Meals Hill Protection Project
Prepared by Great Land Trust
August 25, 2017

Property Name:	Meals Hill, Port Valdez
Owner:	Port Valdez Company
Agency Sponsor:	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Appraised Value:	To be determined upon completion of appraisal – Appraisal expected to be finalized fall 2017
Funding Request	To be determined upon completion of appraisal – Not to exceed $5,200,000
Acreage	184
Legal Description	Those portions of Tracts C & E, PORT VALDEZ SUBDIVISION, according to the official plat thereof, filed under Plat Number 77-1, Records of the Valdez Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska.

Overview:

This project encompasses the permanent protection of approximately 184 acres in the Port Valdez area adjacent to the Valdez Ferry Terminal in Prince William Sound. The Meals Hill property consists of two parcels that contain habitat ranked in the highest priority category in the 2014 Great Land Trust EVOS Habitat Land Prioritization. The parcels are also in close proximity to prior EVOSTC habitat protection projects and thus build on past EVOSTC efforts.

The parcels will be transferred to the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources. A conservation easement will be held by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Injured services and species recovery and habitat protection is the EVOSTC's focus in the spill area. Acquisition of this property would contribute to EVOSTC area-wide goals including recreation uses and habitat protection for injured species. Injured species are dependent on the coastal, wetland, and upland habitats provided by these parcels. Protection of the parcels would conserve habitat for fish, shore birds, seabirds, migratory birds, and mammal species. The protection of Meals Hill will provide recreational opportunities by securing public access to a unique, locally accessible coastal property with existing trails for non-motorized recreation along the coast and within walking distance to the Ferry Terminal, Valdez Small Boat Harbor and downtown Valdez. Protection of the property will create public access for multiple recreational activities including hiking, biking, kayaking, bird and wildlife viewing, and berry picking.

Added Benefit to Past EVOS Trustee Council Actions:

In 1999, the EVOS Trustee Council approved funding to acquire surface title to approximately 142 acres (PWS1056 Blondeau parcel and City of Valdez parcel) at the mouth of Mineral Creek in Valdez approximately 0.3 miles from the Meal Hill parcels under consideration. The EVOS Trustee Council also previously approved funding to acquire 25 acres (in 1995) and 9.5 acres (in 2000) northeast of the Valdez Small Boat Harbor (Valdez Duck Flats PWS06, Hayward parcel PWS52) approximately 0.5 miles

from the Meals Hill parcels. In addition, oil spill restitution funds were used to construct the Shoup Bay trail which begins approximately 0.5 miles from the Meals Hill parcels (see map on page 5).

Property Description and Habitat:

Meals Hill is a prominent landscape feature in Port Valdez providing scenic open space, habitat and recreational opportunities near downtown Valdez. The parcel is adjacent to the Valdez Ferry Terminal, 0.3 miles from the Valdez Small Boat Harbor, and 2.5 miles north, directly across Port Valdez from the Valdez Marine Terminal at the end of the Trans Alaskan Pipeline System.

The property is a unique coastal bedrock feature that stands above the city. The property contains undisturbed coastal rain forest, one mile of rocky coastline, and wetlands in the low-lying areas between the parallel ridges of the hill. The property is bordered on the north by residential and industrial development along Egan Avenue, to the east by Hazelet Avenue and the Civic Center, to the South by Port Valdez/ Prince William Sound, and to the west by primarily undeveloped land owned by the University of Alaska, adjacent to Mineral Creek.

The Meals Hill property contains two parcels totaling 184 acres. There is an existing gravel road leading to the overlook at the summit of the hill. There is a private inholding with a residence with a bed and breakfast business located within the exterior boundaries of the Meals Hill parcels that is not part of the sale.

Protection Benefits:

The Meals Hill parcels provide one mile of forested coastline adjacent to subtidal communities, which are an EVOS-affected resource, with continuous kelp beds along the entire one mile stretch. This habitat contributes shelter and food for EVOS-affected species including nearshore fishes, birds, and marine mammals. The marine waters bordering the parcels also provide habitat for five species of pacific salmon including the EVOS-affected resources of pink and sockeye salmon, which spawn in the adjacent Mineral Creek drainage. The property also contains unaltered coastal rainforest, wetlands, and bird nesting habitat unique to the area of Port Valdez proximal to downtown Valdez. The USFWS National Wetlands Inventory maps the Meals Hill parcels as containing 9.45 acres of freshwater emergent wetlands and approximately one mile of coastline adjacent to the estuarine and deepwater wetlands of Port Valdez. These nationally declining wetlands include the continuous kelp beds which provide important habitat to EVOS injured species.

