

Public notice ER-12-01

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Caveats: NONE

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District (Corps) in support of The Denali Commission, has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) and finding of no significant impact (FONSI) titled: Perryville Barge and Boat Ramp, Perryville, Alaska. The EA and FONSI describe the proposed project and potential environmental consequences of constructing the barge and boat ramp.

The EA and FONSI are also posted for public review on the Alaska District web page at:

<http://www.poa.usace.army.mil>.

Click on Civil Works and Planning and look under Documents Available for Public Review, Reports and Environmental Documents.

The public comment period on this EA ends on 19 January 2012.

PLEASE DO NOT reply to sender. Questions and comments should be directed to Guy R. McConnell by the above date via email at: Guy.R.McConnell@usace.army.mil



Environmental Assessment and
Finding of No Significant Impact

Barge and Boat Ramp Perryville, Alaska

December 2011

Finding of No Significant Impact

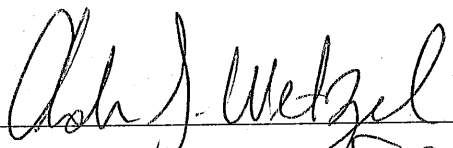
In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the Denali Commission has assessed the environmental effects of the following action:

Construct Barge and Boat Ramp Perryville Alaska

The Denali Commission, in partnership with the Native Village of Perryville, will construct a concrete plank ramp to facilitate transfer of fuel and materials from barges and to improve boat launching and landing. The ramp will be constructed near existing fuel and staging areas. The ramp will be a maximum of 210 feet long, but may be shorter if available funds are insufficient for the ramp as designed.

The project and reasonable alternatives are addressed in the Perryville Barge and Boat Ramp Environmental Assessment. The assessment describes the affected environment and evaluates consequences of the action. As concluded in the assessment, the action will not substantially affect marine mammals, migratory birds, essential fish habitat, endangered species, or other plants or animals of regional or national concern. Less than 0.3 acre of beach in waters of the United States will be affected by the action. The action will not adversely affect cultural, social, or economic resources or disadvantaged populations. The action will not act in association with past, present or anticipated future actions to cause appreciable cumulative impacts. The action is consistent with community planning objectives and with regional coastal management planning.

I find that constructing the Perryville barge and boat ramp will not cause significant impacts to the human environment and that the substantive requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) have been satisfied. Analysis of the project effects indicated an environmental impact statement was not needed.



Tessa L. D. DeLong, MPA
Director of Programs
Denali Commission

12/9/11

_____ Date

Perryville Barge and Boat Ramp

Environmental Assessment

Need for the Action

Perryville is a small community on the Pacific coast of the Alaska Peninsula (figures 1 and 2). It is in Section 27, T49S, R64W, Seward Meridian at 55°53.97'N and 159°10.01'W, and is in Stepovak Bay D-4 USGS quad map. The Pacific Ocean is the principal surface transportation corridor for people in the community. Most families own one or more boats, which are used to harvest natural resources, including fish, game, fur-bearing mammals, and other resources. This natural resource harvest is essential to the welfare of the population and to the continued existence of the community.

Air carriers transport people to and from Perryville and deliver mail and other goods. Building materials, land vehicles, fuel, and other heavier, bulkier materials essential for the community's existence are delivered primarily by barge. Materials landed from barges are transported to an adjacent unimproved staging area where they may be stored in the open or in steel shipping containers (Conexes) until needed.

Boats and barges alike land on the beaches at convenient locations. Most barges land near fuel headers or at a staging area on the limited road system where shipping containers are stored. Boats land close to the road system or near residences. Boats may be difficult to launch and retrieve from trailers on the soft, sandy beach. Heavy equipment operating in the sand may have difficulty unloading barges and risk accidents. As tides change, barges may need to be repositioned often to avoid damage from grounding on the irregular contours of the beach. The staging area also is soft sand that is difficult to navigate, and increases potential for accidents and lost time. Figure 3 shows the soft beach sand at the project site. The staging area is of similar material.

A landing ramp that could be used to launch and retrieve boats from a hard surface and to land barges for unloading would reduce time lost and reduce damages to boats and other equipment. A landing ramp also would improve safety for barge workers and boaters and would reduce potential for fuel spills and cargo loss.

