Lynn
Mayor
Petersburg Borough
P.O. Box 329
Petersburg, AK 99833
bregula@petersburgak.gov; assembly@petersburgak.gov

Dear Mayor Lynn:

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Alaskan Region Airports Division anticipates receiving an application for federal assistance from the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) proposing to rehabilitate the runway, blast pad, apron and safety area at the Petersburg James A. Johnson Airport (Project). The proposed rehabilitation would be located within the airport boundary on property belonging to DOT&PF, within Sections 34 and 35, Range 79 East, Township 58 South, Copper River Meridian, on USGS Quad Map Petersburg D-3 SW, AK (C058S079E) (Figure 1).

For purposes of the National Historic Preservation Act, 36 CFR § 800.3, the FAA is initiating this consultation with you to assist in identifying historic properties and places that may be of traditional, religious, and cultural importance to your community. Please note that we are requesting information only on such places that you believe may be impacted by the proposed project so that we may try to avoid impacts. We would be pleased to discuss project details with you or any confidential concerns you may identify. This letter also contains a Finding of Effect for the Geotechnical and Environmental Contaminant Investigations that are proposed prior to completion of the Project design. This submission provides documentation of this finding as required under 36 CFR § 800.11(d).

Project Description

The Project proposes to rehabilitate the sinking Runway 5-23 Safety Area, as well as settlement between the runway and blast pad, repairs would also be conducted on the Runway 5 Blast Pad

(Figures 2-4). It is anticipated that associated utilities and approach aid foundations would be reset. Construction elements of the Project would include:

- Mill, pave, and apply markings on the runway, taxiway, and General Aviation (GA) Expansion Area¹ (Figure 2).
- Replace high intensity runway edge and threshold lighting, medium intensity taxiway edge lighting, and medium intensity apron edge lighting (Figures 3-4).
- Replace ramp flood light poles with tip down poles and replace the light heads with LED fixtures (Figures 3-4).
- Replace underground utility lines for lighting, including the service line from the airfield to the DOT&PF Maintenance Facility (Figure 5).

More information about the proposed improvements is anticipated after the incorporation of geotechnical information into design. Geotechnical drilling and soil contamination sampling would consist of geotechnical drilling, environmental/soil testing and asphalt coring to depths ranging from 3 inches to 40 ft. Testing locations are represented in Figure 5, locations may be modified at the time of the investigation. The Geotechnical Testing plan is included as Figure 6, note that testing locations and methods have changed from the original plan following consultation with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. The description below and the map in Figure 5 provide the current sampling plan and methods.

Geotechnical Testing and Environmental Sampling Description

Geotechnical Drilling

Drilling would be conducted with a hollow stem auger drill rig to depths of 15, 20 and 40 ft. Testing locations and depths are represented on Figure 5. The cores themselves would measure 2.5 inches in diameter, but the tooling would create holes measuring 8 inches in diameter. Approximately 20-35 geotechnical testing sites are anticipated within the APE, most would be concentrated near the Runway 5 Blast Pad, Main Apron and GA Expansion Area. Geotechnical and chemical samples for environmental analysis would be collected from the same borings. Dynamic Cone Penetrometer (DCP) testing would be conducted on the subgrade at select borings after the hollow stem auger has advanced through the pavement (Figures 5-6).

¹ The General Aviation (GA) Expansion Area is a term used at the Petersburg Airport to refer to the east side of the apron. The area is so named due to an addition to the east side of the Main Apron in 2004-2005. The 2004-2005 addition was intended to increase cargo capacity.

Soil Testing

Soil testing would be conducted with a Geoprobe drill rig to a depth of 2 ft. Cores would measure 1.5 inches in diameter, but the tooling would create holes measuring 2-3 inches in diameter. Approximately 10-20 soil testing sites are anticipated throughout the APE (Figures 5-6).

Environmental Surface Sampling

PFAS analytical samples would be collected north and south of the runway midpoint and west of the Runway 5 end. Testing would be conducted using hand trowels at a depth of 2 ft. below the ground surface, holes would measure approximately 4 inches in diameter. Approximately 5 surface samples would be collected (Figures 5-6).

