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Ms. Robyn McGhee, Senior Environmental Scientist
ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.
P.O. Box 100360
Anchorage, AK 99503

Subject: GMT-1 Spectacled Eider Nest Search, 2016

Dear Ms. McGhee:

This data report summarizes the nest search ABR conducted in the proposed GMT-1 area where off-pad activities were scheduled during the Spectacled Eider nesting season in 2016. Please contact Rick Johnson or Pam Seiser for further information.

Thank you,

/s
Rick Johnson
Senior Scientist

/s
Pam Seiser
Research Biologist

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INTRODUCTION

In preparation for the winter construction season, survey activities were planned along the proposed routes for the GMT-1 pipeline and road during the summer of 2016. Spectacled Eiders occur at low densities in the GMT-1 area and may breed there, whereas the probability of Steller's Eiders occurring near GMT-1 is quite low, and no evidence exists of them breeding in or near this area in recent times. The Incidental Take Statement of the Biological Opinion for GMT-1 (USFWS 2015) contained terms and conditions that restrict human activity to gravel pads where the activity occurs within 200 m of active Spectacled Eider nests: "T&C 1a. Ground-level activity (by vehicle or on foot) within 200 meters of occupied Spectacled Eider nests, from June 1 through August 15, will be restricted to existing thoroughfares, such as pads and roads. Construction of permanent facilities, placement of fill, alteration of habitat, and introduction of high noise levels within 200 meters of occupied spectacled eider nests will be prohibited." To comply with T&C 1a in 2015, ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc., contracted ABR to conduct a nest search for Spectacled Eiders along the proposed pipeline route for GMT-1 prior to survey activities. Additional survey work of the pipeline together with the road routes was scheduled for summer 2016; the eider nest search area in 2015 was expanded to include both the proposed pipeline and road routes. This report is a brief summary of the nest search for Spectacled Eiders conducted for the GMT-1 project in 2016. Background, methods, and references cited here are presented in more detail in a report on nest searches in the Alpine area (Seiser and Johnson 2016, Eider nest searches in the Alpine Area, 2016. Unpublished report for ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc., by ABR, Inc.).

STUDY SITE AND METHODS

The study area included the proposed GMT-1 pipeline and road route in the Northeast National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NE NPRA) between the CD-5 drill pad and the proposed GMT-1 drill pad (Figure 1). We conducted intensive ground-based nest searches for eiders during 21–24 June in potential nesting habitat within 200 m of each side of the GMT-1 pipeline and road using the same methods as Seiser and Johnson (2016). Within the 200 m boundaries, we searched suitable eider nesting habitats, represented as shaded areas in Figure 1: Brackish Water, Salt-killed Tundra, Salt Marsh, Deep Water (both with and without islands),