The Denali Commission, working with Perryville, proposes to meet this need by constructing a public landing ramp for boats and barges at Perryville. The ramp would be usable at higher tide ranges. Boaters and barge operators in the region are accustomed to working with the tides, so this would be an acceptable arrangement and a great improvement over existing conditions.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

Figure 4 is an overhead view of the proposed project. The staging area, covering 40,000 square feet (0.92 acre), would be constructed by placing 6 inches of aggregate over the native sandy soil. Containers stored on the site would be moved temporarily as needed for construction.

A 20-foot-wide road constructed of aggregate fill would extend 103 feet (total area 2,060 square feet; 0.05 acre) westward from the southwestern corner of the staging area to the upper end of the barge ramp.

The barge ramp would be constructed from 20-foot-wide concrete planks over gravel base material. It would begin at the top of the beach slope and would extend seaward (westward) for a maximum of 210 feet to a depth 4.8 feet below mean lower low water (MLLW). Figure 5 shows the ramp profile. The upper 72-foot segment of the ramp would be unarmored. The lower 138-foot segment beginning above the upper-most reach of waves and extending to the toe would be protected from wave energy and erosion by armor rock placed over core material and gravel. Figure 6 shows ramp construction details, including base layer and armor rock placement. Soil excavated during construction would be used as project backfill. Excess excavated material from above mean higher high water (MHHW) would be placed on adjacent uplands. Excess material excavated from below MHHW would be placed on adjacent tidelands where it would be dispersed by wave action.

Total quantities for excavation, fill, and construction are in table 1. Table 2 identifies quantities that would be placed in waters of the United States below the high tide line (+0.8 foot MHHW). The ramp and its armored slopes would cover a maximum of 10,000 sq. ft. (0.23 acre) below the high tide line in waters of the United States. Excess dredged material would cover an additional 5,500 sq. ft. (0.12 acre) to a depth of 5 feet but would be dispersed during the next few tidal cycles.

Table 1. Quantities for Perryville barge landing and staging area

Excavation	3,300 cu. yd.
Backfill	2,681 cu. yd.
Disposal quantity	1,688 cu. yd.
Subbase	860 cu. yd.
Pit-run gravel	939 cu. yd.
Core and armor rock	1,196 cu. yd.
Concrete planks	70
Steel frame	31 tons

Table 2. Quantities for Perryville barge landing and staging area below HTL

Excavation (beach material)	2,717 cu. yd.
Backfill	1,439 cu. yd.
Disposal quantity	1,278 cu. yd.
Subbase	282 cu. yd.
Pit-run gravel	107 cu. yd.
Core and armor rock	1,127 cu. yd.
Concrete planks	43 (61 cu.yd.)
Steel frame	24 tons

Construction would require approximately 6 weeks. All construction would be conducted in late spring or summer. Construction is planned for 2012, but funding constraints could delay construction until 2013. Gravel, core rock, and armor rock would be obtained by the contractor from an existing commercial source. The contractor would select equipment to be used. The most likely approach would be to excavate and place rock with an excavator, backhoe, or similar equipment. Some of the excavation and placement probably would be done from a barge. The contractor would set up a camp, fueling, and staging in existing developed areas adjacent to the project area. Fuel handling and fuel storage set-backs would be consistent with ADEC requirements. The local landfill would be used for trash disposal.

Several alternatives were considered. A longer, full-tide ramp would be more useful, but would exceed available funding. A different location closer to residences could be developed, but barges will continue to use the present location because that is where the fuel tanks and staging areas are located. Transporting fuel and other goods through town to the existing site or moving fuel and staging areas into town would be impractical.

Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

Perryville is similar to many small communities in western Alaska. Most food is obtained from hunting, fishing, and gathering. All other food is imported from hub communities or more distant sources. Essentially, all building materials, petroleum fuels, equipment, household goods, vehicles, and other goods are imported. Most goods and materials are delivered to the community by barge. Passengers, perishable food, and mail are generally delivered by light aircraft.

Pacific coastal waters and the adjacent shores are the source of essential subsistence resources for people in the area. They provide transportation access and are habitat for fish, waterfowl, and sea mammals that are essential local food. The project site is not a subsistence harvest area, but it is used for accessing, mooring, loading, and unloading boats employed for harvesting fish and wildlife.

Perryville is in a shallow bay protected to some extent by Coal Cape on the east, Three Star Point on the west, and the Chiachi Islands to the south (figure 2). The Corps of Engineers estimated MHHW to be +7.5 feet (above sea level, which equates to sea level) and the high tide line (HTL) to be +10.2 feet. Surges and storm waves could reach substantially higher. The Pacific Ocean at Perryville does not freeze in the winter, so the beach could be used throughout the year when weather and wave conditions allow. Boating from the beach almost ceases, however, during the coldest months.

