

# 2014 Secretary of the Defense Environmental Award Nomination Cultural Resources Management, Installation Fort Wainwright, Alaska

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Fort Wainwright is located in the Tanana Valley of Interior Alaska, a place known for its long winters, extreme climate, and a varied cultural history spanning 13,000 years. The installation is comprised of the cantonment area, seven major training areas, and a number of smaller satellite locations, all totaling approximately 1.6 million acres or 10% of the Army's total land inventory. The installation's boundaries stretch over 100 miles to provide premier training capabilities unmatched elsewhere in the United States. Fort Wainwright's mission is to be the leader in optimizing use of resources and energy while providing installation services and support to enhance the readiness and quality of life for our Soldiers, Families, and Civilians.

Fort Wainwright was established in 1939 as Ladd Field, an Army Air Corps cold weather test station. The test station was constructed on land with a long history of human use, from small bands of prehistoric nomadic people to modern-day homesteaders, miners, and subsistence hunters. What began as a small, remote test station quickly expanded during World War II into a large and strategically important installation. Ladd Field became the transfer point for American airplanes bound for the Soviet Union under the Lend-Lease program. In 1947, Ladd Field became Ladd Air Force Base, charged with air defense along with reconnaissance missions and cold weather testing and research. In 1961, Ladd Air Force Base was transferred back to the Army and renamed Fort Jonathan Wainwright. Today, Fort Wainwright is home to nearly 17,000 Soldiers, Family Members, and Civilians and continues to serve a vital and strategically important role in support of worldwide deployment.

The Fort Wainwright Cultural Resources Management (CRM) program is vital to the successful management of Fort Wainwright's 1.6 million acres of land. Through proactive stewardship of 662 known archaeological sites and 42 historic buildings and structures, the CRM program supports Fort Wainwright in achieving its ever-evolving military mission needs. Through public outreach to both Soldiers and the wider Fairbanks community and consultation with over 55 interested organizations, including 42 federally-recognized tribes, the CRM program continues to build and improve relationships with neighboring communities and educate Soldiers on Alaska's unique heritage, making them better Army ambassadors to those surrounding communities.

### Judging Criteria

	Program Management
	Technical Merit
	Orientation to Mission
	Transferability
	Stakeholder Interaction
	Program Impact
	
	
	
	
	

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The CRM team consists of the Cultural Resources Manager, a DoD civilian, and support personnel from the Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands: a Native Liaison, two Archaeologists, and two Architectural Historians. The program also benefits from assistance provided by Soldiers from the Warriors in Transition battalion, seasonal employees, and university partners. The CRM program manages 84 archaeological sites and 42 historic buildings and structures that are eligible for listing or are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Together these properties make up three archaeological districts and two historic districts including the Ladd Field National Historic Landmark (NHL). Additionally, there are 73 archaeological sites not eligible for the National Register and 505 archaeological sites whose eligibility has yet to be determined.



To support Fort Wainwright's management of cultural resources, the CRM program recently revised the Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan (ICRMP) in FY13. This is a major accomplishment as previous versions were developed when Fort Wainwright was a subordinate garrison to US Army Garrison Alaska. This plan formalized and solidified Fort Wainwright's independent management of cultural resources after realignment. Another significant achievement was the successful implementation of the Operations and Maintenance Programmatic Agreement to streamline the consultation process on routine activities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106). Other major accomplishments include the development of Ladd Field NHL *Design Guidelines* and *Maintenance Plan*; the amendment to the Battle Area Complex Surface Danger Zone Programmatic Agreement; the revision of the *Standard Operating Procedures for Government-to-Government Consultation and Tribal Coordination*; and the approval of DoD Legacy funding to study sustainability of historic buildings in cold climates.



Garrison Commander signs the FY13 ICRMP.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Overall Conservation Management

The CRM program successfully accomplished a number of program and installation goals in FY12-13. The staff surveyed 15,000 acres, including determinations of eligibility (DOEs) for over 65 archaeological sites and historic buildings, completed interior building surveys, and conducted 27 separate Section 106 consultations. The Operations and Maintenance Programmatic Agreement streamlined consultation process addressed 532 projects, reducing the number of individual consultations and saving approximately \$215,000 in associated costs. In addition, by making DOEs priority, the CRM program reduced the number of properties considered eligible, resulting in more efficient and sustainable management of cultural resources.



Fort Wainwright's CRM program is a leader among Army cultural resources programs. During FY13 and under recommendation from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and Army Environmental Command, both Fort Huachuca and Yuma Proving Ground reviewed Fort Wainwright's procedures for conducting consultations and for seeking outside interest in partnerships. In both cases, the installations used Fort Wainwright's experience and examples to craft successful Section 106 consultations. The CRM program has developed policies, procedures, and approaches that can be easily transferred or adapted by other DoD installations, including how to successfully integrate Section 106 consultation with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) responsibilities and how to develop low cost, helpful mitigation projects





beyond basic recordation. The CRM program has used mitigation to educate Directorate of Public Works staff through informal technical trainings, information papers, and signage. The CRM program has also kept costs low by monitoring archaeological sites after training events in a newly constructed range complex instead of traditional data recovery.



