



Pribilof Island Site Remediation

Report to Congress
April 19, 2024



U.S. Coast Guard

Foreword

April 19, 2024

I am pleased to present the following report, “Pribilof Island Site Remediation,” prepared by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2016 directs the submission of a report on the efforts taken and the schedule for completion of remediation of contaminated soils on Pribilof Island tracts 39 and 43 and any use of tract 43 to carry out Coast Guard navigation activities.

Pursuant to Congressional requirements, this report is provided to the following members of Congress:



The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chair, House Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources

I would be pleased to answer any questions you have, or your staff may contact my Senate Liaison Office at (202) 224-2913 or House Liaison Office at (202) 225-4775.

Sincerely,

Linda L. Fagan
Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard
Commandant



Pribilof Island Site Remediation

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I. Legislative Language

This report responds to the language set forth in Sections 522(b)(4) and 524(e)(1) of the *Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2016* (Pub. L. No. 114-120, as amended), which states:

SEC. 522. TRANSFER AND DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY

(b) FEDERAL USE.—

(4) **REPORTS.**—Not later than 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act and not less than once every 2 years thereafter, the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating shall submit to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report on—

- (A) efforts taken to remediate contaminated soils on tract 43 described in subsection (a)(2);
- (B) a schedule for the completion of contaminated site remediation on tract 43; and
- (C) any use of tract 43 to carry out Coast Guard navigation activities.

SEC. 524. TRANSFER, USE, AND DISPOSAL OF TRACT 43

(e) REPORTS.—

(1) **REMEDIATION OF CONTAMINATED SOIL.**—Not later than 2 years after the date of the enactment of the Pribilof Islands Transition Completion Amendments Act of 2016 and not less than once every 2 years thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report on—

- (A) efforts taken to remediate contaminated soils on tract 43 and tract 39; and
- (B) a schedule for the completion of remediation of contaminated soils on tract 43 and tract 39.

II. Background

Tracts 39 and 43 are properties located on St. Paul Island, Alaska, which were under the control of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) at the time the *Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2016* was passed.

Tract 39 is a 0.9 acre site located west of the St. Paul Island Airport and approximately three miles northeast of the city of St. Paul, Alaska. This parcel was used until the early 1980s by the Coast Guard and later by the Federal Aviation Administration as a radio beacon site. In accordance with the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017*, tract 39 was transferred by NOAA to the Tanadgusix Corporation, the Alaska Native Village Corporation of St. Paul Island, Alaska by Quitclaim Deed on August 11, 2017.

Tract 43 is located approximately two miles northeast of the city of St. Paul, Alaska. Originally this parcel was used for broadcasting long range navigation (LORAN) signals. More recently, the Coast Guard's use of the property has included very high frequency (VHF) and high frequency (HF) communications as well as a seasonal forward operating location for search and rescue (SAR) actions. The 84.88-acre site currently contains buildings and structures, including three communications towers, transmitter buildings, a signal and power building, and an administrative/barracks building. In accordance with the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017*, tract 43 was transferred by NOAA to the Coast Guard on March 28, 2017.

In accordance with the *Pribilof Islands Transition Completion Amendments Act of 2016*¹, the Coast Guard submitted the *Pribilof Islands Tract 43: Transfer, Use, and Disposal* report to Congress on June 13, 2017. This report details the lands and structures in Pribilof Islands tract 43 that are not necessary for Coast Guard communications and SAR activities and describes the smallest practicable tract necessary to carry out these activities. Figure 1 captures the layout and proposed boundaries for tract 43. The portion of tract 43 that is excess to the Coast Guard's needs is shaded in red and labeled tract 43B. It is approximately 68.48 acres and includes two transmitter buildings. The portion of tract 43 that is required to ensure continued support for safety, operations, and communications is shaded in green and labeled tract 43A. It is approximately 16.40 acres and includes an administrative building with berthing and galley facilities, a generator building, communication towers and their adjacent safety zone property.

¹ Pribilof Islands Transition Completion Amendments Act of 2016 as set forth in Title V, Subtitle B of the *Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2016*, Pub. L. No. 114-120, § 524(b), as amended by the Pribilof Islands Transition Completion Amendments Act of 2016, set forth in *National Defense Authorization Act of 2017* § 3533.

III. Report

A. Efforts taken to remediate environmental site contamination on tract 39 and tract 43

As documented in the Quitclaim Deed dated August 11, 2017, transferring the parcel from NOAA to the Tanadgusix Corporation, there is no outstanding environmental contamination or environmental remedial action necessary for tract 39.

Three different contamination releases have occurred at tract 43. The first release occurred between 1977 and 1987, when approximately 70,000 gallons of fuel were released from above and below ground storage tanks. Since then, multiple investigations of the site have occurred, confirming that the fuel contaminated both soil and groundwater.