Asphalt Coring

Cores would be collected from the existing runway, taxiway and apron pavement. Testing would be conducted with a drill rig to a depth of 3 inches, borings would measure 1.5 inches in diameter, but the tooling would create holes measuring 8 inches or smaller in diameter. Approximately 30-40 coring sites are anticipated throughout paved areas within the APE (Figures 5-6).

Upon completion of sampling, borings would be backfilled with drill cuttings, bentonite, imported gravel and compacted embankment fill cuttings as applicable. Asphalt surfaces would be repaired using cold-patch asphalt.

Preliminary Area of Potential Effect (APE)

The preliminary APE measures approximately 162 acres on airport property with a variable depth depending on project activities (Figure 5). Geotechnical and Environmental testing depths would range from 3 inches to 40 ft. below ground surface. The APE is delineated around the runway taxiway and apron, as well as a corridor to the DOT&PF Maintenance Building along Haugen Drive to account for utility line replacement.

Staging areas are to be determined but are anticipated to be on existing paved areas on airport property. Staging for geotechnical and environmental investigations would be minimal and contained within the APE, work would have no lasting impacts to the viewshed, noise or dust levels of the project area. All access roads are existing. The APE may be refined following the results of the geotechnical and environmental investigations and comments from your agency and other consulting parties.

Identification Efforts

DOT&PF Cultural Resource Specialist, Susannah Lemke, conducted the initial background research to identify cultural and paleontological resources in and near the proposed project.

Lemke meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (48 Federal Register 44738-44739) and the criteria of 43 Code of Federal Regulations 7.8. For the initial background research, Lemke reviewed the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS) AHRSPortal Mapper and Advanced Search Modules in June of 2026. There are no AHRS sites or historic districts recorded within the preliminary APE or within a 0.25-mile radius.

Also considered was documentation from numerous DOT&PF Projects at the airfield from the 1970s to the present. One letter report, titled *SWPPP for 9 Airports in Southeast Alaska*, included a review for a DOT&PF Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan at the Petersburg James A. Johnson Airport in 2004. No subsurface cultural resources were noted within the airfield (Oasis Environmental, 2004). A search of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources Revised Statute 2477 Trails database (RS 2477) indicates that there are no RS 2477 trails in the Petersburg area.

Based on an assessment of known documentation and construction records, FAA does not consider the airfield to be in an archaeologically sensitive area. The runway was constructed between 1967 and 1968 on muskeg. Contractors removed 56,300 cubic yards of muskeg and filled the gravel and dirt runway using material sourced from a nearby quarry (Federal Aviation Administration, 1968). Since that time, modifications to the runway have required removal of organic materials and the addition of fill material. A 2008 geotechnical data report, cited in the geotechnical exploration plan, indicates that the depth of fill within the Runway Safety Area varies from 11 to 30 ft., the fill overlays peat deposits ranging from 3.5 to 5 ft. deep (Figure 6).

There are several buildings and structures within the APE that are associated with the airfield. The airfield was constructed in 1968, the runway was paved and expanded in 1973 and repaved twice in the 1980s. Additional improvements have included expansion of the apron, lighting improvements and cyclic maintenance (Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, 2026). Associated buildings located on the apron were built between the 1970s and the present. Neither the buildings nor the runway have been evaluated for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), several are 50 years of age or older, the minimum requirement for consideration applying the Criteria for Evaluation for the NRHP 36 CFR § 60.4. A summary of the airport facilities and their ages is provided in the aerial photo and table below.



Aerial photograph showing buildings and structures at the Petersburg Airport

Construction Dates of Buildings and Structures within the Preliminary APE		
Date of Construction	Current Name	National Register of Historic Resources (NRHP) Status
1968	Runway 5/23	Unevaluated, meets minimum requirement for NRHP consideration
c. 1985	AK Seaplanes Terminal	Does not meet minimum requirement for NRHP consideration
c. 1974	Temsco Building	Unevaluated, meets minimum requirement for NRHP consideration
c. 1974	Alaska Airlines Terminal	Unevaluated, meets minimum requirement for NRHP consideration
c. 1974	Alaska Airlines Building	Unevaluated, meets minimum requirement for NRHP consideration
c. 1990	Nordic Air Terminal	Does not meet minimum requirement for NRHP consideration
c. 2015	Alaska Airlines Cargo	Does not meet minimum requirement for NRHP consideration
c. 1985	City Cargo Building	Does not meet minimum requirement for NRHP consideration
1993	DOT&PF Maintenance Building	Does not meet minimum requirement for NRHP consideration

Finding of Effect: Geotechnical and Environmental Sampling

Due to the nature of the geotechnical and environmental sampling and taking into account the supporting information provided above, FAA is proceeding directly to a Finding of Effect for this sampling effort. This Finding of Effect is only for the Project's geotechnical and environmental sampling.