Landform and topography is typical of the Alaska Peninsula. Perryville is on a broad, sandy delta, but is close to the rugged spine of volcanic mountains that runs the length of the Alaska Peninsula. The beach and the upland soils at the project site are well-drained sand with little gravel or organic material. Figure 3 shows the soft, sandy beach at the project site. No other wetlands or waters of the United States are at the site.

Vegetation at Perryville is typical of Alaska Peninsula beach habitats. Beach grasses tolerant of salt, severe winters, winds, and frequent desiccation are the principal vegetation at Perryville and

in the project area. Figure 7 shows the proposed staging area, which is partially cleared and is surrounded by an almost monotypic growth of beach grass. Shrubs, recumbent woody plants, and forbs grow in nearby soils, but not at the project site. Less than 0.5 acre of beach grass vegetation would be cleared for construction of the staging area and the upper segment of the ramp. No wetland plants, sea grasses, or attached algae would be affected by the action.

The grassy habitat at the project area is too tall and dense for most ground nesting birds, but may be used at least occasionally as nesting and feeding habitat. Shrews, voles, and other small rodents use this habitat type for food and cover and, in turn, are hunted by foxes and other predators. The project area is immediately adjacent to a road and other areas heavily used by humans and their dogs, which reduces habitat value to birds and mammals. The habitat loss from project construction and operation would be of little consequence to terrestrial birds. Construction in vegetated areas would be timed to prevent take of migratory birds, or the site would be surveyed before construction by a qualified biologist to ensure there were no nesting birds.

The region contains high-value waterfowl nesting and migratory habitat, but the beach and tall-grass habitat around the project site does not meaningfully serve either function. The beach at the project site is used by feeding shorebirds, and the adjacent coastal waters are used by feeding and loafing waterfowl and seabirds. Seals may occasionally follow the beach line while feeding and as a movement corridor. Habitat and marine invertebrate prey near the project site are probably not important to sea otters, but could be used occasionally. The project structure would not affect bird or sea mammal movement or other important life functions. Human activity that might affect the biota would not increase substantially, but would be concentrated in this area. Effects would be minor and of little biological importance.

The sandy beach at Perryville lacks the rocky structure and dense kelp that is so important to many Pacific fish along this coast. Pelagic fish feed along this habitat, and the beach may be important to juvenile fish that hold in shallow water along the coast for a period after they migrate out from natal streams. The beaches also may be used as spawning habitat by sand lance, smelts, and other fish. There is no indication that the beach habitat at Perryville is of unusual value to any Pacific fish species. The NOAA data base does not list any essential fisheries habitat at the beach in this location, but does identify essential habitat for juvenile, immature, and maturing Chinook, sockeye, Coho, chum, and pink salmon in deeper water just off shore. Juvenile fish moving along the beach might be diverted seaward by the ramp, but only for a short distance, and they would be able to remain in shallow water as they moved along the ramp. Structures with steeper margins and in deeper water have been reported to expose juvenile salmon to greater predation, but this should not be a problem at the Perryville project because there are no steep margins and the project is not located in deeper water.

Moose, brown bear, wolves, caribou, and wolverine range through the area, but would be no more than occasional visitors to the project site. Harbor seals are present along most of the southern Alaska Peninsula coast and range through the project area. There are no reports of high-density populations near the project site. Sea lions also range through the area. The closest sea lion rookeries or haul outs are on Mitrofanina and Spitz islands, about 20 miles southwest. The

project site is not especially important habitat to any population of terrestrial or marine mammal in the region, and impacts from project construction would be minor.

The Anchorage U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Field Office endangered species consultation guide (Alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/endangered/pdf/Consultation_guide_31010.pdf) lists critical habitat for two endangered species in the region: Northern sea otter critical habitat and Kittlitz's murrelet at-sea breeding habitat. The entire Pacific coast of the Alaska Peninsula is sea otter critical habitat, although they are more likely to be along rockier shores where there are better opportunities to feed on marine invertebrates. Sea otters may occasionally move along the shoreline at the project site, but the area does not appear to be of any special value to sea otters.

No sites or properties in or near the project are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Records of the State Historic Preservation Officer do not list any cultural resources at the project site. Construction would be halted and the State Historic Preservation Officer would be notified if any potentially historic or paleological material was encountered.

The population at Perryville is predominantly a racial minority. The action would be an economic and cultural benefit to the population and would not disproportionately affect any segment of the minority population.