During the review period, the CRM program focused on formalizing procedures and policies with quantitative measures of success and increasing communication and awareness within the installation and externally with stakeholders. Soldiers gain knowledge and new appreciation from awareness campaigns on Alaska Native culture, Interior Alaska's prehistoric history, and Fort Wainwright's World War II heritage. This new knowledge helps Soldiers be good neighbors and stewards of the land while living in Alaska, which in turn, helps the Army retain important, productive relationships with surrounding communities. Involvement of the CRM program early in the planning process has reduced limitations on training abilities and improved use of installation infrastructure including historic buildings. These efforts enabled the CRM program to integrate fully into larger installation planning processes like the Fort Wainwright Real Property Planning Board where Public Works and the Command Staff plan facility utilization and new construction. This integration is also seen in the CRM program's active participation in the development of Fort Wainwright's Installation Strategic Plan. From these efforts, the installation reduced costs as fewer and less contentious Section 106 consultations became the norm.



### Historic Buildings and Structures

The unique and layered history of Fort Wainwright is evident in its built environment. The core of the cantonment is the Ladd Field NHL with 21 contributing buildings and structures that convey the significance of the World War II missions. Surrounding the Ladd Field NHL are the historic buildings that make up the Ladd Field Air Force Base Cold War Historic District.



*Interpretive panels illustrate Ladd Field's history.*

The management and stewardship of historic buildings is an important component of the CRM program. Fort Wainwright established a foundation for successful maintenance and adaptive reuse of its historic buildings through the development of two Memorandums of Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) that facilitated the rehabilitation of historic Cold War-era buildings. In FY12 and FY13 respectively, the CRM program finalized two major planning documents, the *Ladd Field NHL Design Guidelines* and *Ladd Field NHL Maintenance Plan*, that support adaptive reuse and continued use of the NHL's historic buildings. These two documents were supplemented with new installation-wide Americans with Disabilities Act and Energy Efficiency standards. By utilizing these standards and plans along with the ICRMP, the installation has adaptively reused buildings, renovated interior spaces, and maintained assets for continued military use. While utilizing these documents, the CRM staff has worked closely with Facility Maintenance personnel, including attending yearly inspections of historic buildings. Fort Wainwright continues to be committed to reusing its historic buildings and structures as evidenced through the pursuit and approval of FY13 DoD Legacy funding through a partner university to study how historic buildings can be more sustainable in cold weather climates. Another major success in maintaining and rehabilitating historic buildings was seen in FY13, when three Ladd Field NHL buildings were repaired with in-kind material preventing the loss of character-defining features, and non-historic elements were removed to bring the buildings back to their historic look and feel.



In FY13, the CRM program successfully finished surveying all historic buildings and structures listed on our Real Property Inventory that were over 40 years old. Now the CRM program has moved beyond the known inventory and into assisting the Real Property Office in finding and documenting historic buildings and structures currently not documented in the installation's inventory list. This is a particularly difficult project because of the large land base with areas of historic use being found in remote locations within training lands. Examples of the type of properties that are encountered include illegally-built hunting cabins and older military infrastructure, such as towers, defense structures, and bridges. Along with completing the inventory survey, the CRM program maintains a historic buildings database that records information on National Register-eligible properties. This database includes current photos, architectural descriptions, known alterations, and statements of significance for each property, and it is utilized by Public Works for up-to-date information of Fort Wainwright's historic buildings. Also, the CRM program continues to support achieving accuracy of the historic property status within Army inventory programs. During FY12, Fort Wainwright was able to assert audit readiness in 2013, ahead of the established 2017 compliance deadline.



### Archaeological Resources

Interior Alaska has a long history of human occupation dating to the end of the glacial period, approximately 13,000 years ago. Non-glaciated areas like those in Interior Alaska stretched from the Canadian border to Siberia and provided a corridor for small bands of nomadic people to travel between the continents. The earliest sites dating from this time period on Fort Wainwright are found on ancient dunes and river terraces, and most of the archaeological sites contain remains of meals at hunting camps and debris from creating and sharpening stone tools.



