

**DENALI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE**

**CENTRAL ALASKA NETWORK**

**Vegetation Monitoring Program**

**Summary Trip Report: Nika Ridge Mini-grid**

**2 July to 9 July, 2007**



**Lead Author: Nikki Grant-Hoffman**  
**Contributors: Carl Roland, Peter Nelson**

**September, 2007**

## **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this trip was to collect vegetation data including vascular and non-vascular data and soil observations and collections according to the protocols established for the Central Alaska Network (CAKN) vegetation monitoring program for the Nika Ridge Mini-grid. All points were accessible and all were sampled.

## **PERSONNEL:**

Carl Roland – Crew leader, vascular plant collections and identification, metaplot, solar charging and tablet maintenance, observations and plot navigation

Peter Nelson - Non-vascular collections and identification, gps, plot photographs

Nikki Grant-Hoffman – Soil observations and collections, tree coring and solar charging and tablet maintenance

## **ACCESS TO MINI-GRID AND CAMPING POSSIBILITIES:**

We accessed the Nika Ridge Mini-grid via a 20 minute helicopter ride. We landed near point 18 and 19, at the time there was a caribou antler very visible near the landing site! We landed between the stream and ridge on what became our kitchen. We camped up on the flat ridge just above our landing site which provided good views and good accessibility to the grid.

This was an excellent campsite. Water was not a problem; the stream below us was clear and running well. However, after a significant rain it was running very cloudy and would likely have clogged a water filter.

## **HIKING:**

Travel around the grid was not difficult and all points were accessible. There was some uphill walking; however, slopes were not terribly steep and most walking was open tundra ‘mattress’ walking. There were a number of well used animal trails (moose and caribou mostly) that we used to get to the lower, brushier points. Overall the grid was easy to move around.

## **WEATHER AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS:**

Overall weather was nice for this sampling period. We had rain at night several times and during the day a few times; however, overall the weather while working was often dry. We did have one thunderstorm that passed very close and we moved down-slope to wait it out. We also had one rainy and cool day with temperatures in the 50’s, the rain and wind made it seem colder. Mosquitoes were a concern and bug jackets were often used. At camp the mosquitoes were quite thick. Also, we ran into wasps several times. Both Carl and Nikki were stung, Carl was stung at one of the points and Nikki was stung while hiking through the drainage. We also had two points with wasp nests near or in the plots (see point summaries). There was a fair amount of walking through wet spongy or soggy ground and rubber boots were used often.

## **SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:**

The terrain was not that steep and we were often walking on vegetation. Also the presence of wasps should be considered if anyone has an allergy. We did not see any bears, moose, or caribou; however, the trail near camp is well used and caution should be used while moving around the camp. Overall this was a safe grid to move around.

## **GENERAL NOTES ON PLOT-WORK AND PLOT OBSERVATIONS:**

We completed our sampling of this mini-grid very quickly and left one day early.

**Table 1. Collection series for the Nika Ridge mini-grid.**

Collector	Identifier	Series
Roland	Vascular plants	CR07-001 to CR07-026
Nelson	Digital Photos	141-4109 to 145-4547 PN07-063 to PN07-309;
Nelson	Nonvascular collections	PN07-740 to PN07-743
Grant-Hoffman	Soils	1 to 25 (all plots)
Grant-Hoffman	Tree cores	18 to 19 and 21 to 25

## **ACTIVITIES:**

### **Monday, July 2**

Today we arrived at Nika Ridge. We were all at the air strip around 9 and our first flight left around 1000. We were alternating flights with the other Denali field crew and our entire crew was at Nika ridge around 1400. We finished camp set-up and started work around 1500. We were able to hike to point 15 and complete it and return to camp around 1900.

Weather: The weather was good. We had low clouds in the morning; however, these did not stop us from flying. We also had light rain in the afternoon.

### **Tuesday, July 3**

Today we finished 4 points, 1, 2, 3, and 6! We started at 0800 and finished at 2100. We hiked up the hill to the south of camp to reach these points. The hike up was strenuous, but hiking throughout the day was easy going. There were no trees to sample at any of these points, so once I finished soil sampling I helped scribe for the non-vascular person which helped things move more quickly. Today we saw Savanna sparrows, golden plovers, and jaegers

Weather: The weather was great today, sunny and warm!

### **Wednesday, July 4**

Today was another productive day; we completed points 14, 10, 4 and 5. We started at 0800 and finished at 2015.

Weather: Mostly sunny and warm with a little rain.

### **Thursday, July 5**

Today we were able to do 3 plots all of which were somewhat brushy. We followed a moose trail to near point 20 and then moved to points 25 and 24. From 24 we followed the moose trail along the drainage back to camp. Walking in the morning was wet and brushy. Point 20 and 24 was particularly brushy (See appendix 1). We also had some trees to core today. We were able to finish a little earlier today around 1815. We saw a Harrier today.

Weather: We had rain at dinner and overnight, but it was sunny during the day.

### **Friday, July 6**

Today we again completed 4 points, 23, 22, 21, and 16. We worked from 0800 to 2000. Points 23 and 21 went pretty quickly. Point 21 was especially quick. It was between a stream and a landslide and a large earth mound was likely the deposit from this landslide. This point was particularly buggy.

Weather: It was sunny in the morning and hot in the afternoon. Partway through the last point of the day a thunderstorm moved close to us, so we moved down slope and waited it out for about 20 minutes. When the storm was approximately 8 miles away we resumed work. It continued to rain through dinner finally stopping around 2100. The stream was running high and muddy after this storm and we used water we already had instead of trying to filter.