Protection of these parcels would provide new opportunities for tourism and recreation in Valdez, both of which are also EVOS-affected services. The protection of the Meals Hill parcels will provide access to tourism and recreational opportunities by making public an easily-accessible coastal property with existing trails for non-motorized recreation along the coast adjacent to and within walking distance from the Valdez Ferry Terminal, Civic Center Overlook Trail, and coastal walkway to the Valdez Small Boat Harbor. Trails on the parcel would also be able to link with the Mineral Creek Trail, Shoup Bay Trail, and Dock Point Trail. Recreational uses would include hiking, skiing, mountain biking, kayaking, bird and wildlife viewing, and berry picking.

Potential Threats:

Conservation of these parcels would eliminate the threat of future habitat fragmentation, degradation, or development of this prime coastal habitat. Adding to the benefits of the Trustee Council's previously protected adjacent parcels, conserving these parcels of land would reduce habitat fragmentation and thus remove barriers to species mobility. Species' ability to freely move across areas ensures a greater rate of reproductive success, greater access to food, and more opportunity to establish territory in higher-quality habitat. Conserving contiguous tracts of lands also protects pathways between resources. Ample access to resources reduces species stress and makes them less susceptible to disease and starvation.

The Valdez City Council has been briefed on this potential EVOS habitat acquisition project and discussed the many merits of conserving Meals Hill for habitat, recreation, tourism, and community benefit.

Proposed Management:

Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

Funding Request:

To be determined upon completion of appraisal – Not to exceed $5,200,000

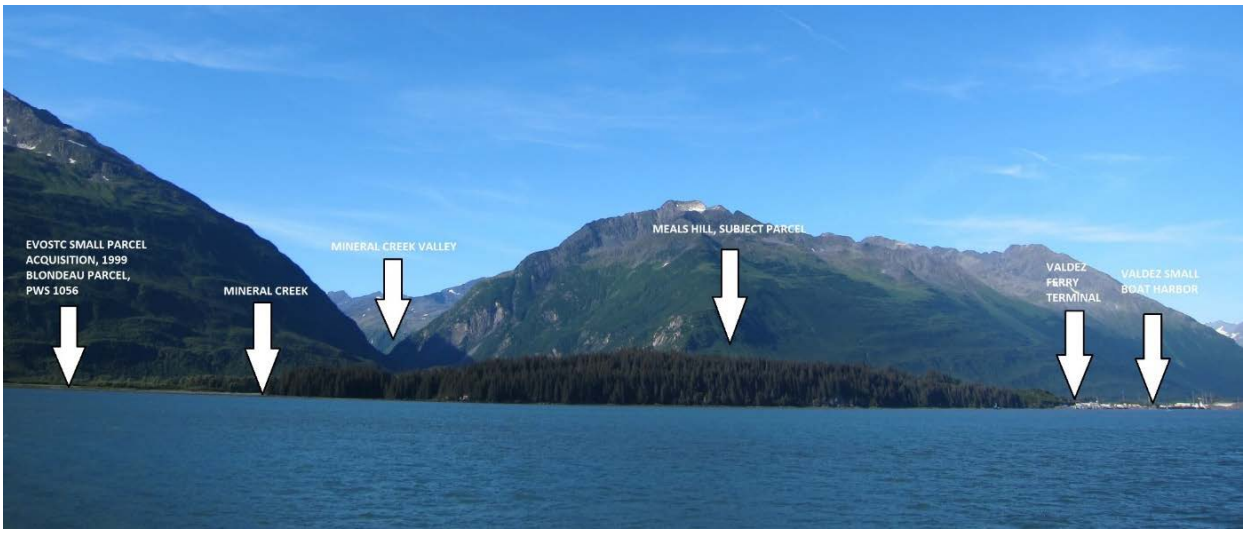


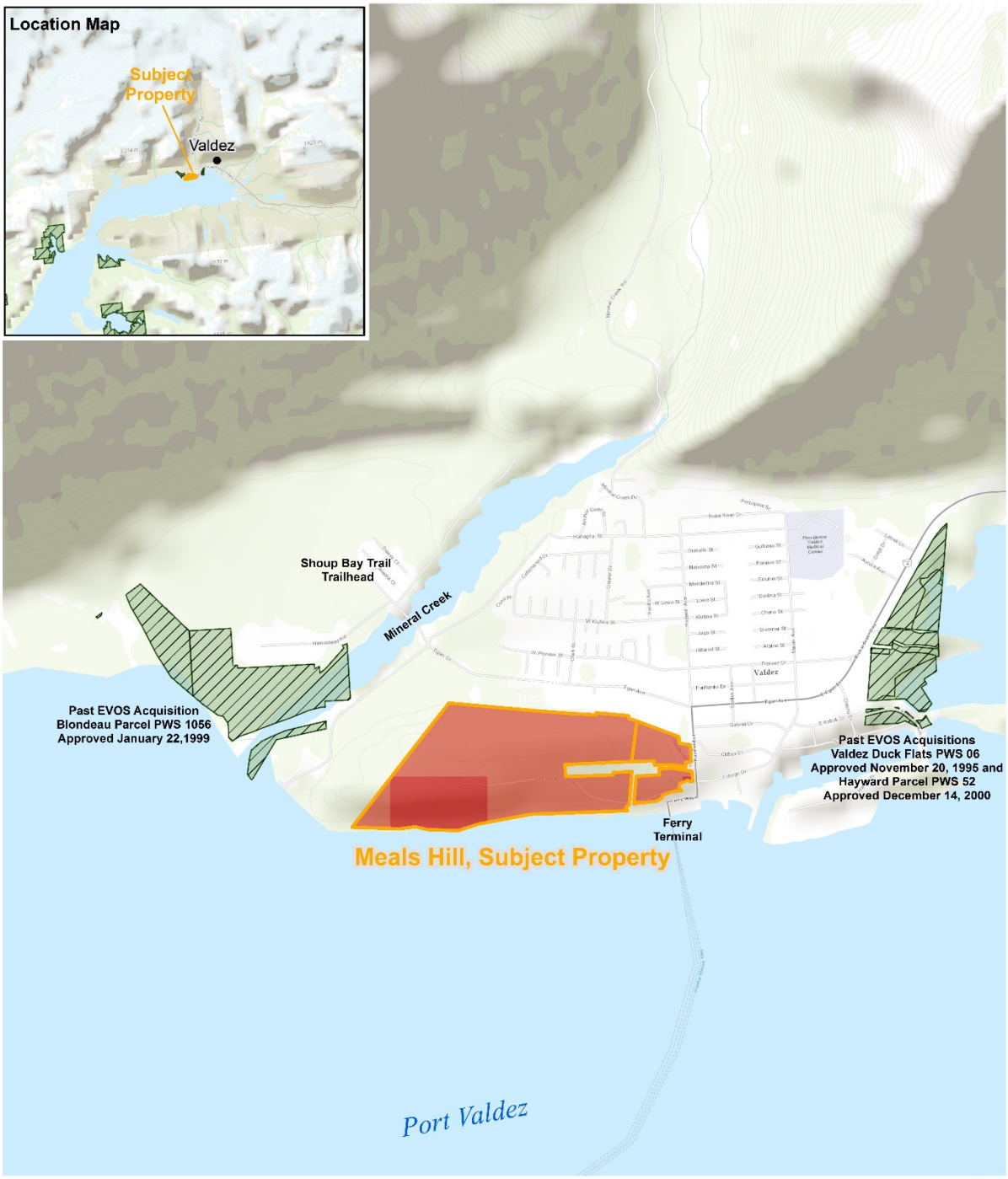
Photo: Meals Hill and surrounding land as viewed from the Alaska Marine Highway ferry, Aurora, approaching the Ferry Terminal in Port Valdez.

Photo: Meals Hill property contains one mile of coastline adjacent to continuous kelp beds.

Photo: Meals Hill showing coastline, coastal forest, gravel road to viewpoint and proximity to Valdez.

Photo: Coastal rain forests on the subject property across Port Valdez from the Valdez Marine Terminal at the end of the Trans Alaskan Pipeline System.

Photo: View from top of Meals Hill across Port Valdez to the Valdez Marine Terminal at the end of the Trans Alaskan Pipeline System.



Meals Hill property, City of Valdez

Past EVOS Action

EVOS Habitat Scoring

Low High

0 0.5 1 Miles

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Great Land Trust
EVOS Habitat Prioritization