In 1996, the Coast Guard installed a petroleum vapor extraction system. This effort was unsuccessful due to excessive rock in the subsurface. In 1998, a high-vacuum extraction system was installed to remove contaminated groundwater, petroleum product, and hydrocarbon vapor. The extraction system operated from 1999 to 2003 but was later dismantled due to diminishing free product recovery. The site has been under a soil and groundwater monitoring program, established with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation² (ADEC). Biennial monitoring of soil and groundwater contaminants has been ongoing since 2000.

The second contamination event was the result of a C-130 aircraft mishap, where approximately 1,000 gallons of fuel were released. The release event contaminated approximately 450 cubic yards of soil near the runway. The soil was spread and maintained as a landfarm³ on tract 43A (Figure 1), with the intent to actively manage and decrease the concentration of petroleum contamination to below regulatory levels through natural attenuation. The Coast Guard has been actively managing this soil on tract 43A since 2008. Soil samples indicate a decreasing trend of contaminants in the soil and nearing levels below regulatory cleanup levels. The next sampling event is scheduled for the summer of 2024.

The third contamination was due to operation of a former small arms firing range. All contaminated soil from the old Small Arms Firing Range was excavated and removed in September 2022.

² Although the State of Alaska does not have an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved hazardous waste program, Federal agencies exercising jurisdiction over solid or hazardous waste sites within Alaska are nonetheless subject to, and required to comply with, Federal, State, interstate, and local requirements, both substantive and procedural respecting control and abatement of solid waste or hazardous waste disposal and management in the same manner, and to the same extent, as any person subject to such requirements. *See* Section 6001 of the Solid Waste Disposal Act, as amended by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (Pub. L. 94-580), *codified at* 42 U.S. Code (U.S.C.) § 6961(a). Aircraft fuel released into the environment is presumptively excluded from the scope of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 9601 *et seq.* *See* 42 U.S.C. § 9601(14); *Cose v. Getty Oil Co.*, 4 F.3d 700 (9th Cir. 1993).

³ A “landfarm” is an above-ground remediation technology for soils that reduces concentrations of petroleum constituents through biodegradation. In simple terms, it is the decision to remove soil that is contaminated by a fuel spill from location A, transport it to location B, and then spread the contaminated soil in a thin layer across an area within location B and wait for nature to take its course in breaking down the fuel. This method of treatment has proven effective in reducing concentrations of nearly all the constituents of petroleum products. *See How To Evaluate Alternative Cleanup Technologies For Underground Storage Tank Sites, A Guide For Corrective Action Plan Reviewers*, EPA 510-B-17-003 Emergency Management October 2017, page V-1. https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-03/documents/tum_ch5.pdf.

B. Schedule for the completion of contaminated site remediation on tract 43

The Coast Guard anticipates the following schedule, provided no additional contamination is discovered:

1) Tract 43 - Petroleum Contaminated Groundwater

ADEC approved the Coast Guard's updated 2023 Groundwater Monitoring report and agrees with continued groundwater monitoring due to the presence of contaminants above the regulatory cleanup levels and free product in numerous wells.

In accordance with 18 Alaska Administrative Code (AAC) 75.345, long-term monitoring will continue on tract 43 until two consecutive monitoring events from all monitoring wells demonstrate contaminant concentrations are below state regulatory thresholds; the contaminant concentrations show a decreasing or stable trend; and, hazardous substance migration is not occurring. When all conditions are met, the site will be viewed as 'naturally attenuated' and monitoring will no longer be required. Monitoring cannot cease until these requirements are satisfied. This must be demonstrated by the Coast Guard's annual monitoring data. In accordance with 18 AAC 75.345(i), ADEC must approve the ceasing of groundwater monitoring activities. Continued monitoring is not an impediment to the transfer of tract 43B.

2) Tract 43A - Petroleum Contaminated Soil

Discussions are ongoing to obtain ADEC approval of in-situ management of the approximately 8,750 cubic yards of contaminated soil. Ground water tests must be below state regulatory thresholds before finalizing the in-situ management plan. Most of the impacted soils are located under the Signal and Power Building.

3) Tract 43A - Contaminated Soil from C-130 Incident

The Coast Guard will continue to employ natural attenuation of the land spread contaminated soil until remediation goals are met. The next sampling event will take place in the summer of 2024.

