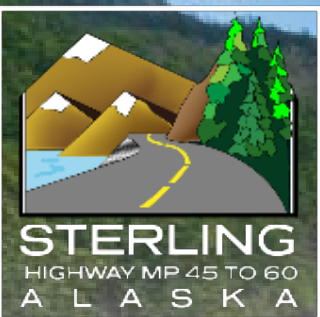




WELCOME

Sterling Highway MP 45 to 60



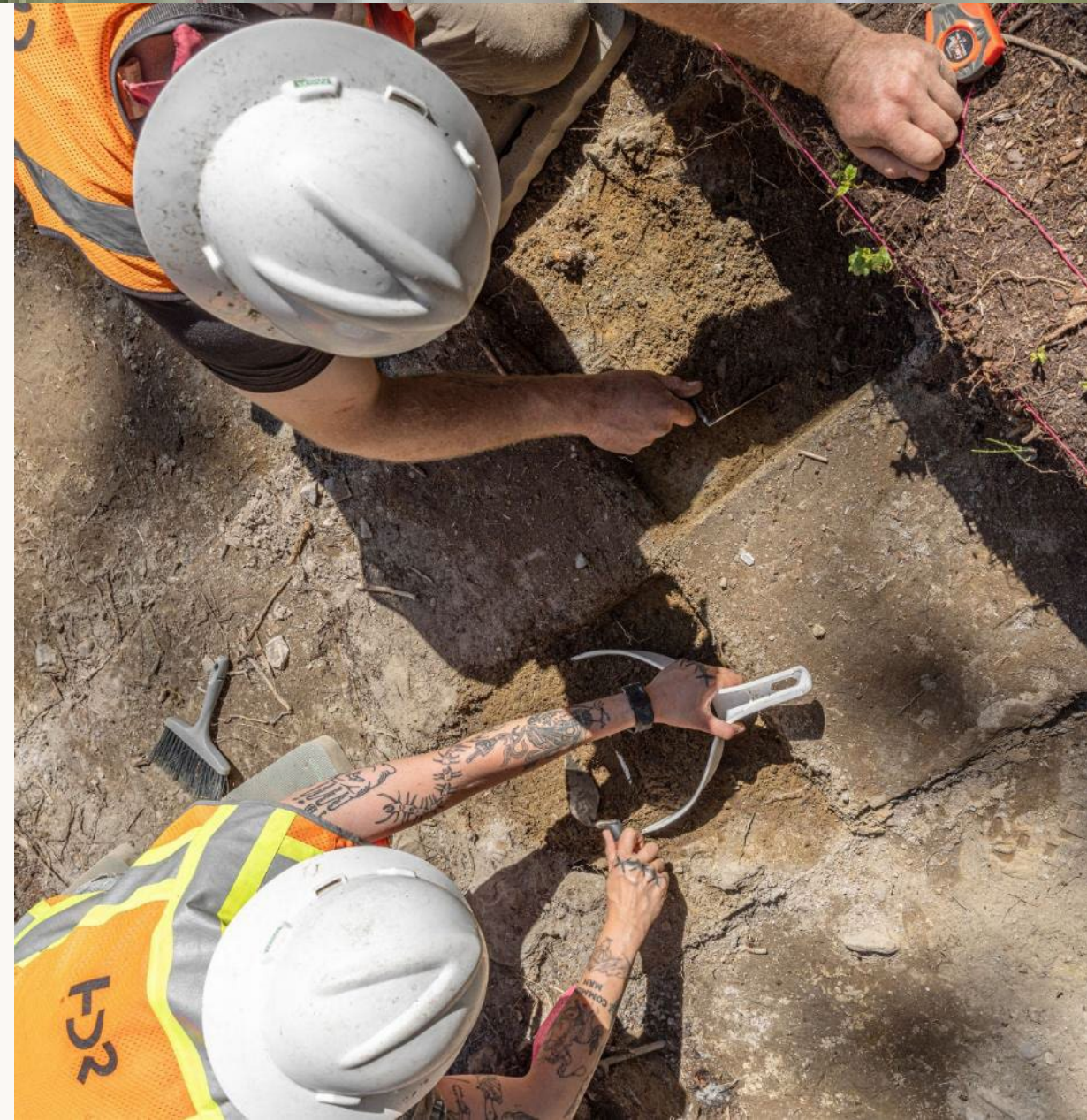
Cultural Resources Mitigation Update

October 14, 2026



Tonight's meeting purpose is to provide an update on mitigation activities specific to the Project's cultural resources program.

