

UNALASKA: SOUTH CHANNEL BRIDGE (Project No. 52930)

March 15, 2006

How the Amaknak Bridge Site became involved with the bridge project

- The proposed alignment for Henry Swanson Drive was considered the optimal project design because it met the highest design criteria for safety, was most easily constructed, and it minimized maintenance requirements.
- However, the selected design shifted Henry Swanson Drive through the Amaknak Bridge Site, a known archeological midden site. Consultation in late 2002 and early 2003 among the parties listed below resulted in a decision to prepare a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The MOA was signed in March and April of 2003.

Who are the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) parties?

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)
Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska	Ounalashka Corporation (OC)
Unalaska Historic Commission	Museum of the Aleutians
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF)	

What does the MOA do?

- The MOA defines mitigation measures and other commitments necessary to offset the adverse effects on the Amaknak Bridge Site. The MOA stipulated that FHWA through DOT&PF would ensure that plans were drafted, reviewed, and approved by the MOA parties, and implemented for (1) data recovery of the site and (2) archaeological monitoring/salvage recovery.
- The MOA also established specific protocol for any human remains, associated grave goods, and objects of cultural patrimony that might be discovered during excavations.

Data Recovery at the Amaknak Bridge Site

- The data recovery plan, prepared by archeologists Richard Knecht (Museum of the Aleutians) and Richard Davis (Bryn Mawr College), was approved by the MOA parties in May 2003. The plan included recovery of at least 20 percent of the site, with all artifacts and associated documentation to be curated at the Museum of the Aleutians. The Museum website is <http://www.aleutians.org/>
- The data recovery program provided for in the MOA was completed in 2003. Knecht and Davis directed the field crew that excavated approximately 264 cubic meters of site deposit, representing about one-third of the site. This work provided data pertinent to research questions concerning prehistoric Eastern Aleutian culture history, household archaeology, subsistence technology, and adaptations to environmental change. At least ten semisubterranean stone-walled dwellings were uncovered, four of which were fairly intact. Numerous chipped stone, ground stone, and bone artifacts were collected. A large volume of faunal remains, including marine mammals, fish, and birds, was recovered. A range of radiocarbon dates indicates that the site dates to about 2,500 to 3,500 years ago. Artifact form and frequency place the site chronologically midway between the nearby Margaret Bay and Summer Bay sites.
- A data recovery report, dated May 2005, was circulated to the MOA parties. Inquiries on the report are to be directed to the Qawalangin Tribe, P.O. Box 334, Unalaska, Alaska 99685; or by phone at 581-2920.

Archaeological Salvage Recovery

- The earlier proposed monitoring plan for removal of the midden has been restructured into a separate archaeological salvage recovery project to be conducted in advance of bridge construction. This will require an on-site archaeological team and services of a local excavator.
- Mike Yarborough, Cultural Resources Consultants LLC, will lead the archaeological team, assisted by Dave McMahan, State Archaeologist from the Office of History and Archaeology.
- A holding area on OC property near the OC office and the Museum will be established for the removed midden material. The area will be secured with fencing and a locked gate. When hauling operations are completed, the midden material will be seeded so that the mound is stabilized with vegetation.
- An archaeological salvage recovery report will be filed with the MOA parties within 1 year after completion of the salvage recovery. Inquiries on the report are to be directed to the Qawalangin Tribe.