

Initial Study Report Meeting

Study 11.8 Rare Plant Study

March 29, 2016

Prepared by

ABR, Inc.—Environmental
Research & Services

Study 11.8 Status

ISR documents (ISR Part D Overview):

- Initial Study Report: Parts A, B, and C (June 3, 2014)

Status:

- In 2013, field surveys for rare plants were completed without any variances.
- In 2013, the study team sampled a wide range of habitat types in the study area and found two rare species.
- Due to access restrictions in 2013, researchers were unable to sample CIRWG lands in the Gold Creek Corridor and in the southwestern part of the proposed Watana Reservoir. To complete the survey of the Project area, field surveys for rare plants will be conducted in those areas in the next study year.
- No additional field survey or data analysis work has been conducted for the Rare Plant Study since 2013.

Study 11.8 Objectives

- Identify habitats in the Project area that may support rare vascular plant species, which were previously found within a broad region surrounding the Project area
- Search those habitats in portions of the Project area that would be disturbed by Project construction and operations activities for populations of rare vascular plant species
- Map the locations and estimate population sizes for any rare species found

Study 11.8 Components

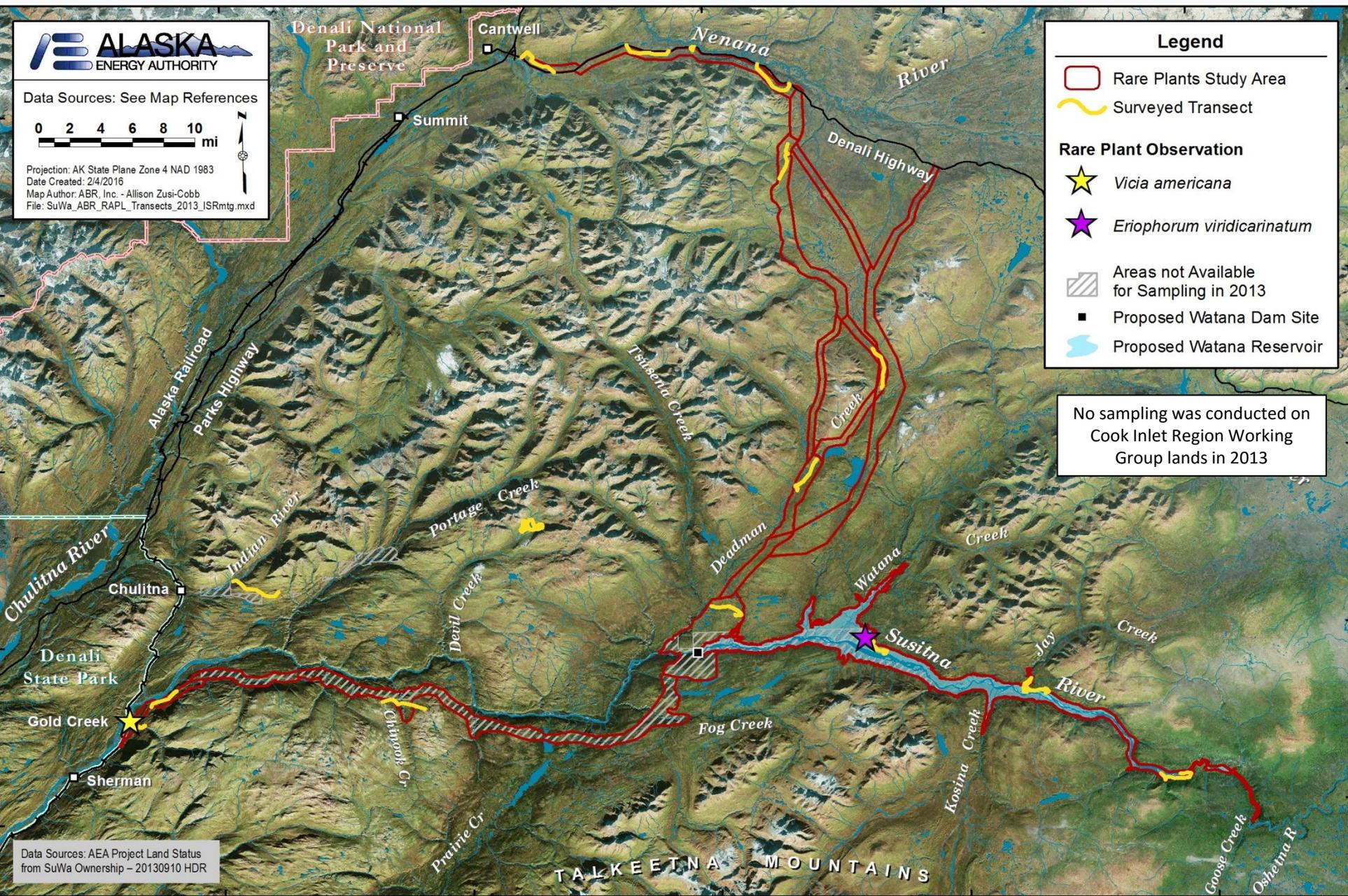
- Selection of focal species and habitats in which to search for rare vascular plant populations—using data from the records of rare plants previously collected in a broad region surrounding the Project area (ISR Part A, Section 4.1, p. 2)
- Work focused on those species listed as more rare within the state (S1, S1S2, S2, and S2S3 rankings) by the Alaska Natural Heritage Program (ISR Part A, Section 4.1, p. 2)
- Field surveys for rare vascular plant taxa (ISR Part A, Section 4.2, p. 3)

Study 11.8 Variances

In 2013, there were no variances from the methods for the selection of focal species and habitats or for the field survey work for rare plants as described in the RSP (Section 11.8.4.1)



Study 11.8 Summary of Results (ISR Part A, Section 5): Transects Sampled in 2013



Study 11.8 Summary of Results

(ISR Part A, Section 5)

- Field surveys conducted in early July and early August, 2013; a total of 16 transects were sampled
- Two rare species were found; both identifications have been confirmed by UAF Herbarium staff:
 - *Vicia americana* (American vetch; S2) was found at Gold Creek Camp at the western end of the Gold Creek Corridor
 - *Eriophorum viridicarinatum* (thinleaf cottonsedge; S2S3) was found on a terrace above the Susitna River in the proposed Watana Reservoir near PRM 199; it was also found by other botanical field crews outside of the rare plant study area
- Several other rare taxa were found during surveys for other Project botanical studies (identifications yet to be confirmed)

AEA's Proposed Modifications to Study 11.8

(ISR Part D, Section 7)

The **Chulitna Corridor** was eliminated from the study area (ISR Part D Overview, Section 1.3) and the **Denali East Corridor Option** was added to the study area as an additional, alternative north-south corridor alignment for transmission line and road access from the dam site to the Denali Highway (ISR Part C, Section 7.1.2)

Steps to Complete Study 11.8

(ISR Part D, Section 8)

- Using the list of rare plant species compiled in 2013, conduct field surveys in the next study year to locate any additional populations of rare vascular plant species that occur in those portions of the Project area that were unsurveyed in 2013 and could be affected by Project construction and operations activities (RSP Section 11.8.4.1).
- Estimate population sizes for any rare vascular plant species found in 2013 and 2015 and map their locations in GIS (RSP Section 11.8.4.1).

Licensing Participants Proposed Modifications to Study 11.8?

- Agencies
- CIRWG members and Ahtna
- Public

