

106 SUCCESS STORY

Public-Private Partnership Preserves Cold War Missile Site for the Future

Anchorage, Alaska

“The success at Nike Site Summit was the result of a long-term, persistent effort by the community working with the military through the Section 106 process to create a continuing partnership and stewardship plan for these important historic resources.”

— JUDITH BITTNER
Alaska State Historic
Preservation Officer



THE STORY

After World War II, the risk of nuclear war with the Soviet Union loomed. In response, the United States developed an advanced air defense system to protect against a strategic bomber attack. Nike Hercules was a nationwide, ground-based anti-aircraft missile system that would deploy nuclear warheads over longer ranges and reach higher altitudes. The resulting nuclear blast and radiation would destroy fleets of attacking bombers. Located at an elevation of 4,000 feet on top of Mount Gordon Lyon above Anchorage, Alaska, Nike Site Summit, a former U.S. Army Nike Hercules missile installation, is the most intact example of American military defense against potential airborne nuclear attacks. The installation was one of 145 Nike Hercules missile sites across the U.S. constructed from 1957 to 1960, and Site Summit was one of the very few Nike sites to conduct actual test firing of missiles. It was one of the last Nike missile sites to close in 1979 and subsequently was abandoned for several years until interest in its preservation grew following the end of the Cold War. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996 as a historic district of national-level significance.

THE PROJECT

In response to deteriorating buildings and increasing trespassing and vandalism, in 2007 the Army proposed a management plan that would have demolished almost half of the site. The demolition would have greatly diminished the ability to use Nike Site Summit to interpret a historic working missile battery of the Cold War era.

THE 106 PROCESS

The Army, the federal agency carrying out this project, was responsible for conducting the Section 106 process under the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires that federal agencies identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the fate of the property when adverse effects are likely to ensue.

Photos: Above, acquisition radar tower and enlisted men barracks with radar attached (photo from Survey HAER AK-18-A, courtesy Library of Congress); Right, Nike Hercules missile (U.S. Army photo); Nike firing (photo courtesy Alaska SHPO)

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Photos: Above, Nike Site Summit (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Laura Turner); Top right, missile launch and storage facilities (photo courtesy NPS); Bottom right, interior of missile launch and storage building with missile transport carriage (photo from Survey HAER AK-18-C, courtesy Library of Congress)

Recognizing the historic importance of this site, the Army consulted with the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the National Park Service (NPS), the Native Village of Eklutna, the Friends of Nike Site Summit (FONSS), the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Nike Historical Society, the Alaska Association for Historic Preservation (AAHP), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, to modify its proposed management plan. During the Section 106 consultation in 2008, the Army sought the technical assistance of the NPS to better understand the potential effects of its management options on the historically significant characteristics of the site. The NPS' resulting report helped inform the Section 106 review. The consultation process resulted in a Programmatic Agreement in which the Army developed a plan to stabilize certain buildings and structures, scheduled demolition for a limited number of buildings and structures, and delayed demolition of other buildings and structures in order to provide consulting parties reasonable time to plan and seek outside funds for their stabilization and/or rehabilitation.

THE SUCCESS

Working under the partnership arrangement established in the Section 106 agreement, the current property owner, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska (JBER), the SHPO, FONSS, NPS, and AAHP are collaborating to preserve the site. FONSS, with support from JBER, NPS, SHPO, and AAHP began work in 2010 to stabilize and restore parts of the site. FONSS successfully raised funds and coordinated significant volunteer efforts for on-site stabilization work, hazardous material abatement, and building repair. JBER continues to stabilize buildings at the site, clean up and improve site safety, and secure the site from trespassers. JBER and FONSS work together to conduct guided public tours of the site, still an active military training area, to enable thousands of visitors to see and learn about Nike Site Summit. The parties agreed to complete interpretative off-site materials, such as a Historic American Landscape Survey and an educational program with a teacher toolkit to outline the history of the Cold War in Alaska with an emphasis on the Nike missile program. Through the Section 106 process, the Army and Air Force found partners to preserve a significant and unique historic resource from the recent past and tell its story for future generations.

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

401 F Street NW, Suite 308, Washington DC 20001

Phone: 202-517-0200 • Fax: 202-517-6381 • achp@achp.gov • www.achp.gov

Consulting Parties:

U.S. Army
 Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer
 National Park Service
 ACHP
 Native Village of Eklutna
 Municipality of Anchorage
 National Trust for Historic Preservation
 Friends of the Nike Site Summit
 Nike Historical Society
 Cold War Historical Museum
 American Society of Landscape Architects
 Anchorage Ski Club, Inc.
 Cook Inlet Historical Society
 Alaska Association for Historic Preservation

For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to www.achp.gov



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