There is no other past, on-going, or anticipated in-water construction or activity on adjacent uplands that has or is likely in the foreseeable future to impact important resources. There is little potential for the project to cause cumulative impacts in association with other past, present or future actions.

Coastal Management Program

Alaska's coastal zone management program expired on July 1, 2011. Project proponents are no longer required to evaluate projects for consistency with enforceable standards of coastal management plans. Those plans do, however, offer useful criteria for evaluating projects in the coastal zone. Perryville is in the Lake and Peninsula Borough coastal district. The proposed action is consistent with the district's enforceable policies. The following consistency elements were considered:

The proposed action is water and coastal dependant and provides for multiple uses and avoids duplicative facilities.

Fill in coastal waters is designed to avoid significant impacts to coastal processes.

The project would maintain and improve public coastal access to and values of subsistence and recreational uses and would avoid impacts to navigational uses.

Development would remove the minimum area of vegetation, and disturbed areas would be protected from erosion.

The project would be adjacent to an area customarily used for subsistence, but would not impede those uses, wildlife passage, or traditional access.

The project would affect wetland and coastal habitats, but the minimum areas necessary would be used, and important functions would not be appreciably affected.



Figure 1. Location of Perryville on the Alaska Peninsula.

Figure 2. Project site at Perryville.



Figure 3. Soft beach sand at Perryville ramp site.

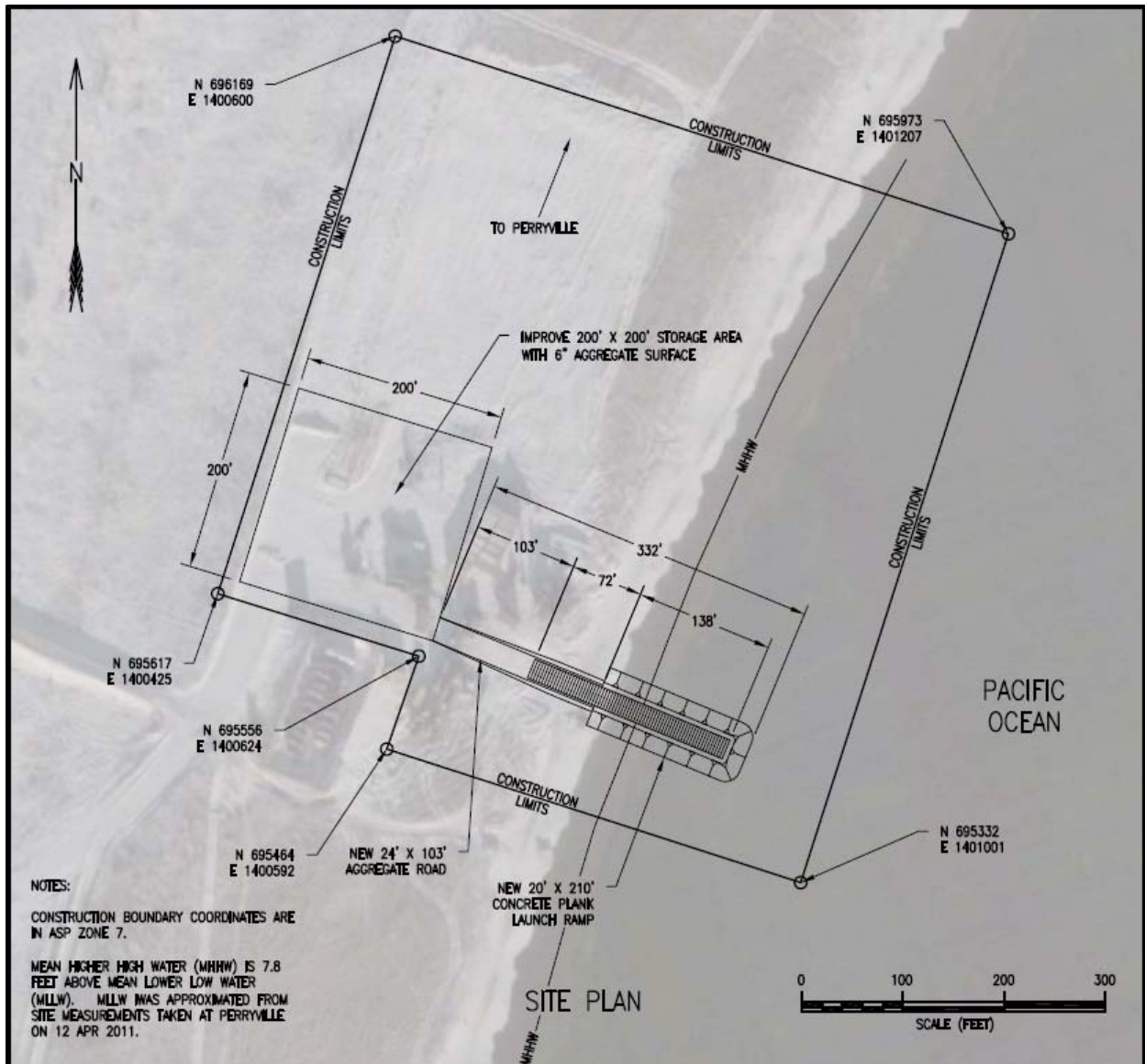


Figure 4. Overhead view of the proposed Perryville project.

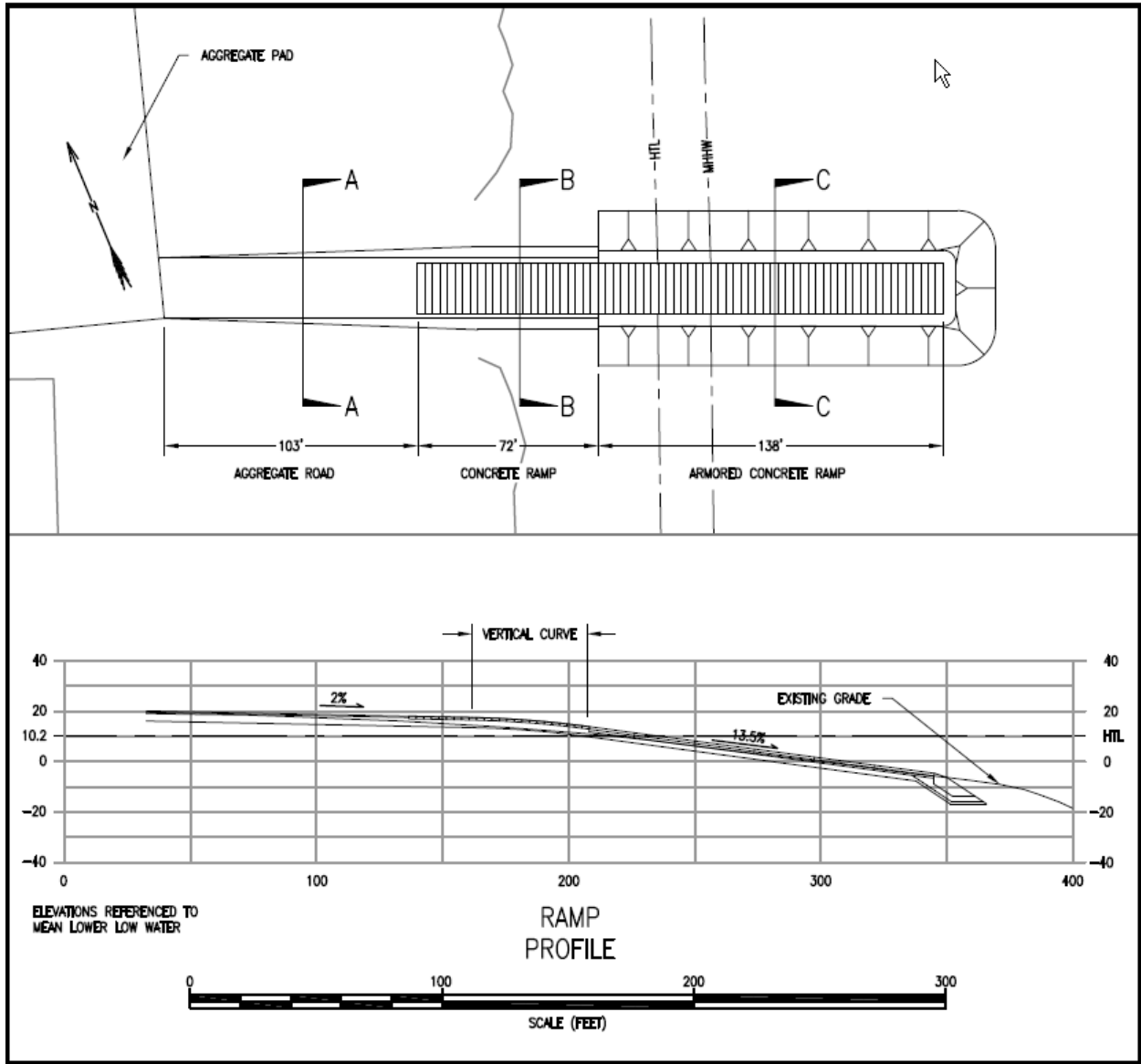


Figure 5. Perryville project ramp profile.