4) Tract 43B - Lead Contaminated Soil

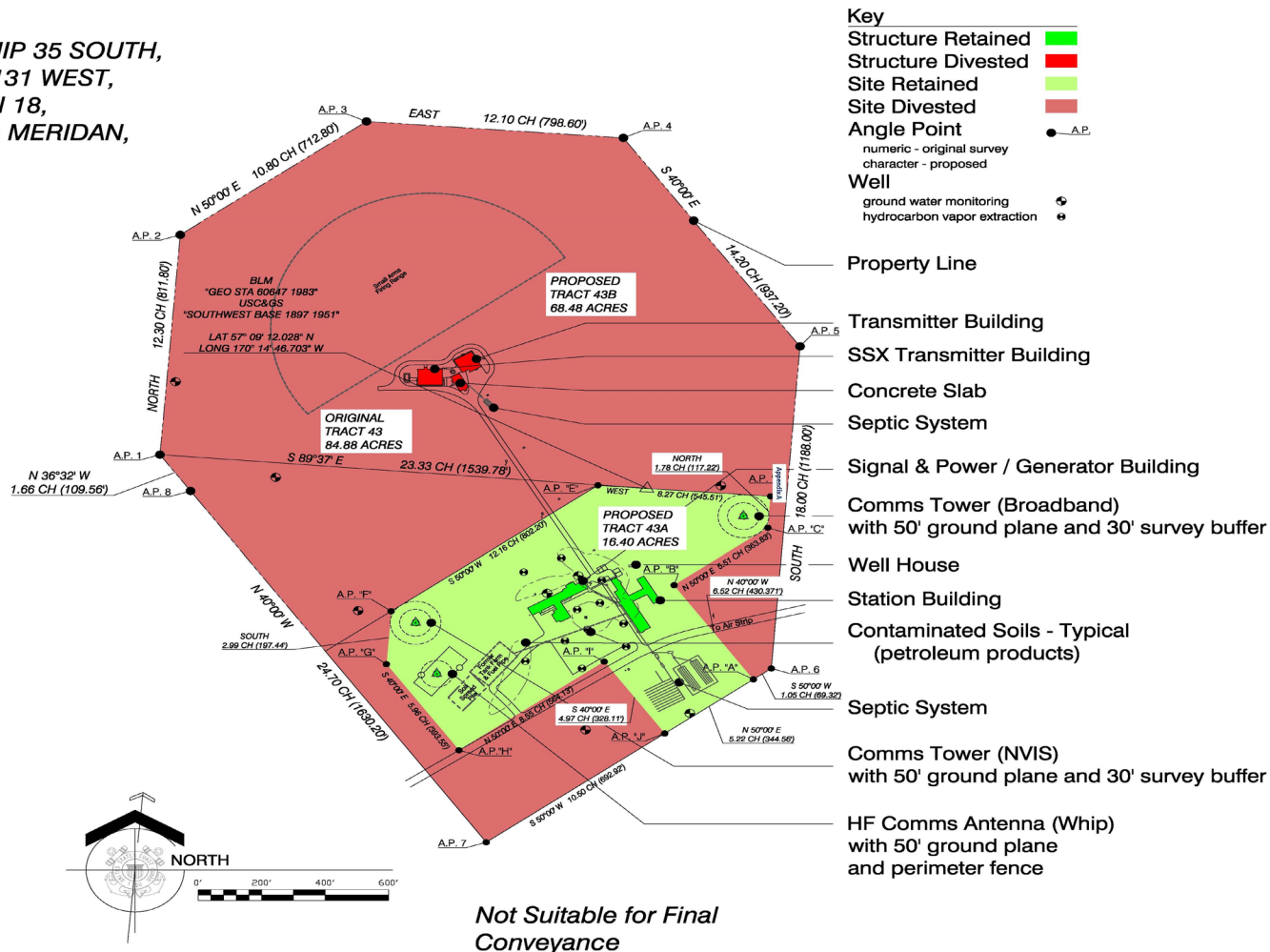
Tract 43B received a "Cleanup Complete" determination from the ADEC on February 02, 2020. The Coast Guard has initiated the land transfer to the Tanadgusix Corporation with an expected completion in 2024.

C. Use of tract 43 to carry out Coast Guard Navigation activities

While LORAN activities have ceased, the Coast Guard facility within tract 43A in St. Paul remains a critical resource for Coast Guard communications and aviation mission requirements in the Bering Sea. The Coast Guard now uses tract 43A for VHF and HF communications for both Coast Guard in-flight operations and mariners on the Bering Sea, as well as for housing aviation crews for seasonal SAR missions. As reported in the Pribilof Islands: Tract 43 Transfer, Use, and Disposal report to Congress dated June 13, 2017, the smallest practicable tract enclosing lands and improvements in tract 43 that are necessary to carry out communications and SAR activities is contained in tract 43A.

Figure 1. Coast Guard Proposed Tract Boundaries

TOWNSHIP 35 SOUTH,
RANGE 131 WEST,
SECTION 18,
SEWARD MERIDAN,
ALASKA



USCG PROPOSED PROPERTY BOUNDARIES AND FACILITY DIVESTITURE, TRACT 43, ST. PAUL ISLAND, ALASKA
SCALE: AS SHOWN

Appendix: List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Definition
AAC	Alaska Administrative Code
ADEC	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
HF	High Frequency
LORAN	Long Range Navigation
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
SAR	Search and Rescue
U.S.C.	United States Code
VHF	Very High Frequency