Cultural resource site location and other confidential site information is restricted in order to protect sites from unauthorized disturbance under Alaska state law (AS 40.25.110) and under the federal Freedom of Information Act (PL 89-554). The restriction of cultural site information is allowed by AS 40.25.120(a)(4), Alaska State Parks Policy and Procedure No. 50200, the National Historic Preservation Act (PL 89-665, 16 U.S.C. 470), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (PL 96-95).





LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



We respectfully acknowledge the Kahtnuht'ana and other Dena'ina Peoples on whose traditional lands we reside.

We honor the Kahtnuht'ana and other Dena'ina Peoples who have been, and continue to be, stewards of Alaska's air, lands, and waters from time immemorial; the Elders who lived here before; and the Dena'ina People of today and future generations to come.



AGENDA

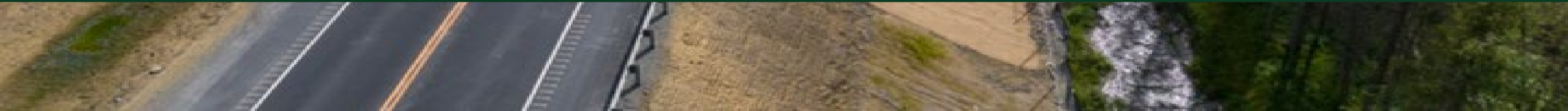


- 1. Introductions**
- 2. Background**
- 3. Project Mitigation Efforts**
- 4. Lessons Learned**
- 5. Planned Activities for 2027 and Beyond**
- 6. Poster Session including Q&A with Project staff**





INTRODUCTIONS



Julia Hanson, PE
DOT&PF, Project Manager

Robyn Miller
HDR, Cultural Resources Lead

Ruby Willoya-Williams
Kenaitze Indian Tribe

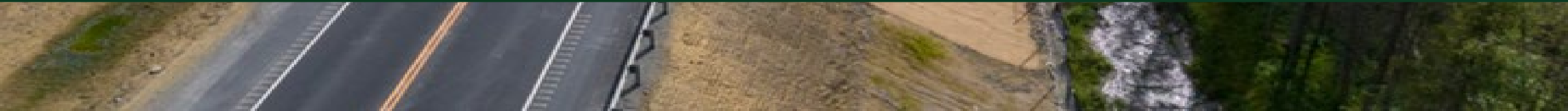
Support Team:

- Mary Ann Sweeney, MA, DOT&PF, Statewide Environmental
- Debra Corbett, KIT, Tribal Archaeologist
- Rosanne Darby, KIT Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
- Sean Teeter, HDR, Field Director
- Elliot Hubbard, HDR, Assistant Field Director
- Alex Sonnabend, HDR, Consultant Project Manager
- Paige Barker, HDR, Public Involvement
- Morgan Miller, HDR, Public Involvement