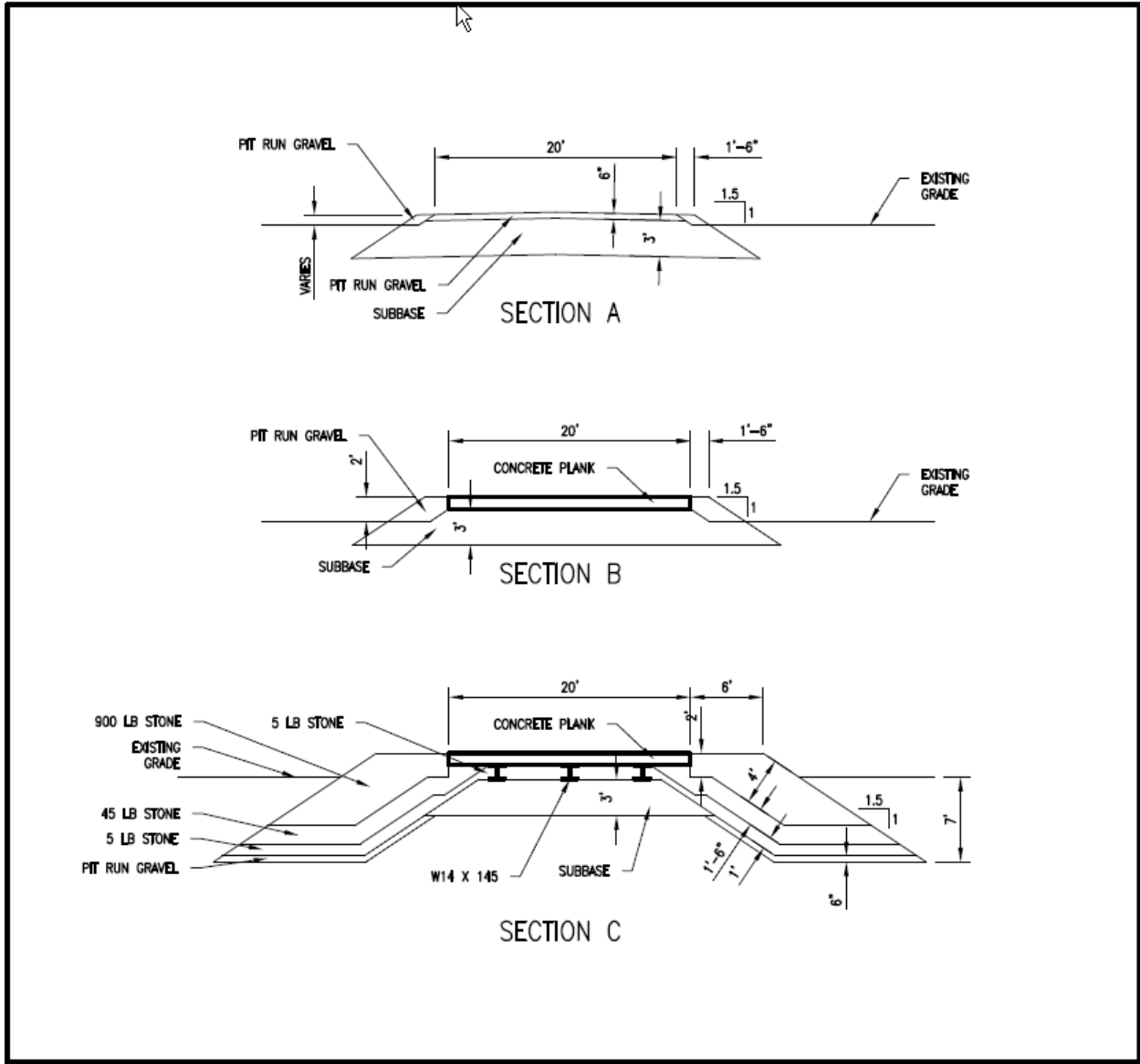


Figure 6. Perryville project ramp cross sections.



Figure 7. Cleared uplands and vegetation at the Perryville project staging area.