



Safer Seward Highway Project
Seward Highway MP 98.5 to 118,
Bird Flats to Rabbit Creek
Project No.: Z566310000/0A31034

Environmental Assessment

*Appendix L: Eagle Nest Survey Technical
Report*

DRAFT

December 2025

Prepared for:

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

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SAFER



Seward
Highway

Eagle Nest Survey Technical Report

Seward Highway MP 98.5 – 118 Bird Flats to Rabbit
Creek

DOT&PF Central Region

August 15th, 2023

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Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction and Purpose	1
2.0	Trip Summary.....	1
3.0	Methods	1
4.0	Survey Results	2
5.0	Survey Recommendations.....	2
	Figures.....	3
	Appendix A – Nest Photographs	8

Tables

Table 1. Nest Locations	2
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

GPS	Global Positioning System
HDR	HDR Engineering, Inc
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

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1.0 Introduction and Purpose

Bald and golden eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 as amended (16 U.S.C. §§ 668-668c). Eagles, as well as other raptor species, are also protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (16 U.S.C. §§ 703-12). Both of these regulations protect migratory bird species and their nests from destruction and disturbance related to pre-construction and construction activities.

The purpose of this survey was to identify eagle and other raptor nests that might be disturbed by construction related activities and to determine the level of eagle use of any observed nests. Documenting the location of eagle nests in the project area is useful to inform the project team whether any eagle nests disturbance or take permit may be required as a result of the project design and construction methods.

2.0 Trip Summary

On May 17, 2023, HDR biologists conducted an aerial survey via helicopter to document eagle and other raptor nests near the proposed Seward Highway 98.5-118 project area. The weather during the survey was partially cloudy, a high temperature of 58 degrees Fahrenheit, windspeed up to seven miles per hour, and a visibility greater than ten miles. The survey crew consisted of HDR biologists, Simon Wigren and Will Mans. The helicopter used in the survey was an Airbus H125, piloted by Pathfinder Aviation, LLC. The flight departed Merrill Field, Anchorage, Alaska, at approximately 10 am and returned at 3 pm. Snow cover was absent across the study site, vegetation had yet to green, and only some buds were observed on surveyed deciduous trees.

3.0 Methods

Prior to the survey, crew members reviewed existing HDR eagle nest survey data for documented nests in the project area to improve search efficiency. During the survey, one surveyor was in the front of the helicopter, the second in the rear. Both biologists were positioned to be able to view the project area from over Turnagain Arm. After departing Merrill Field (PAMR), the surveyors flew south to the end of the project at Potter Marsh. Under the direction of Simon Wigren, the pilot made two passes following the marsh's tree line and its highway boundary at less than 300 feet above ground level. From Potter Marsh, the survey was flown southeast along the Seward Highway on the Turnagain Arm side.

When nests were observed, the survey team collected a GPS point and photos of the nest. HDR biologists also recorded nest characteristics such as status (active or inactive), species using the nest, nesting substrate, and nest condition. The survey consisted of two complete passes along the length of the project area with a stop at Girdwood Airport in-between to change the position of the surveyors in the helicopter.

4.0 Survey Results

HDR biologists observed eight nests during the survey (Table 1). Many of the nests were adjacent to the Seward Highway in close proximity (Figures 1-4). The nests were exclusively found in large cottonwood (*Populus spp.*) trees (Appendix A – Nest Photographs) and were more common near waterbodies that support anadromous fish populations.

Four of the nests observed during the survey, HDR23-1, 4, 5, and 6, were found to be active, with one or more adult eagles observed in the nest. The other nests appeared empty and not in use by adult eagles. Several adult eagles were observed in the vicinity of Nest HDR23-8 but it was deemed inactive at the time of the survey due to a lack of any sign of use.

Table 1. Nest Locations

Nest ID#	Latitude ^a	Longitude ^a	Activity	Distance to Existing Highway Centerline (ft)
HDR23-1	61.078701	-149.824908	Active	978
HDR23-2	61.078281	-149.821131	Inactive	1,608
HDR23-3	61.072393	-149.812033	Inactive	2,389
HDR23-4	61.050733	-149.791517	Active	205
HDR23-5	61.004114	-149.663288	Active	462
HDR23-6	60.987303	-149.515220	Active	123
HDR23-7	60.976216	-149.448742	Inactive	2,145
HDR23-8	60.949896	-149.392050	Inactive	675


^a NAD 1983 (2011) State Plane Alaska 4 FIPS 5004 (US Feet)

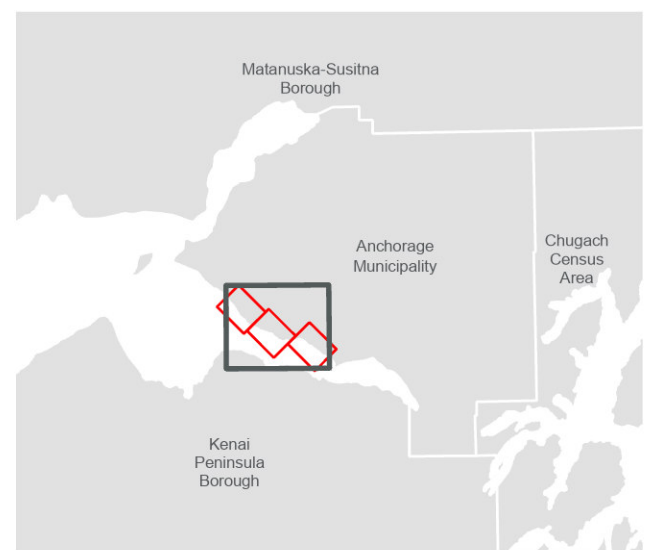
5.0 Survey Recommendations



As the project design progresses, the need for nest disturbance or take permits should be determined through coordination with the USFWS Alaska Region Migratory Bird Management office. Additional survey may be required prior to construction to determine the status of known nests and to identify new nests in future nesting seasons.