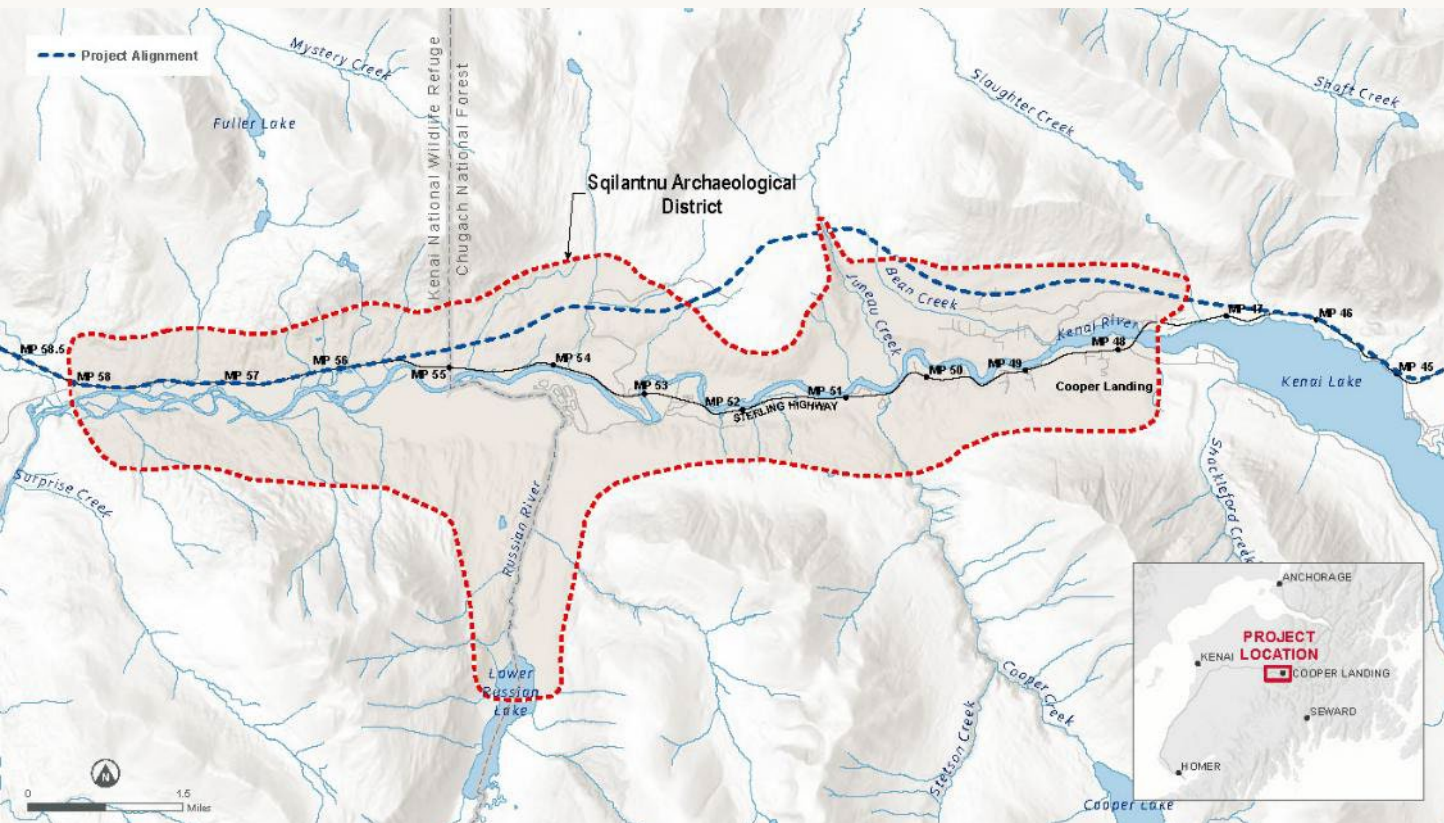


BACKGROUND



BACKGROUND

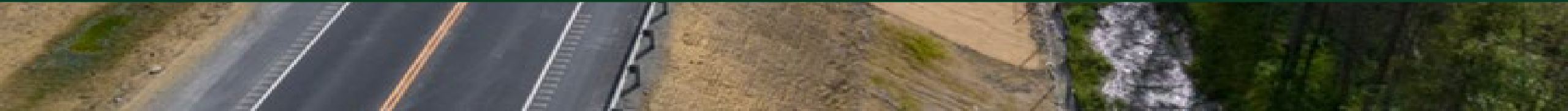
- Initial archeological surveys date back to the late 1970s.
- Surveys for the new alignment began in the early 2000s and again the 2010s.
- Programmatic agreement signed in 2018 and the EIS issued in 2019.





PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS

Overview



PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS: Overview



Mitigation:

Measures that avoid, minimize, or compensate for effects caused by a proposed action or alternatives as described in an environmental document or record of decision and that have a nexus to those effects.

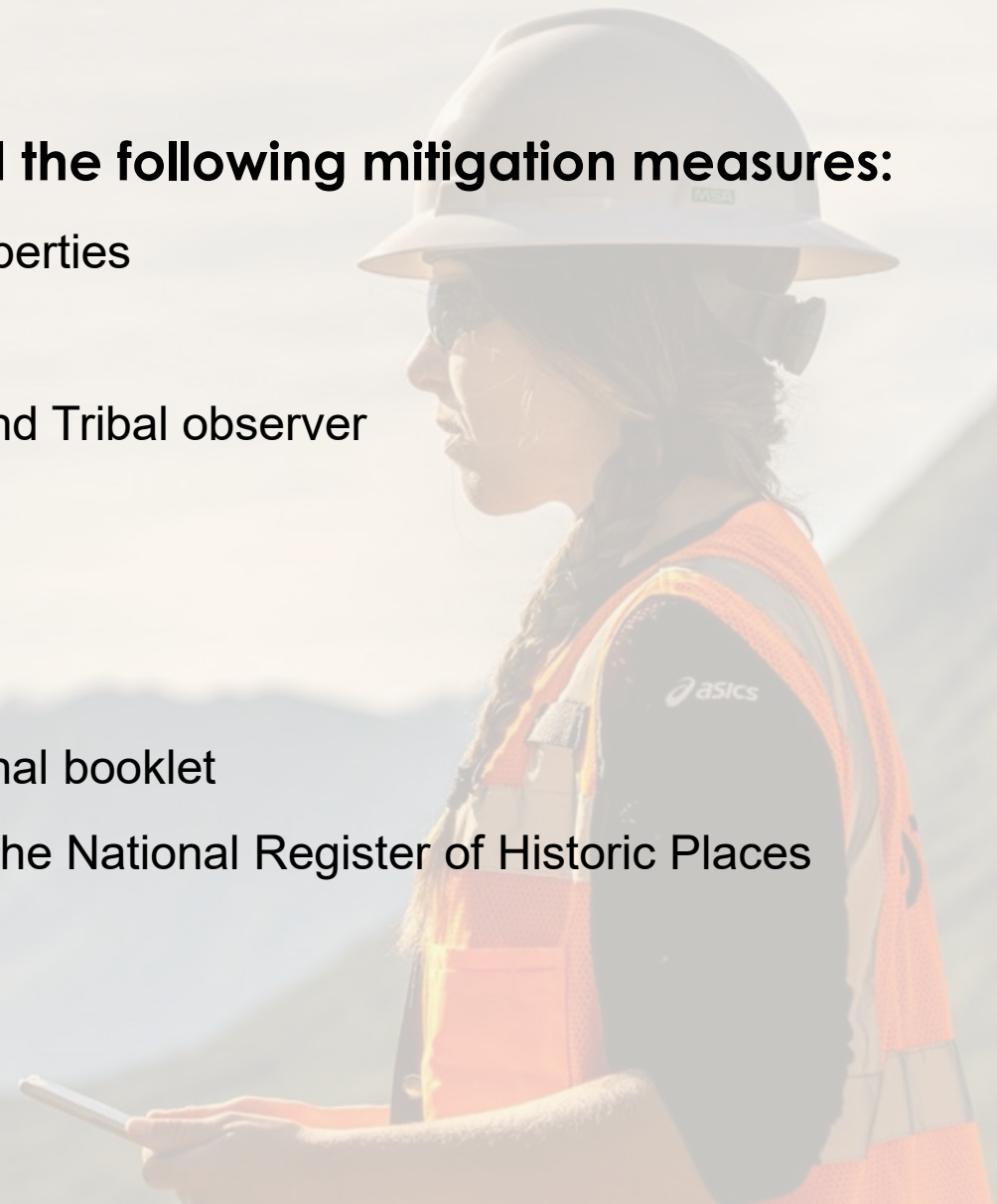


PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS: **Overview**



The Project's Programmatic Agreement outlined the following mitigation measures:

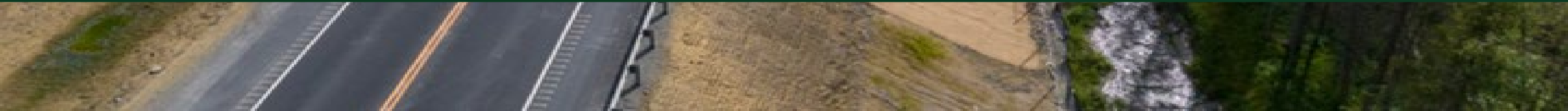
- Archaeological survey and identification of historic properties
- Avoidance of historic properties, if feasible
- Construction monitoring by a qualified archaeologist and Tribal observer
- Testing and data recovery
- Reporting and data analysis
- Digitizing Kenaitze Indian Tribe (KIT) Oral Histories
- Publicizing findings in a scientific journal and educational booklet
- Nomination of the Sqilantnu Archaeological District to the National Register of Historic Places
- Installing interpretive signage





PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS

Field Surveys





PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS: **Field Surveys**

The current footprint directly impacts approximately 4 acres of 21 historic properties.

2,154 Acres surveyed

130 Professional archaeologists
since 2019 (approximately
65 Alaska-based)

12 Tribal observers

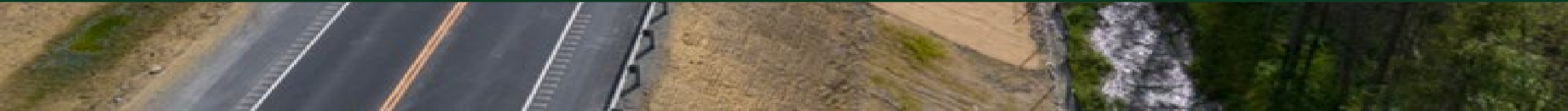
132,000 Hours worked

Survey Year	Acres
Pre-2005	954.4
2005	367.4
2009	103.1
2014	22.1
2016	74.8
2020	393.4
2021	216.5
2022	7.7
2023	3.3
2024	6.0
2025	5.5
2026	0
Total	2154.3



PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS

Tribal Involvement



PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS: Tribal Involvement

The Project is located on the traditional lands of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe.

Since 2020, **12 Tribal observers** have worked on the project.



PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS: Tribal Involvement

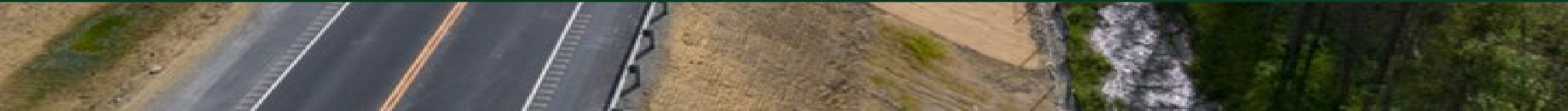
Youth participants in the KIT Susten Archaeology Camp visited the Project site for hands-on learning with Project archaeologists.





PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS

Data Recovery





PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS: **Data Recovery**



Data that tells a story

- Pre-historic and historic artifacts
- Fire-cracked rocks and soil samples
- Artifacts
- Field notes
- Photographs, maps, and drawings
- Traditional cultural knowledge

450

Excavation units dug
(1 meter x 1 meter units)

1,698

Shovel tests dug
(50 cm x 50 cm units)

6

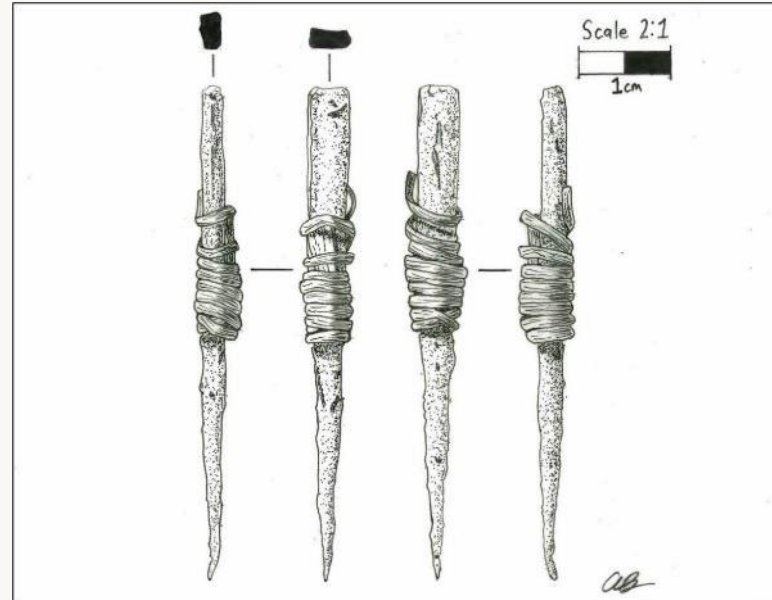
**Professional posters/
presentations**

14

**Interim and annual data
recovery reports**

PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS: Data Recovery

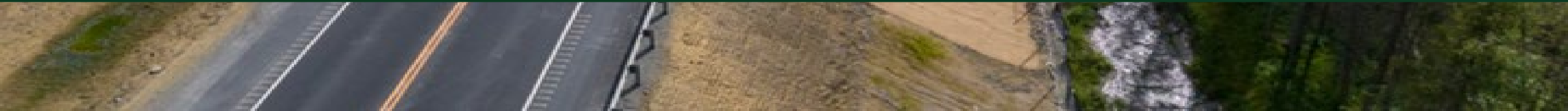
*Data that
tells a story*





PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS

Construction Monitoring



PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS: Construction Monitoring

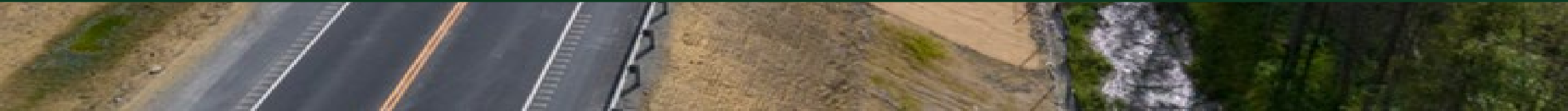
Everyone on the team is encouraged to **reach out to archaeologists with questions or concerns** about identification and preservation of potentially important findings.





PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS

Dena'ina Oral Histories Digitization Project



PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS: Dena'ina Oral Histories Digitization Project



“Cultural artifacts only tell part of the story; they need the voices of the people to fill in details and provide deeper understanding.



KIT is working to collect, translate, and preserve Kenaitze oral histories in a digital format and is currently transcribing and digitizing existing interviews.



KIT plans to develop a public website with the full catalog of published documentation and selected samples of digitized materials.”

*Some information may be redacted from public documents due to its sensitive nature.

“As Dena'ina people, we have been part of this land for time immemorial. Our oral history says that we are the original stewards of this land.”

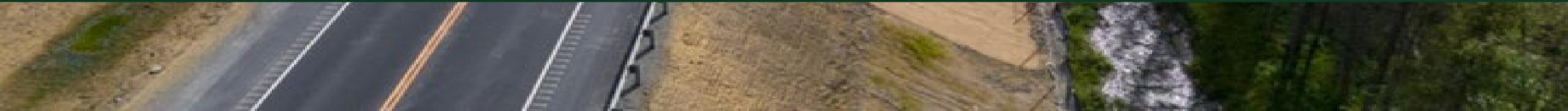
“We advocate for the appropriate removal and mitigation of the sites that have been documented in this area that will be impacted by the projects' footprint. Through working with CIRI, the Kenaitze Indian Tribe has taken the role and responsibility of monitoring and documenting the work being done through the project.”

“Dena'ina people live, gather, and travel through this area and have for thousands of years, to support the Kenaitze Tribe's mission to assure that the Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina thrive forever.”



PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS

Rhode Cabin



PROJECT MITIGATION EFFORTS: Rhode Cabin

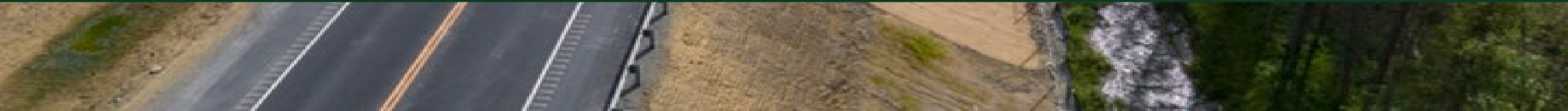
Four structures at the Rhode homestead on Kenai Lake were surveyed in 2023 and 2024 as part of the Project.

All four structures were determined eligible for listing to be nominated to the National Register for Historic Preservation.





LESSONS LEARNED



■ Site challenges:

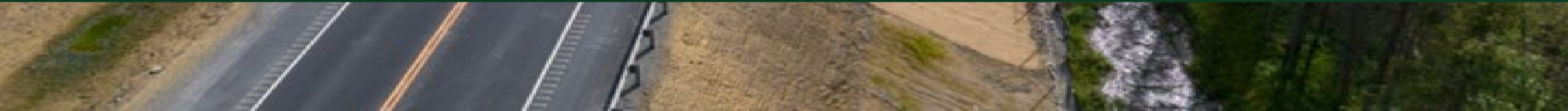
- Flooding and groundwater at excavation sites
- Falling trees
 - High winds
 - Spruce bark beetles
- Snow
- Machinery and roadwork in close proximity
- Frozen ground
- Wildfires
- Nationwide shortage of archaeologists





PLANNED ACTIVITIES

2027 and Beyond



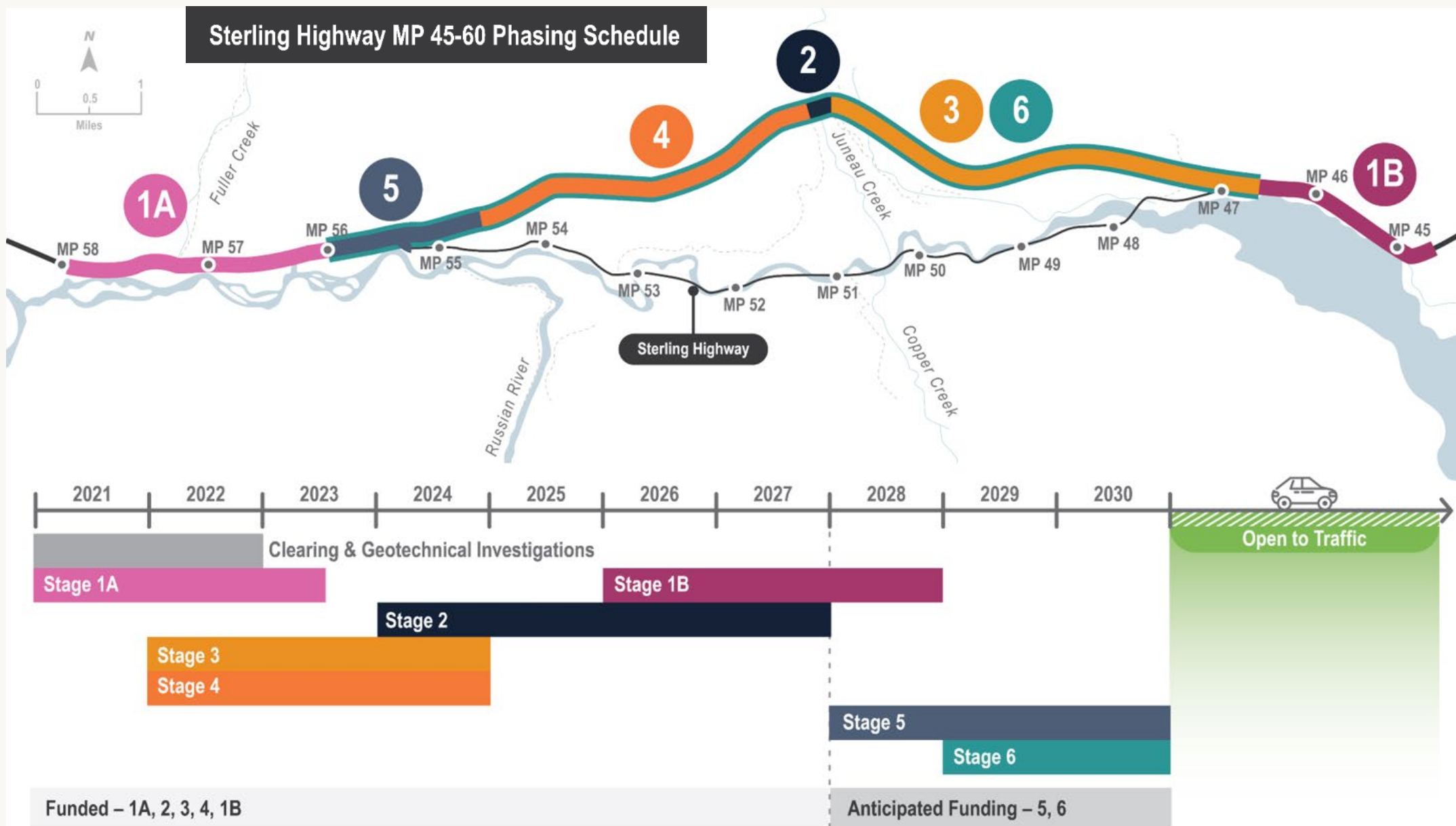


PLANNED ACTIVITIES: 2027 and Beyond



- Additional field surveys and data recovery if project footprint changes
- A professional publication compiling past and current research on the Sqilantnu District, to be published in a scientific journal
- An educational booklet on the Sqilantnu Archaeological District
- A nomination for the Sqilantnu Archaeological District to the National Register for Historic Places
- Interpretive signs within the Sqilantnu Archaeological District

PLANNED ACTIVITIES: 2027 and Beyond





THANK YOU!

Poster Session!!!

Have questions? Find a team member during the poster session!



Stay Informed!



Visit the website

www.sterlinghighway.net



Project questions?

Julia Hanson, PE
907-269-0753

Construction questions?

Shaun Combs, Project Engineer
907-595-2009



SCAN ME