



News Release

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Alaska District

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February 5, 2010

Release No. 10-02

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers denies permit application for CD-5 drill pad

ANCHORAGE – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District has denied the permit application from ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc. to construct a drill pad identified as CD-5 west of the Colville River Delta to expand the Alpine petroleum field on the North Slope. The Corps has determined that there are other practicable alternatives that would have less adverse impact on the aquatic ecosystem and still meet the overall project purpose.

In December 2008, ConocoPhillips applied for permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act to discharge fill material over 62 acres of wetland tundra to construct the CD-5 drill site pad; a 6.2 mile-long access road with three bridge crossings; two valve pads with access roads; and new pipeline support structures. ConocoPhillips' preferred alternative states that the drill pad would be connected to the Alpine field's road system by gravel roads and a 1,425 foot-long bridge across the Nigliq Channel of the Colville. All three bridges and 2.5 miles of road would be within the Colville River Delta. The bridges would be used for vehicles, production pipelines, and utilities.

The Corps found that issuing a permit for the applicant's proposal is not in compliance with 404 (b)(1) guidelines, which states "that no discharge of dredged or fill material shall be permitted if there is a practicable alternative to the proposed discharge which would have less adverse impact on the aquatic ecosystem, so long as the alternative does not have other significant adverse environmental consequences".

Other alternatives with less environmental impacts could include horizontal directional drilling but would require new permit applications. These alternatives minimize impacts to the Colville River Delta, which is the largest and most complex delta on the Arctic Coastal Plain and drains nearly 30 percent of the North Slope. The delta serves as habitat for approximately 80 species of birds, numerous fish, migrating caribou, and is within the subsistence hunting and fishing areas of the village of Nuiqsut. The delta also represents nearly 70 percent of overwintering fish habitat within the North Slope.

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