Figures


Seward Highway Eagle Nest Surveys


-  Eagle Nests May 2023
-  Survey Trackline
-  Mileposts
-  Chugach State Park Trails
-  Seward Highway 98 - 118 Centerline



0 1 Miles

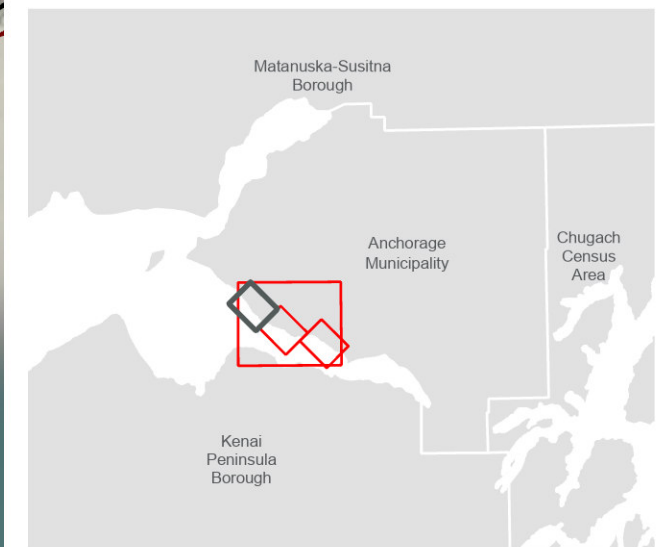




Page 1 of 4

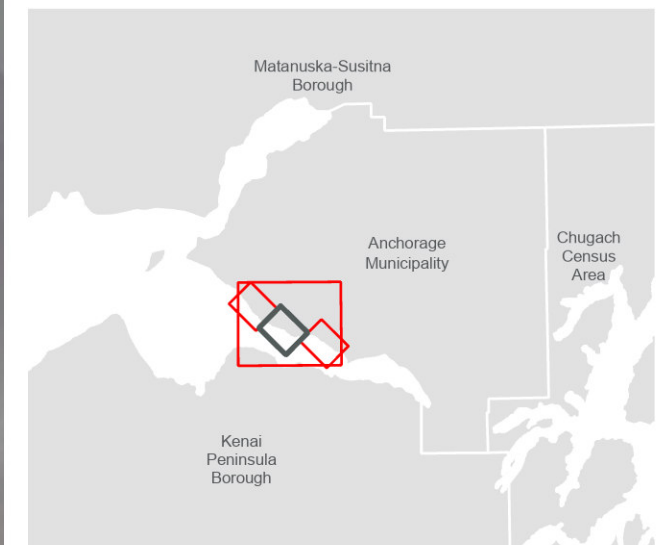
Seward Highway Eagle Nest Surveys

-  Eagle Nests May 2023
-  660 ft Management Buffer
-  Survey Trackline
-  Mileposts
-  Chugach State Park Trails
-  Seward Highway 98 - 118 Centerline



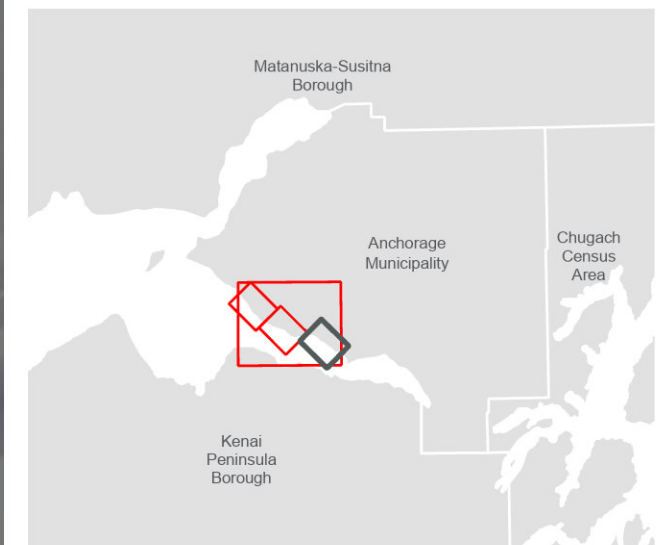
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Appendix A – Nest Photographs

Nest HDR23-1 Active Nest



Nest HDR23-2 Inactive Nest



Nest HDR23-3 Inactive Nest



Nest HDR23-4 Active Nest



Nest HDR23-5 Active Nest



Nest HDR23-6 Active Nest



Nest HDR23-7 Inactive Nest

