

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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## ALASKA PIPELINE PUMP STATION TO BE BUILT IN DIFFERENT LOCATION TO PROTECT NESTING SITES FOR FALCONS AND OTHER BIRDS OF PREY

The site for one of the 12 pumping stations for the trans-Alaska oil pipeline will be permanently relocated, and a private airfield's nearby operations have been seasonally suspended, to protect important nesting sites for hawks and falcons--including endangered peregrine falcons--the Department of the Interior said today.

The changes are taking place near the Sagwon Bluffs on the north slope of Alaska's Brooks Range, where at least 18 major nesting sites could have been severely disrupted by heavy construction and aviation activity.

Pump Station No. 2 will be built instead at a point on the giant pipeline between three and four miles north of its originally planned location, according to Andrew P. Rollins, Jr., Interior's authorized officer for construction surveillance of the pipeline. The change in location will not affect the time required to complete construction, still scheduled for late 1977.

Action came after the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an Interior Department agency, reported that the expected disturbances could result in an "irretrievable decline in the number of raptors (birds of prey) using the bluffs." High noise levels and mechanical operations are known to frighten the big birds away from areas they would otherwise use to nest.

At the same time, the Bureau of Land Management, the Interior agency in charge of maintaining most of the land area crossed by the pipeline, has rewritten its lease to Alaska International Airlines for use of the Sagwon Cliffs airstrip, specifying no further landings or takeoffs between April 15 and August 15 each year.

The Federal Aviation Administration is cooperating by contacting aircraft operators to advise them of the problem and solicit their help in directing pilots to maintain at least 1,000 feet of altitude above the nesting sites, and at least one mile of horizontal distance from them during the especially critical period between April 15 and July 15.

(More)

The birds, which include rough-legged hawks, gyrfalcons, and peregrine falcons, use the cliffs between April and August to nest, hatch their eggs, and raise their young to flight stage. Nesting this year is believed to have begun late in April and bird activity is expected to continue until the last fledgling has left its nest about mid-August.

Officials said the Sagwon airstrip had been scheduled for use by aircraft flying supplies and equipment for construction of the pump station and related pipeline activities, with work due to approach peak stage in the area during the coming months. The Happy Valley airfield, some 10 miles away, will handle this air traffic instead.

Alaska's Department of Fish and Game, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management will be monitoring the area during the nesting period, and pilots observed to be deliberately harassing or otherwise disturbing the raptors will be subject to penalties under the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

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