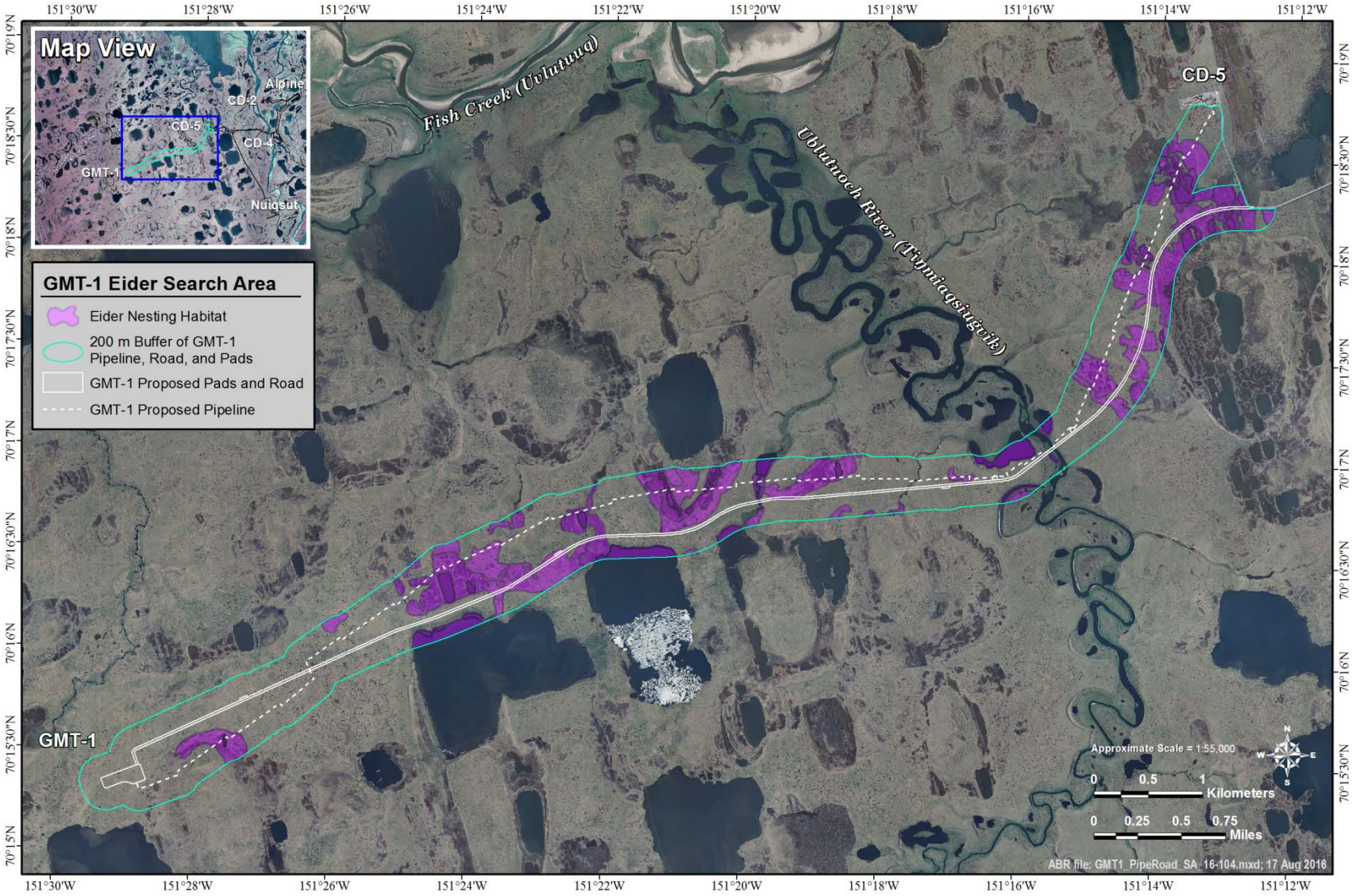

Figure 1. Eider nest search area along the proposed GMT-1 pipeline and road route in the Northeast National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, 2016.

Shallow Water (both with and without islands), Deep Polygon Complex, Sedge Marsh, Grass Marsh, Wetland Complex (both Young and Old), Patterned Wet Meadow, Nonpatterned Wet Meadow, and all shorelines of waterbodies. We did not search areas unsuitable for eider nesting (primarily Moist Tussock Tundra and Moist Sedge-shrub Meadow, which are represented as non-shaded areas in Figure 1).

RESULTS

We did not find Spectacled Eider adults or nests during a ground-based survey of potential eider nesting habitat along the GMT-1 pipeline and road routes during June 2016. We also found no Steller's Eider adults or their nests along the pipeline and road routes. These results were similar to our 2015 nest search results (Johnson and Seiser 2015, GMT-1 Pipeline Route Spectacled Eider Nest Search, 2015. Unpublished report for ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc., by ABR, Inc.). In 2016, we searched 260 ha (642 acres) of the 822 ha (2,026 acres) within the 200 m buffer around the GMT-1 road and pipeline corridors; the remainder comprised habitats that are not used by nesting Spectacled Eiders (Figure 1). Within the areas searched, we found 49 nests of other large waterbirds species: 31 Greater White-fronted Goose nests, 11 Cackling/Canada Goose nests, 2 Northern Pintail nests, and 1 nest each of the following: unidentified goose, King Eider, unidentified scaup, unidentified loon, and Parasitic Jaeger. Unidentified nests were found without incubating birds, but were identified to genus based on feather or nest bowl characteristics.