

**East Alaska Resource Management Plan Amendment
Delta River Special Recreation Management Area Plan**

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

AK-050-EA-08-001
Bureau of Land Management
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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the information contained in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Proposed Delta River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) Plan and East Alaska Resource Management Plan (EARMP) Amendment, it is my determination that Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) will have no significant effect on the quality of the human environment and that none of the anticipated environmental effects meet the definition of significance as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, in accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA (AK-050-EA-08-001).

Context:

The Delta Wild and Scenic River (DWSR) is one of a few road-accessible rivers in the state of Alaska, and is less than a six-hour drive from two of Alaska's largest cities: Fairbanks (pop. 83,000) and Anchorage (pop. 260,000). The DWSR corridor shares the same boundary as the Delta River SRMA. Access to the Delta River is along the Denali Highway, approximately 21 miles west of Paxson and the Richardson Highway, or 114 miles east from Cantwell and the Parks Highway. Lands within the Delta River SRMA are primarily unencumbered Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, except for a few private inholdings and a portion of the river corridor determined to be a navigable waterway that is managed by the State of Alaska.

Management of the Delta River SRMA was previously guided by the 1983 DWSR Management Plan and the EARMP. Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) and related management objectives were not previously identified, and no decisions were made to manage use levels and associated impacts of recreational use.

The Proposed Action will identify ORVs and management objectives, allow for a wide range of current and future public uses, and still provide management direction to minimize social conflicts and protect river resources. In addition, adaptive management standards based on river user tolerances for different impacts and management direction in support of protecting river resources and ORVs, while allowing a wide range of public uses in the Delta River SRMA, will also be included.

Intensity:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse:

The EA considered the potential beneficial and adverse effects of the Proposed Action in Chapter 4. None of the adverse effects were found to meet the definition of significance as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27. The Proposed Action provides the best overall direction in support of protecting river resources and ORVs, while still allowing the widest range of public uses in the Delta River SRMA. The Proposed Action minimizes social conflicts and protects river resources through a strong emphasis in education and interpretive outreach. The Proposed Action includes adaptive management standards that are based on river user tolerances for different impacts. Monitoring and non-compliance with these standards drives the implementation of management actions.

2. Degree of effect on public health and safety:

The Proposed Action achieves a balance between resource protection and beneficial uses of the human environment. It will improve public health and safety by implementing adaptive management actions to control adverse impacts related to human waste and litter management within the river corridor.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas:

The Delta River SRMA shares the same boundary as the Delta Wild and Scenic River and provides a variety of important cultural, wetlands, and ecological values. The Proposed Action implements protections to benefit ORVs within the river corridor.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial:

Public input regarding the Proposed Action has been solicited throughout the planning process. The BLM-Alaska Glennallen Field Office released the EA for a 45-day public review and comment period, and received 68 written comments from the general public, organizations, and state and federal governmental entities. Based on these comments, the effects on the quality of the human environment are not considered highly controversial.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk:

During the analysis of the Proposed Action, no highly uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment were identified.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration:

This Proposed Action neither establishes a precedent for future BLM actions with significant effects, nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. Monitoring of adaptive management indicators and standards for impact issues are clearly stated in the Proposed Action. Monitoring that results in the need for future restrictions, such as an Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) closure to motorboat use and/or airplane landings, would be subject to the ANILCA closure procedure specified in 43 CFR 36.11(h), including public hearings and *Federal Register* posting requirements.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant impacts:

The Proposed Action identifies no individually or cumulatively significant impacts. Any adverse impacts the Proposed Action identifies, in conjunction with any adverse impacts of other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions, will only result in negligible impacts to river resources. The cumulative effects are analyzed in Chapter 4 of the EA.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources:

The portions of the Delta River SRMA within the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District (TLAD) are some of the densest areas for late Pleistocene and early Holocene archaeological sites in the North American Subarctic. These areas contain a relatively rich picture of the area's prehistory and history, based upon one of the largest and densest cluster of archaeological sites in this part of Alaska. Many of these sites, and almost all of those within the TLAD, are considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as contributing properties to the archaeological district. The most significant threats to these archaeological sites are from the use of Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) and campsites along the river corridor. The effects analysis in Chapter 4 of the EA shows that the prescribed OHV and campsite

management actions developed for the Proposed Action will be beneficial for cultural resources in the TLAD and throughout the entire river corridor.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat:

There are no known endangered or threatened species or critical habitat located within the planning area.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law:

The Proposed Action does not violate any known federal, state, or local environmental protection laws. The Proposed Action is in compliance with the EARMP, which provides direction for the protection of the environment on BLM public lands administered by the Glennallen Field office.

Approved



Bud Cribley, Alaska State Director
Bureau of Land Management



Date