*Test excavations found deeply buried artifacts with charcoal dating the site to 13,300 years ago.*

During the review period, the CRM program inventoried 126 sites and completed DOEs for 33 sites. Thirteen of these are prehistoric sites determined eligible for the National Register. They include several multi-component stratified, late Pleistocene sites in the Tanana Flats with stone tools and animal bones. The CRM program also protected two sites from potential damage and monitored 131 sites multiple times each year for effects from range use. At the end of FY12, the CRM program amended the Battle Area Complex Surface Danger Zone Programmatic Agreement to include a streamlined approach to monitoring sites based on training schedules, saving approximately \$17,000 annually for the duration of the agreement. As outlined in the ICRMP, all artifacts are left in place unless they are in danger of being removed by others or are excavated in shovel tests or unit excavations. By working closely with Range Planners, the CRM program successfully helped relocate new construction and training projects away from archaeological sites, saving costs usually associated with data recovery.



During FY13, the CRM program partnered with Texas A&M University to conduct a backcountry field school. Together, the CRM staff and field school surveyed for sites around Blair Lakes, mapped tools found underwater at the lake edge, delineated the boundaries for two known sites, and conducted a DOE evaluation at a 13,000 year-old site. This partnership resulted in a cost-savings of over \$16,000. In addition, the CRM staff presented at a number of academic conferences and institutions (Society for American Archaeology, the Alaska Anthropological Association, Texas A&M, and Palaeoamerican Odyssey) and made contributions to *Current Research in the Pleistocene* and *Alaska Journal of Anthropology*.



Research efforts during FY13 have focused on reconstructing the geological and paleoecological context for Late Pleistocene sites in the Tanana Flats Training Area. The CRM program continues to compile data from soil surveys, geotechnical drilling, pollen cores, radiocarbon chronologies, and archaeological investigations to recreate Fort Wainwright's landscape from 13,000 years ago. The geography and environment have changed dramatically since this time. Late Pleistocene people living at the site would have encountered very different plants and animals in their surroundings. This data was presented at the 2013 Palaeoamerican Odyssey conference.



### Alaska Native Program

Fort Wainwright has a layered, fully developed program for engaging and working with Alaska Natives facilitated by the CRM program's Native Liaison. This singular Army-to-tribe point of contact coordinates consultation with tribal stakeholders regarding Section 106 requirements, management of cultural resources on the expansive land base, and related projects, such as the development of the ICRMP. Quarterly newsletters to 42 tribes, biannual meetings with five tribes, project-specific meetings with six tribes, and a government-to-government program webpage complete the communication matrix to tribal stakeholders. This multifaceted approach ensures more complete, meaningful input from Alaska Native stakeholders which results in better planning and management of Army resources and assists Fort Wainwright in being a good neighbor to vital tribal community partners.



Tribal consultation includes on-site visits.

With each garrison change of command, including the latest in FY13, the CRM program reviews the garrison's *Standard Operating Procedures for Government-to-Government Consultation and Tribal Coordination* and makes modifications to reflect changes in existing and new policies and commander preferences of program execution. These procedures were created to institutionalize the way the installation intended to develop and maintain the government-to-government relationships with consulting tribes. It does so at standards above and beyond those set forth in the *DoD American Indian and Alaska Native Policy*. On a monthly basis, the Native Liaison presents training on Alaska Native Cultural Awareness and cultural resources awareness, including responsible land use, to Soldiers and Family Members at Newcomer's Orientations. In addition, the CRM staff presented on the topics of Alaska Native cultural awareness and respectful land use during FY13 in support of Earth Day activities and in support of Fort Wainwright's youth newcomer activity, Camp Cheechacko. The CRM program also works closely with the installation's natural resources and restoration programs to ensure that Alaska Native subsistence hunting and gathering rights are taken into account during all planning activities. The installation's Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) inventory is up-to-date with no items currently managed by the installation. Procedures for addressing NAGPRA, government-to-government relations, Archaeological Resources Protection Act, tribal consultation, and integration of tribal knowledge into land management are all outlined in the ICRMP.



### Curation

The CRM program renewed its contract with the University of Alaska Museum of the North to curate all artifacts found on Fort Wainwright lands. The CRM program has worked closely with the museum to update procedures and older collections to current standards, and as of FY13, all Fort Wainwright collections are in 100% accordance with 36 CFR 79. By curating artifacts off

post, costs have been reduced by \$10,000 yearly, and collections are more accessible to the research community. Since the museum is located in Fairbanks, all the collections are still very accessible to Fort Wainwright. The CRM program began working with the museum during FY13 to photograph all of the installation's collections to ensure that digital files are available for use in reports and public outreach. Several students have already used the collections for research purposes for graduate work and for conference presentations.



### **Cultural Resources Awareness and Education**

Since its inception, a major focus for the CRM program has been community involvement, assisted by a robust awareness and education program. The program utilizes popular and inventive public outreach materials, articles for local and academic publications, booths and displays at major events, public presentations, and an interactive website and Facebook page. The CRM program began developing and installing interpretive panels around Fort Wainwright a decade ago. In FY13, the CRM program added three new interpretive signs to a viewing platform overlooking historic Ladd Airfield to educate Soldiers, the community, and visitors on Fort Wainwright's Cold War aviation history. The CRM program has also developed a three-tiered awareness campaign for the protection of archaeological sites including a poster, presentation, and pamphlet geared toward the contractors and Soldiers active on Fort Wainwright's lands. In both FY12 and FY13, the CRM program participated in Earth Day celebrations, which involved teaching school-age children about Fort Wainwright's history, presenting to Soldiers on responsible land use, and developing postcards that highlighted cultural resources. During the review period, the CRM staff gave multiple presentations to a wide variety of local Fairbanks civic organizations, including senior groups, historical society meetings, school children, and Soldiers. Lastly, the CRM program updated the Cultural Resources website and launched a Fort Wainwright Environmental Division Facebook page, providing a user-friendly and interactive format to engage the public and provide awareness and outreach materials. Taken on the whole, these efforts create appreciation and respect among Soldiers and the broader community of our shared heritage which in turn adds to overall quality of life on Fort Wainwright.



An interesting example of recent mitigation through public outreach is the *Teaching with Historic Places* lesson plan, *Ladd Field and the Lend-Lease Mission: Defending Alaska in WWII*. The lesson plan was developed for students in grades 5 through 7, using the National Park Service's (NPS) *Teaching with Historic Places* program standards. By utilizing established standards, the CRM program saved time and reduced costs while ensuring the final product would be useful and educational for students. This project facilitated close coordination with an important consulting party, the NPS Alaska Region, benefiting both the Army and NPS.

Fort Wainwright developed a low-cost, high-standard public outreach project, and NPS gained a new lesson plan for the *Teaching with Historic Places* program. The lesson plan was finalized in FY13 and has already generated interest from local schools. It is available online for anyone to download and utilize.



*Soldier learns about prehistoric heritage.*

### **Community Relations**

The CRM program works closely with stakeholders through government-to-government consultation, engagement with Section 106 consulting parties, and community outreach. The program heads the Fort Wainwright Cultural Resources Working Group, which meets twice yearly to dis-



cuss current Section 106 undertakings and updates on past projects, public outreach, and mitigation. The group consists of the SHPO, NPS, and local interested organizations. The CRM program provides site visits to facilitate consultation and during FY13 presented to the local Historic Preservation Commission on current undertakings. Additionally, the CRM program continued to develop beneficial partnerships with other agencies and educational institutions, in fulfillment of Preserve America, Executive Order 13287. In FY13, the CRM program worked with the SHPO to update and finalize a statewide report on Cold War historic properties. By working with the SHPO on finalizing the report rather than developing a completely new report, the CRM program saved \$21,000 in mitigation costs, assisted the SHPO in completing a necessary state-wide study, and strengthened our working relationship with the agency.



CRM staff teaches students history.

### Cultural Resources Compliance



To maintain compliance with federal and state cultural resources laws, the CRM program works directly with individuals responsible for military readiness. This includes working with the Command Group on Alaska Native community relations and culture awareness education for Soldiers; Range Managers on protecting archaeological sites during and after construction and training exercises; and Public Works Engineers, Maintenance Specialists, and Master Planners to ensure that our historic buildings are maintained and reused in continued support of military mission needs. In order to meet compliance responsibilities, the CRM program interacts with multiple federal and state agencies and tribal governments, including the NPS, SHPO, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and federally-recognized tribes. The CRM program works closely with law enforcement to ensure that if Archaeological Resources Protection Act violations occur, the offenders will be accountable. During FY13, the CRM program executed 100% of its \$1.7 million budget with no delays to the mission, allowing for successful training of Soldiers and preparations for deployments



Recently, the CRM program worked on the complex process of integrating Section 106 consultation with the NEPA process. In FY10, Fort Wainwright first fully integrated the two processes to address new construction within the Ladd Field NHL, and in FY13, the CRM program expanded on lessons learned to successfully integrate the two processes while addressing the disposition of two historic hangars. The CRM staff worked with the NEPA team to streamline the processes while continuing to engage consulting parties. The FY13 US Army Engineer Research and Development Center's study, *Two for the Price of One: Integration of NEPA and NHPA Procedures*, includes these two examples as case studies.

### CONCLUSION

Over the past 75 years, Fort Wainwright has grown from a small cold weather test station with a 55-man detachment to today's modern installation, home to nearly 17,000 people. In spite of the many difficulties associated with the long, extreme winters and the remote, expansive land base of Fort Wainwright, the CRM program has thrived. The program has successfully ensured that installation lands and facilities remain available and in good condition not only to support Fort Wainwright's mission but also to preserve the cultural history that is inherent to life in Interior Alaska. The history of Fort Wainwright and its importance to life in Alaska's Last Frontier is still felt today in part because the CRM program is a vital member of the Fort Wainwright community.