Geotechnical and environmental sampling would take place within and around the runway, taxiway, apron and runway safety area at the Petersburg Airport. No buildings are within the footprint of the proposed sampling effort. The sampling areas have been previously disturbed by grading and adding of fill material during the initial construction and subsequent expansion of the airfield. Testing would reach depths that could penetrate undisturbed soils, however there are no known subsurface cultural resources within the testing footprint and the soils below the fill were muskeg, a low probability substrate for cultural resources. As a result, FAA does not consider the airport and runway to be in an archaeologically sensitive area and is not recommending archaeological monitoring for the geotechnical and environmental sampling.

Several structures within the airport property are over 50 years of age meeting the minimum requirement for application of the Criteria for Consideration for the NRHP, however FAA does not believe the geotechnical and environmental sampling effort would affect future evaluation of the properties or the defining characteristics of the airfield. Sampling efforts are similar in scope and scale to previous cyclic maintenance activities including paving and rehabilitation efforts.

For these reasons, FAA believes that a finding of **no historic properties affected** (36 CFR § 800.4[d][1]) is appropriate for the proposed geotechnical and environmental investigations.

The FAA will provide an APE and separate Finding of Effect for Project rehabilitation activities following the completion of geotechnical and environmental sampling. The subsequent Finding of Effect will incorporate any Project design revisions as well as comments received from consulting parties.

Consulting Parties

The following consulting parties are being contacted for the Project:

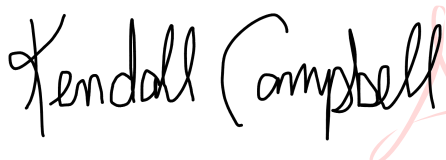
- Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)
- Clausen Memorial Museum
- Petersburg Indian Association
- Petersburg Borough
- Sealaska Corporation
- Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

FAA Contact Information

For responses, comments or questions related to the proposed Project, please contact Kendall Campbell, Alaska Region Airports Division, at the address above, at 907-271-5030, or by e-mail at Kendall.D.Campbell@faa.gov.

FAA requests your input on our proposal so that we can incorporate your concerns into Project development. Your timely response will greatly assist us in incorporating your concerns into project development. For that purpose, we respectfully request that you respond within thirty days of your receipt of this correspondence.

Sincerely,

 Digitally signed by KENDALL
DIANNE CAMPBELL
Date: 2026.07.28 12:50:30
-08'00'

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Enclosures:

- Figure 1. Location and Vicinity Map
- Figure 2-4. Proposed Activities
- Figure 5. Preliminary APE
- Figure 6. Geotechnical Exploration Plan

Electronic cc w/ enclosures:

Christy Gentemann, DOT&PF Southcoast Region, Regional Environmental Manager
David Epstein, P.E., DOT&PF Southcoast Region, Project Manager
Joseph Galgano, DOT&PF Southcoast Region, Environmental Impact Analyst
Thomas A. Gamza, DOT&PF Statewide, Cultural Resource Manager-FAA/State

References:

- Alaska Department of Natural Resources
2026 Office of History and Archaeology, Alaska Heritage Resources Survey, AHRS Portal.
<https://dnr.alaska.gov/ahrsportal>
- 2026 RS 2477 Open Data Geoportal, Web feature service depicting RS2477 Historic Trails and Historic DOT Trails Inventory 1973.
<https://gis.data.alaska.gov/maps/f97ec4306fb14ed59c71b02ee8cf0f47/about>
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1968 *Petersburg Airport Statistics*. Petersburg Press Newspaper. November 13, 1968 edition. Petersburg Public Library Digital Archive.
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2004 *Letter Report: SWPPP for 9 Airports in Southeast Alaska*. Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities