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# Historic Preservation Plan needs public input

Fern Greenbank  
LOG Editor

The draft of the Seward Historic Preservation Plan is ready for public comment, something Historic Preservation Commission members say it wants and needs in order to perform its required duties.

"The schedule was set, and we are on schedule," said French. "But I just don't think we have done enough to solicit public comment or see the draft before the next scheduled commission meeting."

The Historic Preservation Plan was actually written by a consultant firm, Nuka Research, and based on public comment solicited in the form of surveys and a public meeting April 22, 2014, which French said was poorly attended. He said he doesn't think the traditional required notice periods work well for a topic like historic preservation. The consultant also solicited input with online surveys and collected approximately 20 completed surveys.

Adopting a plan is a requirement for the city since it became a Certified Local Government. That designation requires the presence of a commission and a comprehensive plan. That designation allows the city to qualify for certain types of grants and expert assistance.

"I think the plan right now is mush," said French. "We may have to ask for an extension from the State Historic Preservation Of-

fice and apply for additional funds to gather more public comment."

There are three new members to the commission that have never been involved in a formal meeting or a work session about the plan, said French.

"It needs a concrete direction that people, and the City Council, can buy into," said French. "I still think the community profile reads like a condensed version of Mary Barry's 'Manifest Destiny' oriented community history."

The draft plan notes several challenges specific to Seward as well as opportunities. The draft written by the consultants focuses on the "fragile" nature of downtown Seward. When it comes to consideration of historic zoning downtown, the draft notes the concerns often expressed by business and homeowners that zoning is seen as too much regulation. The draft also points out that people are concerned about the cost of adhering to strict historic preservation guidelines present in formal zoned areas.

Based on the public comments, the consultants noted in the draft that local government "expresses little support" for preservation efforts, in part because there are so many funding needs. Another challenge expressed was the conflict between economic and industrial development and preservation.

Because of the obstacles facing historic preservation efforts, the consultants focused

the opportunities portion of the plan on education and public awareness in the hope that more information would result in more support for preservation efforts.

French said he thinks the commission has to be more proactive in its approach which starts with a stronger commitment expressed in the plan because it is this plan the commission will use as a roadmap for at least the next decade.

"I think we have a council currently that might be receptive to recommendations made by the commissioners," said French.

One councilmember that has always been a big proponent of historic preservation and planning is Iris Darling, owner of the Brown and Hawkins Building which is on the National Register of Historic Places.

"I know some people really dislike the idea of an historic zone, because they don't like being told what to do," said Darling. "But honoring the state's history and the city's history is good for the city all the way around. It really is time we had an historic district."

Collecting data about the economic impact of historic preservation is something French wants the commission to consider. For example, programs like Main Street USA, administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, provides financial incentives and grants for business owners in historic areas to comply with regulations

when repairs or remodeling is needed. Communities have to qualify for Main Street designation first.

French said there is plenty of evidence that historic tourism helps cities with heavy tourism industries during the off seasons and this is something Seward could benefit from.

From the city's perspective, said Assistant City Manager Ron Long, there is no preconceived idea or strong perceptions related to the plan.

"We really are waiting for the Commission to provide us and the City Council with recommendations," said Long. "We don't want to have an influence over public comment or the Commission's important work."

Copies of the draft can be accessed online or viewed the library. This comment period ends Friday, Sept. 5, though commission member John French says that is not long enough.

Public comment can be sent to michelleprior@nukaresearch.com or written comments can be delivered to the Seward Community Library front desk. All comments are due by Friday, Sept 5. The Seward Historic Preservation Commission will review and discuss the draft plan in a work session following their August 27 meeting. The plan can be accessed online at [www.cityofseward.us/DocumentCenter/View/1997](http://www.cityofseward.us/DocumentCenter/View/1997).

## Lowell Point lagoon

From Page 1

quest for proposals gave potential contractors a large window for performance, otherwise the bids would have been much more expensive, he said.

When discussion moved back to the current smell, Councilwoman Iris Darling pressed Leman about emergency measures available to salvage businesses and residents' quality of life right now. The only viable option presented was calcium nitrate, which the city is already using to decrease the smell. Public Works Director WC Casey said he is using the manufacturers dosing schedule but agreed to go back and research more to see if additional nitrate is needed.

Councilman Dale Butts asked Leman who he goes to when he needs advice. Leman's initial response was himself, but did offer up some published authors as references he uses. Leman said he has asked the DEC for help with the air quality issue.

"They more or less said, good luck with that, so I went to the private sector for testing equipment," said Leman.

At one point, Leman said he wasn't aware there was anything wrong with the aerators, but was reminded that the aerators have a leak and air is escaping to places unknown, which causes the smell to increase.

Leman said the smell will get worse when the sludge removal begins and there are no plans currently in place to mitigate that issue. The council asked what other cities do when they experience this problem.

"Ponds are not usually so close to people," said Leman.

So, Councilwoman Christine Terry asked Leman specifically to find out what can be done.

"People are smelling this and having headaches," said Terry. "Is it mass hysteria? Real or perceived we have to do something. There are children at Lowell Point. This isn't new. This happens in other places."

To this remark, Leman said, he had gone out with his daughter Sunday night and didn't smell anything out at Lowell Point.

"We did smell it when we got by the Sealife Center," said Leman. "I'm not saying it isn't possible, just that I didn't smell it on that night at that time."

Conversation moved to what is actually causing the smell. Leman said to get rid of the smell, you would first have to find out what is making the air smell. It could be a combination of gases such as carbon, ammonia, methane or hydrogen sulfide, he said.

"Can't you test for those gases," asked Councilman Butts? "What is it? Is it harmful? There may be something else. I don't believe

this is just hydrogen sulfide."

Leman said it probably wasn't necessary because you don't need to test for carbon dioxide or oxygen and the equipment is currently showing a reading of "non-detect" for hydrogen sulfide, though it was revealed that the testing equipment is not completely outside, rather, it is housed in a unit with the doors open because the equipment installer was worried about rain damage, said Casey.

"What you are likely smelling are sulphur compounds, so you could start there," said Leman.

But, what can be done right now, asked Councilwoman Casagrande.

Casey said he would investigate higher dosing of calcium nitrate and look into aerators.

"We really are doing all we can," said Casey.

The entire work session lasted more than two hours and covered a lot of ground. Seward resident and environmental toxicologist gave Leman a run for his money with a master class in biology as French expressed concern that not enough is known about what is going on in the lagoon aerobically and anaerobically.

No specific solutions were offered but the council and residents did have a chance to ask the engineer the city relies on how the lagoon problem got to this point of dysfunction and what can be done to salvage businesses and reduce health risk. Leman said the DEC's decision not to allow the city a bypass waiver to make sludge removal less expensive was a political decision.

Toward the end of the meeting, frustrated Lowell Point resident Lynda Paquette said there was an elephant in the room called "that attorney we don't have yet."

"What I'm hearing is that I pretty much can't take reservations for May or June," said Paquette. She asked the council to consider the cost of speeding up the dredging process versus the loss being sustained by Lowell Point residents.

Another Lowell Point business owner, John Page, told the council he needs some assurance that next summer the smell will be gone because he doesn't know if he can keep his returning staff.

"I do feel some support from the council," said Page. "I know it's not pleasant for any of us."

At this time, Leman and Casey and city management have been asked to negotiate with the contractor in a way that might speed up the process. The results of a seven day air quality testing period should be ready this week and they will be reviewed by council. In addition, the council asked the city manager to put the lagoon issue in every city manager's report for every council meeting.



### Seward Airport Improvement Project (#54857)

#### Public Open-House Meeting

&

#### Notice of Intent to Conduct Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Studies

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), with the Federal Aviation Administration, has begun a project to improve the Seward Airport. The project's primary purpose is to make improvements that will substantially reduce further damage to airport facilities caused by the frequent flooding of the Resurrection River. The proposed project also will likely include runway/taxiway reconstruction, pavement rehabilitation, new airport lighting/electrical enclosure building, new navigational aids, and additional fencing and erosion control/armor. All alternatives identified will be subject to further environmental and engineering study. Any proposed improvement will also require compliance with Executive Order (EO) 11990 Protection of Wetlands and EO 11988 Floodplain Management.

Please stop by the public meeting any time during the hours below to learn more, help identify issues and concerns, and speak to a project team member.

#### Public Open House Meeting

Date: Thursday, September 11, 2014

Hours: 4 pm to 7 pm (stop by any time)

Project Overview Presentation: 15 minutes at 4:15 pm and 6:15 pm

Location: K.M. Rae Marine Education Building (lobby and auditorium)

Address: 201 Railway Avenue, Seward

Written comment may be given at the Open House, submitted via the website ([www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/sewardairport/](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/sewardairport/)), email ([solsticeak@solsticeak.com](mailto:solsticeak@solsticeak.com)), or mail (Robin Reich, Public Involvement Coordinator, Solstice Alaska Consulting, 2607 Fairbanks Street, Suite B, Anchorage, AK 99503) by September 26, 2014. For more information or to join the mailing list, visit [www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/sewardairport/](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/sewardairport/).

The DOT&PF complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Individuals with a hearing impairment can contact DOT&PF at a Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (907)269-0473. No person shall be excluded from participation in, or be denied benefits of any DOT&PF programs based on race, religion, color, gender, age, marital status, ability, or national origin.

Can't get enough? Check out  
[www.TheSewardPhoenixLOG.com](http://www.TheSewardPhoenixLOG.com)



**Seward Airport Improvement Project (#54857)  
Public Open-House Meeting  
&  
Notice of Intent to Conduct  
Preliminary Engineering Studies**

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**Seward Airport  
Improvements Project**



**The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF)** has initiated preliminary studies and is collecting information to prepare for designing improvements to the Seward Airport. Learn more at an upcoming *public meeting* (see right) or on the project website, coming soon: [www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/sewardairport/](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/sewardairport/)

The project team would like to hear your thoughts, ideas, and comments. Please come to the open house or send written comments (by September 26, 2014, please) to: Robin Reich, Public Involvement Coordinator, Solstice Alaska Consulting, Inc., 2607 Fairbanks Street, Suite B, Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Email: [solsticeak@solsticeak.com](mailto:solsticeak@solsticeak.com)

**Seward Airport  
Improvements Project  
#54857**

**OPEN HOUSE  
PUBLIC MEETING  
September 11, 2014**

**STOP BY any time  
between 4 and 7 pm**

**PRESENTATION at  
4:15 and 6:15 pm**

**LOCATION:**  
K.M. Rae Marine  
Education Building,  
Seward Marine Center,  
201 Railway Avenue,  
Seward

*Please Come!*



**Seward Airport  
Improvements Project**  
c/o Solstice Alaska Consulting, Inc.  
2607 Fairbanks Street, Suite B  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503



To:



# Seward Airport Improvements Project (#54857)

Public Meeting #1 • Open House and Project Presentation • September 11, 2014

## Meeting Agenda and Overview



### Meeting Purpose

- To present the Seward Airport Improvements Project (including a project overview, existing conditions, issues heard so far, and schedule).
- To gather input from community members and local experts on issues and concerns.

### Meeting Format

- **Open House Hours:** 4 pm to 7 pm
  - Please sign in and then visit the information stations (see detail below) in this lobby.
- **Project Overview Presentation**
  - Step into the auditorium at either 4:15 pm or 6:15 pm to listen to a 15 minute project presentation and overview.

### Open House Stations

- **Station #1: Welcome and Sign in**
- **Station #2: Process Overview**
  - Begin with a “big picture” view of this project. Learn about the project process, including where we are in this project now, and how this process works to balance big-picture considerations.
- **Station #3: Existing Conditions**
  - Review what we have learned so far related to:
    - **Aviation Activity**
    - **Wind Coverage**
    - **Wetlands**
    - **Land Ownership and Zoning**
    - **Future Plans of Alaska Railroad Corporation (adjacent airport neighbor)**
  - Share your thoughts and ideas on these topics or others with a team member.
- **Station #4: Considerations and Issues**
  - Review an aerial photo highlighting known airport deficiencies.
  - Review federal floodplain mapping in detail to better understand this issue.
  - Share your thoughts with a team member.
- **Station #5: Next Steps**
  - Take a look at the project milestones and project phases to see what is coming next.
- **Station #6: Comment Station**
  - Your written comment is an important part of the process. You’ll find comment forms here.

*Thank you for your time and participation!*

Visit the project on the web at: [www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/sewardairport/](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/sewardairport/)





# Seward Airport Improvements Project (Project #54857)

Public Meeting #1 • Open House and Project Presentation • September 11, 2014



Thank you for your attendance today. Please sign in (legible print is appreciated)!

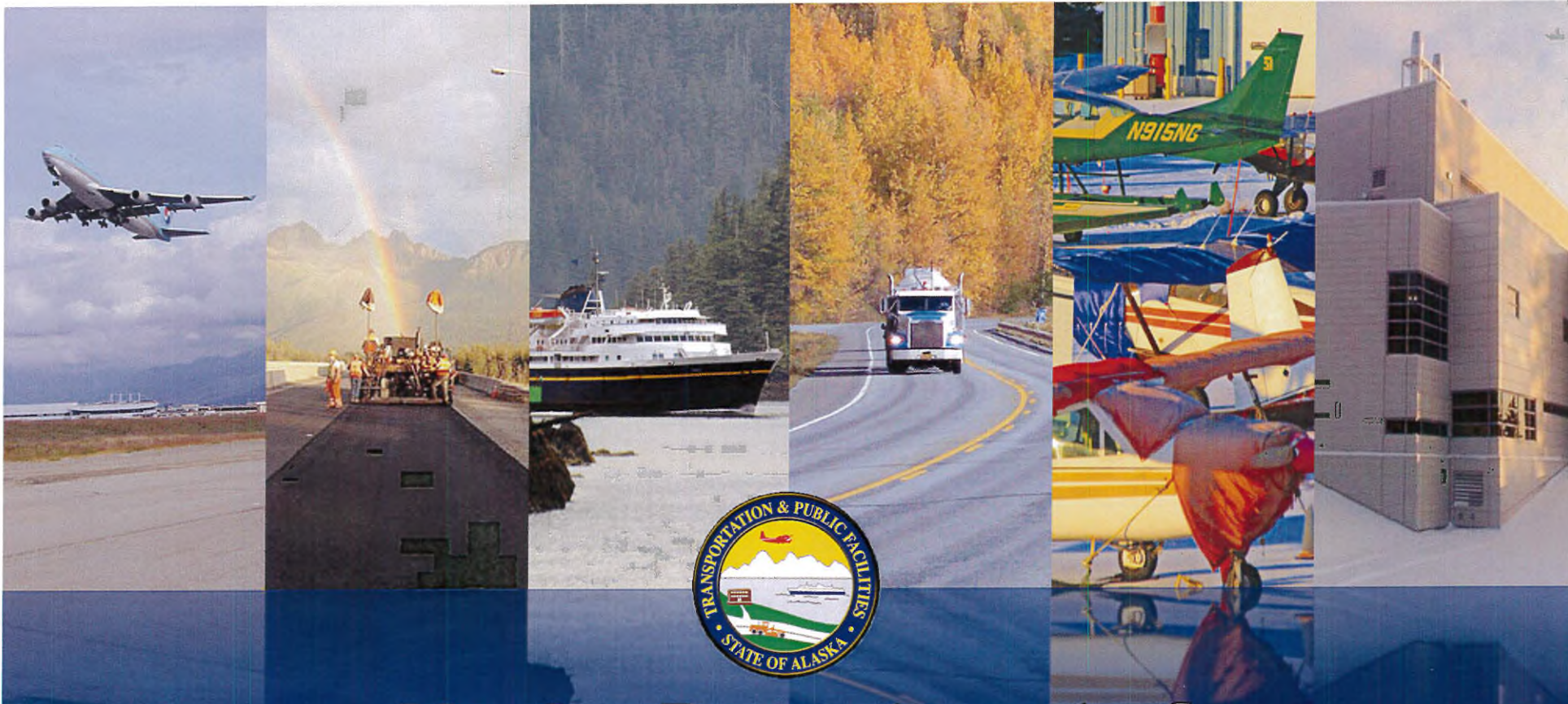
Name	Mailing Address	Email Address
Dennis Perry	PO Box 1802, Seward	bearlakepilot@gmail.com
L & K KURTZ	SEWARD JOURNAL	SEWARDJOURNAL@GMAIL.COM SEWARDJOURNAL.COM
Mike Insalaco	PO Box 3505	mikei@ak.net
Lucky Wilson	PO Box 680 Seward	AKLUCKYMAN@GMAIL.COM
Louis Bencardino	Box 95 Seward	bencardino1@arrb.com
Denny Hamilton	Box 7 Seward	sewardain@comcast.net
Bob Linville	Box 1753	Seward, AK 99664
WALTER CORRIGAN	Box 770	Seward AK 99664
Roscoe Mathis	Box 167	SEWARD AK 99664
Stephanie Presley	Box 831	sprestey@kpb.us Seward AK 99664
WILLARD DUNN	3127	WILNB@AK.NET
Fern Greenbank	PO Box 3304	editor@thesewardsofphoenixlog.com
Dan Mahalak	PO Box 2646	Dmahalak@yahoo.com

Voluntary Information Requested by the Civil Rights Office of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities *	
Gender (Please Circle)	Race (Please Circle One)
Male/Female	White/Alaska Native/Native American/Black/Hispanic/Asian/Pacific Islander/Other
Male/Female	White/Alaska Native/Native American/Black/Hispanic/Asian/Pacific Islander/Other
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Male/Female	White/Alaska Native/Native American/Black/Hispanic/Asian/Pacific Islander/Other
Male/Female	White/Alaska Native/Native American/Black/Hispanic/Asian/Pacific Islander/Other

\* The purpose of requesting this information is to ensure fair and equal representation by the public in all projects and programs administered by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.







# Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

## Seward Airport Improvements

September 11, 2014



# Welcome!



- Introductions
- Project process overview
- What we've learned, still gathering data
- Schedule



# Project team



- **ADOT&PF**

- Barbara Beaton, P.E.
  - Project Manager
- Joy Vaughn, P.E.
  - Consultant Coordinator

- **PDC Engineers**

- Royce Conlon, P.E.
  - Project Manager
- Ken Risse, P.E.
  - Project Engineer
- Patrick Cotter, AICP
  - Project Planner

- **Solstice Alaska**

- Robin Reich
  - Public Involvement Coordinator/Biologist
- Carla SlatonBarker
  - Public Involvement Specialist

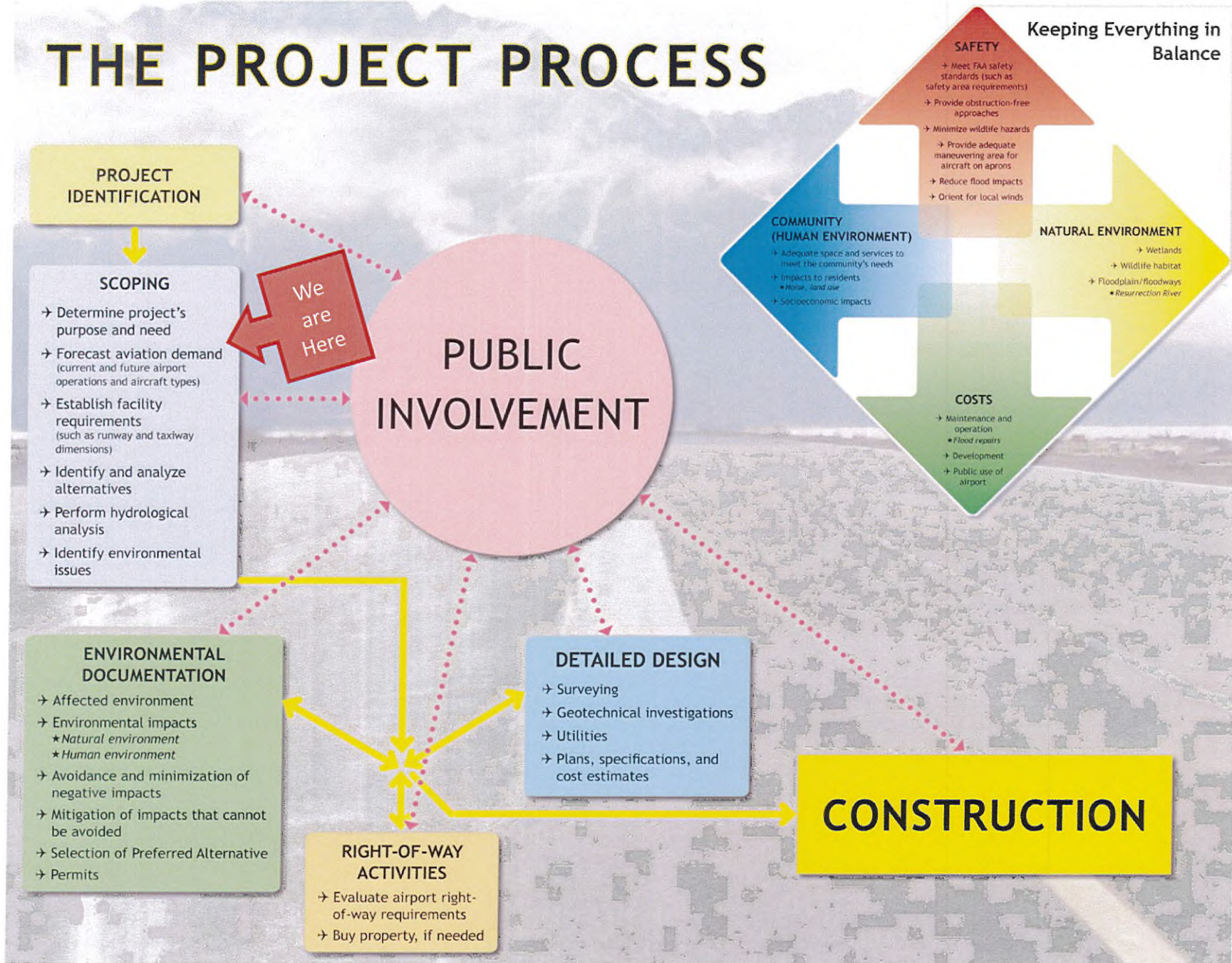
- **Hydraulics & H Modeling**

- Ken Karle, P.E.
  - Project Hydrologist

- **Shannon & Wilson**

- Kyle Brennen, P.E.
  - Geotechnical Engineer

# THE PROJECT PROCESS



# **Public Involvement Elements**

- **Public Meetings**
- **Stakeholder advisory group**
- **Newsletters**
- **Website w/ notifications of update**
- **Opportunity for Public Hearing**  
(during review period for the Environmental Assessment )

# **Information Gathering**

- **Past, Present & Potential Future Aviation Activity**
- **Community Demographics**
- **Hydrology w/ potential new Floodplain Mapping**
- **Wind Data**
- **Geotechnical Information**
- **Environmental Conditions**
- **Adjacent Land Owners/Land Uses**

# Anticipated Schedule & Process

\*The schedule is dependent upon a number of variables and will likely change



**Scoping**  
June 2014 – Jan 2015

**Environmental**  
Jan 2015 – Dec 2015

**Right of Way Acquisition**  
Oct 2015 – Feb 2017

**Airport Design**

Preliminary	Local	Plans in Hand	Review PS&E	Final PS&E
	35%	65%	95%	100%

**Construction**  
April 2018-Oct 2019

**Public Involvement**

\* Open House      \* Open House      \* Open House





# Direct your written comments to:

**Robin Reich**

Public Involvement Lead

929-5960

[Solsticeak@solsticeak.com](mailto:Solsticeak@solsticeak.com)

Website:

[www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/sewardairport](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/creg/sewardairport)



# MEMORANDUM

**Date:** September 15, 2014

**To:** Barbara Beaton, DOT&PF Project Manager

**From:** Robin Reich and Carla SlatonBarker (Solstice Alaska Consulting) with input and review from Royce Conlon, PDC Project Manager

**Subject:** Summary of 9/11/2014 Public Open-House Meeting for Seward Airport Improvements Project (#54857)

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This document provides a summary of the public meeting held in Seward for the Seward Airport Improvements Project. The project presentation, meeting sign-in sheets, and scanned comment sheets are attached.

## Meeting Overview

A public meeting was held September 11, 2014, at the Rae Building in Seward. The purpose of the meeting was to (1) present the Seward Airport Improvements Project (including a project overview, existing conditions, issues heard so far, and schedule) and (2) gather input from community members and local experts on issues and concerns. These purposes were explained at the welcome station verbally and were noted on the meeting agenda.

## Meeting Format

The format of the meeting was an open house, meaning that people could come and go during the posted hours (4 pm to 7 pm) and visit information stations staffed by project team members. At 4:15 pm and 6:15 pm Royce Conlon, PDC project manager, provided a 15 minute project overview in the adjacent auditorium. The presentation explained the main topics presented on the open-house station boards. The presentation times were advertised in advance, posted at the meeting sign-in table, and announced during the meeting. Most attendees arrived near the time of the presentations, and most attendees reviewed the open-house information before or after the presentations. The presentation did not include a comment or question period; instead, attendees were asked to bring their questions and comments directly to team members at open-house stations.

## Open House Stations/Meeting Information

The presentation slides (attached) provided a high-level overview of the project process, the team, and this phase of work. Stations around the lobby highlighted the information listed below. The goal of station staff was to explain the information (provide clarity) and to encourage people to review and provide comment on issues or concerns.

- Station #1: Welcome and Sign in
- Station #2: Process Overview Graphic

- Station #3: Existing Conditions, related to:
  - Aviation Activity
  - Wind Coverage
  - Wetlands
  - Land Ownership and Zoning
  - Future Plans of Alaska Railroad Corporation (adjacent airport neighbor)
- Station #4: Considerations and Issues
  - Known airport deficiencies
  - Federal floodplain mapping (FIRM map) to show the airport facilities in relative to the flood hazard zones.
- Station #5: Next Steps Schedule Graphic
- Station #6: Comment Station

**Attendees**

The following list reports information pertaining to attendance:

- 33 people signed in.
- Two people declined signing in.
- Five project team members were in attendance (two from DOT&PF and three from the consultant team).
- Most people’s “affiliation” was noted as either pilot, lease holder, media (three local media outlets), City (city manager, planners, mayor in attendance—including some not currently in office/retired), Borough, floodplain interest, or ARRC interest.
- Six people filled out the voluntary information requested by DOT&PF’s Civil Rights Office pertaining to gender and race.
- Seven completed comment sheets (attached) were collected at the close of the meeting.
- Many attendees noted that the meeting was very successful in terms of attendance, saying that most public meetings are more sparsely attended.

**Meeting Notification**

Table 1 provides a list of the mechanisms used to notify the community about the meeting.

**Table 1. Notification Mechanisms**

Notification Mechanism	Date/Details
Display Advertisement: Seward Phoenix Log	Published 08/21/14, 08/28/14, 09/04/14
Postcard Notice (mailed to 185 people on mailing list)	Mailed 9/5/2014
Email Announcement to City List (pdf of postcard to City)	Emailed to City 9/3/14; City confirmed and sent to City list
Chamber of Commerce Announcement	Emailed to City 9/3/14; forwarded by City to Chamber

Flyers Posted in Town (Posted by City; using postcard design)	Posted the week of 9/3/14
Personal Announcement Calls (to airport lease holders/ pilots who participated in summer pilot survey)	Calls made 9/9/2014

**Comment Summary and Themes**

Five general comment themes were heard during the meeting: (1) comments on this public meeting, (2) comments on project process and communication, (3) comments on technical issues and concerns, (4) general comments, and (5) comments on maps and figures. Individual comments heard by team members or recorded on comment sheets are listed below according to comment theme. Verbatim comment sheets are attached.

***Theme 1: Comments on This Public Meeting***

- Many noted that the meeting had a really good turnout.
- Several people noted that the meeting was well organized and provided good information.
- Members of the media commented that the community seemed really engaged in the topics and conversations with the project team at the open-house stations.
- Many noted the absence of a question and answer period following the presentation. Not having this opportunity was perceived by some as a “tactic” for managing the group.

***Theme 2: Comments on Overall Project Process and Communication***

- Some attendees thought that DOT&PF had already defined the project; therefore, many residents wanted to know what was planned. Some said that if a project is underway it meant that those who allocated the funding had a definition of the project.
- Some residents voiced skepticism that DOT&PF really wanted to hear from them. There was a perception that the meeting was a "check the box" meeting rather than a genuine request for information.
- Some expressed that the DOT&PF’s concerns do not align with the community’s concerns (in general terms, this government agency doesn’t care about what happens to them as a community). Attendees wanted DOT&PF to understand “that the community has been through hell and back” [mentioning coal law suit, air quality issues, worry about economy] and that an adversarial relationship and unease developed on other projects impacts the airport project.
- Many voiced the need for honest communication and straight language. There was a request for the project team to understand that the community is filled with intelligent people who care about the community.

### **Theme 3: Comments on Technical Issues and Concerns**

Comments on technical issues and concerns spanned topics like fencing, property ownership, hydrology, airport restrictions, the economy, and airport features. These comments are organized below by topic.

**Fencing.** Fencing is a sensitive issue. Many voiced not wanting or needing a fence. There is historical use by residents of the airport for non-aviation purposes. Residents see the airport as part of their community and cross the airport to get to the mud flats at the head of Resurrection Bay. One commented that the private property between the two runways was donated to Duck Unlimited. The area is used for hunting. Although this person acknowledged people walking across airport property to with a gun to go hunting wasn't necessarily compatible use it was a community use that is valued.

People also like having direct access to hangars. There was concern over reasons, location, and design/aesthetics of any new fencing.

**DOT&PF's Rights as Property Owner.** Meeting attendees do not understand DOT&PF's rights, responsibilities, and liabilities as the airport property owner.

- Many voiced frustration/anger at recent clearing of trees and brush.
- Many wanted advance notice of any activities on the airport, such as tree cutting and brush clearing, so they can become mentally and emotionally prepared for changes to their community.
- Many did not understand the reason or value of recent maintenance work involving tree cutting and brush clearing.

**Hydrology of the Resurrection River and Request for Study.** A common comment theme was the need to know more about the hydrology of Resurrection River related to airport flooding. Specifically, the following ideas and concerns were raised:

- **Dredging.** People know that river dredging occurred in the past and asked why this has not occurred regularly to fix the airport flooding problem. One attendee indicated this grandfather (many years ago) used to do river re-channeling annually to keep the river in the center of the flood plain. He indicated it was fishery issues that caused this practice to be discontinued.

Some suggested dredging each year, particularly in the area "from the drop off to the deeps to the bridges on Nash Road and Seward Highway." One person suggested placing the dredged material behind the existing rip rap for future uses (such as harbor protection from flooding, runway expansion, and/or reestablishment of the original airport road or an eastside road). Some noted dredging happens in Anchorage and it should be acceptable in Seward.

- **Man-made changes** upstream that have caused the current airport flooding problem. People asked for information to understand the cause/effect relationship between

airport flooding and upstream work, particularly at “the (Seward Highway) Bridges.” People want to understand the issue and identify some responsible party in order to determine (a) financial responsibility and (b) if a “man-made” problem makes it easier to receive environmental approval for changing the river alignment.

- **FIRM Map.** One attendee indicated the FIRM map is in the process of being updated. The FEMA had a meeting just days before our meeting to obtain public comment on the new map. This individual indicated he understood the ARRC was planning to go through the CLOMR process for their master plan improvements and he had suggested to them to wait to work from the new map. He suggested we work closely with the ARRC when doing our hydrology work.

**Current Airport Weight Restrictions.** Within this general comment theme, several points were raised.

- Many commenters focused on wanting the restrictions lifted immediately.
  - Some requested the project consider ways to have an “interim” repair if the restrictions cannot be lifted.
- Others focused comments on the importance of restrictions being lifted in the future since the restrictions negatively impact (a) Seward’s economy and industry (see more, below) and (b) Seward’s ability to keep residents and visitors safe. Several commented that to be safe, residents and visitors need the airport to be able to accommodate emergency personnel and equipment.
- Many want clarity related to the engineering and safety issue of airplanes versus heavy equipment. The view is that if heavy equipment was used on the runway during the construction of the emergency dike, then a lightweight plane can be allowed. Some one-on-one conversations provided clarity and information (different physics, engineering, and safety parameters); however, this message was not widely distributed.
- Many asked for an update on DOT&PF’s recent field review of this issue. The DOT&PF project manager communicated the results (no changes; restrictions will not be lifted during this project or prior to construction). This message was given when asked but not widely distributed.

**Airport’s Relationship to the Economy.** City officials, lease lot holders, pilots, and media representatives commented that improvements are needed more quickly than 2018 or 2019. After seeing the required stages of the project, many asked DOT&PF and the project team to expedite the process. Commenters noted that an improved airport is very important to Seward’s economic goals. There is a belief that without airport improvements Seward’s planned economic development will be changed and businesses will pull out of Seward. There is an assumption that groups/businesses need an airport without the existing restrictions and that industry is waiting for these improvements.

**Related to Airport Features.** The meeting provided a good opportunity to speak with airport users. The following ideas and concerns were expressed verbally to team members or included on the comment sheets.

- Upgrade the runways/taxiways/ramp areas.
- Improve navigational aids to enhance safety:
  - WAAS (GPS Wide Area Augmentation System);
  - ADS-B (Aviation Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast) Tower
- Work to get better approach capabilities into SWD; one attendee, a longtime pilot of SWD who had previously had a commercial airtaxi service believes with the new technologies an approach is possible; he had developed one for his own use if needed in an emergency situation.
- Review the property maps; an attendee commented that the land shown on the property boundary on the north side of runway 13/31 doesn't appear correct; the Civil Air Patrol owns a strip of land along that side.
- Do NOT remove a runway because summer and winter winds necessitate two runways.
- Contradiction to the above, another attendee/pilot indicated that an extended Runway 16/34 would be adequate; it provides the needed wind coverage.
- Extend I-6 south for an instrument landing system (ILS) approach.
- Extend a short runway to establish "usable" ILS or GPS approach with a "missed approach" route up the valley; develop for this valley route a new published Non-Precision Instrument (NPI) approach.
- Have a long runway with an IFR approach and a short runway with a GPS approach straight in over the city.
- Do NOT raise taxiways because this would impact an existing hangar (raising the runway is okay).
- Remove the cross taxiway because it is seldom used, but this cross taxiway holds the water back.
- Add space for 20-30 more hangars.
- Build to the original airport plan, including a hangar large enough for large aircraft.
- Add water, fire hydrants, and sewer for safety.
- Construct a float pond (several comments) next to the long runway to bring Seward Airport up to par with other airports, like in Kenai.

**Theme 4: General Comments**

- Contact the military to get an accurate record of use of the airport by C-130s. A few years ago about 30 of these planes used the airport over a couple of weeks.
- Plan for the future: traffic will increase when the Coastal Village Fleet moves in, when a fixed-base operator has scheduled flights to Anchorage, and with Coast Guard traffic and medical flights.
- Make power more affordable; industry avoids Seward because of this high cost.

**Theme 5: Comments on Maps and Figures**

- The airport boundary on the “Airport Considerations/Issues” map is wrong—red boundary should be closer to the runway.
- In the future, don’t use red or green lines—these are hard to see and they carry a meaning just in their color (“stop” and “go”).
- The PowerPoint presentation: black letters on dark background and white letters on light background were hard to see. Purple font was hard to see.

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By [Fern Greenbank](#)  
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## Airport improvement process begins

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The Alaska Department of Transportation got the ball rolling last week when it held an informational meeting in Seward about planned improvements for the Seward Airport.

On Thursday, Sept. 11, members of the team dealing with the airport improvements set up work stations with representatives from different areas of engineering and specialists to answer community questions. At least two dozen residents attended the info meeting, moving from one station to another with questions about different phases and aspects of the project.

One of those residents with a lot to lose is Denny Hamilton, owner of Seward Air, which has supplied fuel to small aircraft and large jets for more than two decades.

“I wasn’t impressed,” said Hamilton. “I think they have already made up their minds about what they’re going to do.”

Hamilton’s enthusiasm for the start of the airport improvement process is low because the DOT presentation reported that construction will not begin until 2018 with a likely completion date of 2020.

“I don’t know if I can hang on that long,” said Hamilton.

In her opening presentation, principal civil engineer for the project, Royce Conlon, said she knows people would like to be at the construction phase now, but the process is lengthy and layered.

“This is just the start of the process,” said Conlon. “We need input and feedback from the community before we ever get to a design stage.”

Conlon explained the multi-phased workflow which started with project identification. That was the easy part, she said, because it’s clear the Seward Airport is in trouble and needs help. In 2014, the runway experienced a lot of damage from flooding that is increasingly happening more often with the river re-routing itself over time and flowing across the runways.

In 2013, the weight limit for aircraft was reduced to 12,500 pounds, prohibiting large aircraft from landing. Since then, there have been several instances in which the Seward airport was needed either for [Coast Guard](#) related activities or medical emergencies, said Hamilton. The weight restriction has damaged Hamilton’s fuel business significantly and endangers lives that need the services large planes offer.

In light of the plans to develop the [Seward Marine Industrial Center](#) and expand the railroad operations, a functioning airport is necessary say all parties concerned. Engineer Joy Vaughn, on hand to answer questions at the DOT information meeting, said she isn’t aware of any group or individual that doesn’t want to see the airport restored to full capacity.

“Because the majority of the funding for airport projects come from the federal government,” said Vaughn, “we have to demonstrate a need and the federal government has very specific guidelines for documenting the need.”

Vaughn said she understands that people think the DOT has predetermined what kind of work is necessary and the call for public input is disingenuous, but she reiterated throughout the meeting to

multiple community members that the community outreach and public comment really does play a big role in determining the scope of the airport improvements which is then presented in the form of grant applications to the federal government.

The process explained at the information session went from scoping to environmental documentation to right of way issues to detailed design and then finally, construction. The DOT project team are trying to keep everything in balance, said Conlon. Trying to balance safety with community needs, natural environment and costs, is challenging, she said. But, she said at the center of the balancing act is public involvement.

Some members of the community made it known to engineers that because they had negative past experiences with the DOT and transparency, they were skeptical that they would be kept in the loop during the process.

“They went out there and cut down trees without telling anyone it was coming,” said Carol Griswald. “We would at least like to brace ourselves with some notice.”

Griswald wasn’t alone when it came to matters of trust. Shannon McCarthy, public information officer for the project, said large government agency projects often come with a mistrusting public and it’s their job to be transparent and earn the trust of residents affected by the project.

“This first meeting was about listening,” said McCarthy. “We have to listen and hear what people are thinking.”

As the process moves forward, said McCarthy, there will be more public outreach to make sure the agencies are not talking over residents of Seward.

Project Manager Barb Beaton said the website that will be up and running soon will be a great tool for the Department of Transportation.

“It will be an interactive site where people can make comments and ask questions,” said Beaton. “We really are interested in ideas from the people who live there, what they think about issues like wind and flooding and property issues.”

In addition to the website, McCarthy said another tool will be an advisory board made up of city officials, railroad officials and borough officials. That group will then report back to their respective groups, she said.

Two ideas have already been suggested by community members and Beaton said all suggestions will be discussed and considered. Several Seward residents, with decades of experience living near the airport, told DOT project officials how the Resurrection River had changed course slowly over time. The paving of roads and bridge construction upstream, they said, sped up the river’s migration closer and closer to the airport runway.

“If the Ballaine brothers came here right now to settle and build Seward here, they couldn’t,” said Kerry Martin, longtime Seward resident and former city officer. “In 1903 you could, but not now.”

Martin, referring to the increasing flooding experienced by Seward, said he agrees with others who think the least expensive method to salvage the airport runways over the long haul is to re-direct the river using gravel and excavation back to its former course.

Project Manager Beaton said the team has discussed this idea with several residents and she is not ruling it out as an option. The state has hired a hydrologist and his recommendation will be reported to the advisory board and residents for discussion.

“When we are comfortable and think the report is ready for public viewing, we will make it public,” said Beaton.

Hamilton, whose livelihood is on the line, said the timeframe is disheartening. He has suggested a solution that would allow the airport to operate at higher capacity while the Department of Transportation continues the studies required to receive federal funding.

Hamilton said he has spoken with the Federal Aviation Administration and was told the airport might qualify for a Prior Permission Required (PPR) process. Under the PPR program, larger planes could be allowed to land in Seward after they file for permission. Then, DOT engineers would arrive on site and study the runway as it relates to real time.

“I think they can be monitoring aircraft while they are doing their studies,” said Hamilton. This would allow planes over 12,500 pounds to land, and be serviced by companies like Hamiltons.

Project Manager Beaton said she has no knowledge of such a program because that type of issue falls under “operations” at the DOT. She said she would discuss it with the appropriate manager because she does not have the authority to authorize such a program.

Assistant City Manager Ron Long said he also was not aware of the PPR program administered by the FAA.

“I see no reason why that can’t be investigated as a possibility,” said Long. “The DOT is saying that it is open to ideas, and here is an idea.”

Long said the current “airport master plan” is not a binding document. It’s outdated and only useful as a tool for framing a discussion about transportation needs. The DOT and the city are not limited by the master plan, he said. When it comes to the idea of re-routing the river, Long said that so far, the DOT has not ruled that in or out.

“They have had ample opportunity to say yes or no,” said Long. “But I’m not sure if they have really considered that method.”

Because of the additional layers of regulations that apply to working with waterways, the idea may seem like more work and more money, said Long, but that shouldn’t be a deal breaker if re-routing the river is the best method for the situation.

With the runway flooding under scrutiny, said Long, it may be a great opportunity to look at new funding sources because other areas of Seward are threatened by increasing flooding.

The viability of the airport is important to the big picture, said Long. The Seward Marine Industrial Complex and the planned railroad dock expansion are forward thinking projects so it makes sense to envision an airport that will match that vision.

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## Flooding isn't Seward Airport project's only concern

September 18, 2014 6:28 pm · [1 comment](#) Views: 280



Flooding occurs again over the Seward Airport runway, a year after it flooded before, and repairs were made to restore it to its former condition. Photo by Carol Griswold.

Heidi Zemach for SCN –

The little Seward Airport doesn't seem to get much public traffic. But some of the traffic it does get: Medevac aircraft collecting people with serious health emergencies, Coast Guard helicopters refueling during stopovers, or helicopters used to search and rescue missing boaters or hikers, can be vital to the town. When major flooding undermined the runway last September, and the Federal Aviation Administration shut down the airport runway to all but aircraft weighing under 12,500 pounds, medevac costs to a hospital ran to several thousand dollars. So it's not surprising that 33 residents turned out to attend an open house and Seward Airport Improvements Project presentation at the K.M. Rae Building September 11<sup>th</sup>, hosted by the Alaska Department of Transportation. They included pilots, public officials, people with businesses and property at, or near the airport, and those involved in flood issues.

Seward airport has experienced a number of floods in recent history, but last year's flood event in late October, in which the runway was overrun by water before a portion of it was physically undermined, swallowed up by the nearby creek turned raging stream, caught everyone's attention. Its subsequent closure until temporary repairs could be done impacted air travel and local access to emergency care for about four months. Recent runway flooding over the past week has clearly demonstrated that more needs to be done.

Flooding sits on top of the list of concerns that DOT feels need to be addressed by a new construction project yet to be determined- but several other key deficiencies with the airport have been identified that will also need to be considered, said Robin Reich, Public Involvement Coordinator with Solstice Alaska. The Seward Airport project picks up where a 2008 master plan identifying project needs left off, and it reevaluates those needs with respect to the recent flooding as well as changes in the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) design standards.

Some of the taxiways are considered "nonstandard" to FAA's current design requirements for instance, Reich said. The taxiway intersects the airport in what is considered a non-standard condition. Whether or not those conditions applies to the more rural Seward airport still needs to be evaluated based on the type of activity taking place at the airport, Reich said. Lighting is another concern, especially along the edges of the runway, and need to be repaired. The runway pavement condition is degraded due to old age and flooding. The short runway appears better aligned to wind conditions than the long runway is, and that situation also needs to be evaluated. Portions of the runway protection zone (area's at the ends of the runway such as the roads and railroad tracks) also are not desirable according to FAA guidance. Finally, there's a concern about safety due to trees that have grown up in the approach, and any project designed should address those concerns and ways to mitigate them.

The detailed planning process is expected to take up to four years, with actual construction of a project tentatively scheduled to begin in the spring of 2018 provided that there is adequate state and federal support and funding, Reich said.

The process currently is Scoping (information gathering), which continues through January 2015. That leads to Environmental Jan-December 2015. Then there's Right of Way Acquisition, Oct 2015-Feb 2017, followed by Airport Design and Construction, April 2018-October 2019.



Robin Reich, of Solstice America, shpoints to areas of concern DOT has with the Seward Airport.



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The steps that will be undertaken before a decision about a future airport project is made includes reviewing aviation activity, wind coverage, wetlands issues, landownership and zoning, and future plans of the Alaska Railroad Corporation, its adjacent airport neighbor, said DOT Project Manager Royce Conlon. Experts also must review new aerial photos highlighting the latest flood hydrology and known airport deficiencies. They also will review federal floodplain mapping, along with newer maps to better understand why flooding is occurring. There will need to be hydrology studies, and also a detailed Environmental Assessment of whatever project is planned. The EA would take into account how the project would affect the natural and human environments, whether there are any endangered species, affected fisheries or fish habitat, and how to mitigate any impacts. The public can become involved and stay informed via newsletters and a project website. There will be more meetings, open houses, and public hearings during the review period for the EA. A stakeholder advisory group, made up of interested locals also is being formed to assist in the process.

Asked whether DOT plans to completely reconfigure the flow of the stream adjacent to the runway, which many view as an impossible task as water tends to flow wherever it wants to go, Reich would only say that it's too early to tell at this point. There is no plan, she emphasized. That's why all the scoping, the studying, and planning process needs to occur.

For more information, [visit the project](#) on the web.

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