### **Saturday, July 7**

Today we did 3 plots; we probably had time for a 4th but are on schedule to finish a day early. We completed plots 9, 8, and 7. Point 9 was shrubby and near water. Point 8 was up a hill and rocky. Plot 7 was steeper (about 25°) with loose gravel. It was easily damaged and walking inside the plot should be minimized. This plot was beside an alder patch with 2 small alders falling inside the plot. We saw jaegers from point 7 and ground squirrels. On the hike back we saw a family of ptarmigan. The stream was still running high but had cleared considerably.

Weather: It was cold, rainy, and windy morning, I was in all of my layers! In the afternoon it was warmer and the wind kept the bugs down.

### **Sunday, July 8**

Today we completed 3 plots, 13, 12, and 11. Plot 13 was open and on a slope. Plot 12 was amazingly situated between 2 patches of thick alder (see appendix 1). It will be interesting to see if this plot is still open at the next sampling.

Weather: There was a light shower in the afternoon and another at night. It was very hot in the later afternoon.

### **Monday, July 9**

Today we did 3 plots again, 19, 18, and 17. All of these were quite close to camp. Point 19 was in the forest, point 18 was down in the drainage and very mucky and wet, and 17 was higher up on the tundra.

Weather: Warm and sunny most of the day with a little rain.

### **Tuesday, July 10**

Today we have finished the entire mini-grid and the plan is to leave a day early. Carl called dispatch on Saturday and requested an early pick up. We were told to expect George to pick us up around 1100. However it was around 1200 when we got picked up. Peter left first with a load of gear. There was only one flight suit and so when George came back for Carl and Nikki, he brought 2 more flight suits. Thus ends our Nika Ridge adventure!

#### *Appendix 1 – Photos*



Photo 1. Crazy frost boils on ridge to south of campsite.



Photo 2. Point #20 - Looking east from plot center.

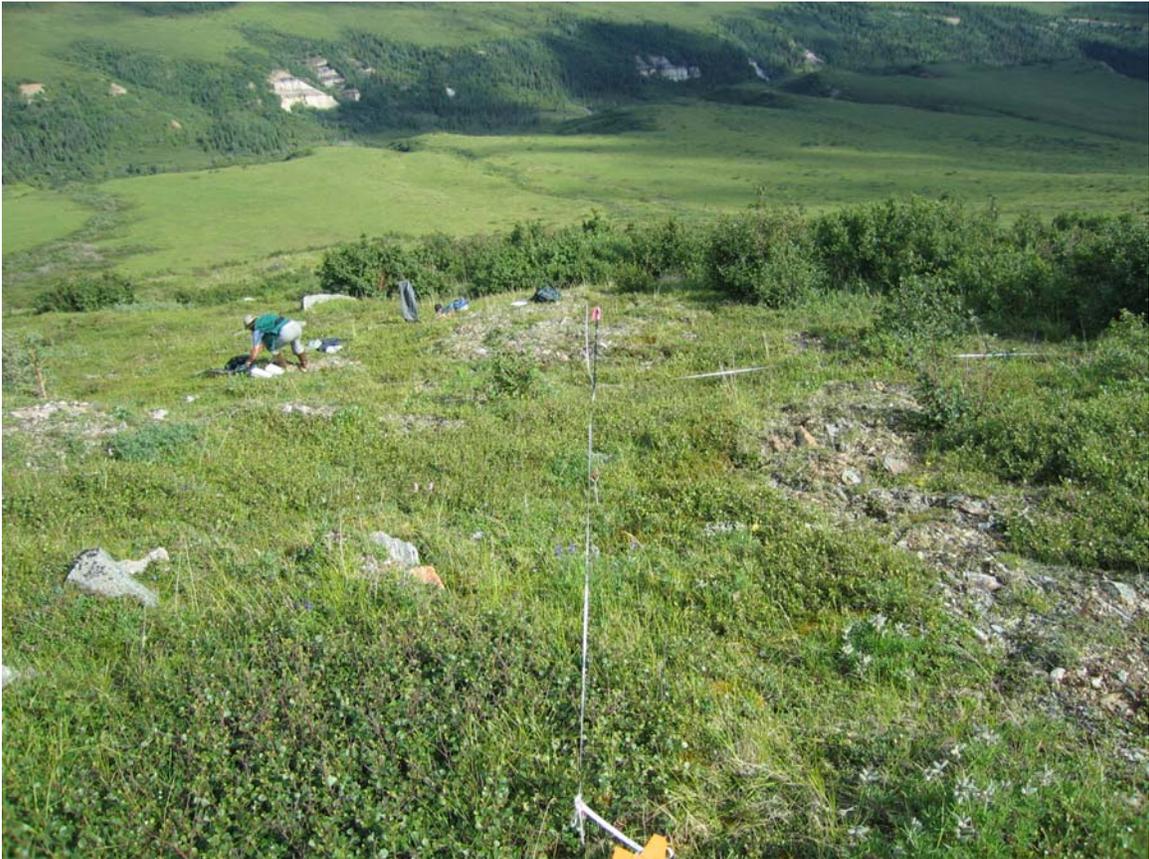


Photo 3. Point #12 - Looking north from perimeter. Campsite is out of view to northwest

Appendix 2 – Map of the area

