

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION AND
PLAN CONFORMANCE DOCUMENTATION**

DOI-BLM-AK-F020-2012-0006-CX

Proposed Action: The purpose for action is to determine whether or not to issue a Right-of-Way (ROW) grant to the National Weather Service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for the installation, operation and maintenance of a weather observing system near the Wickersham Dome trailhead of the White Mountains National Recreation Area (WMNRA).

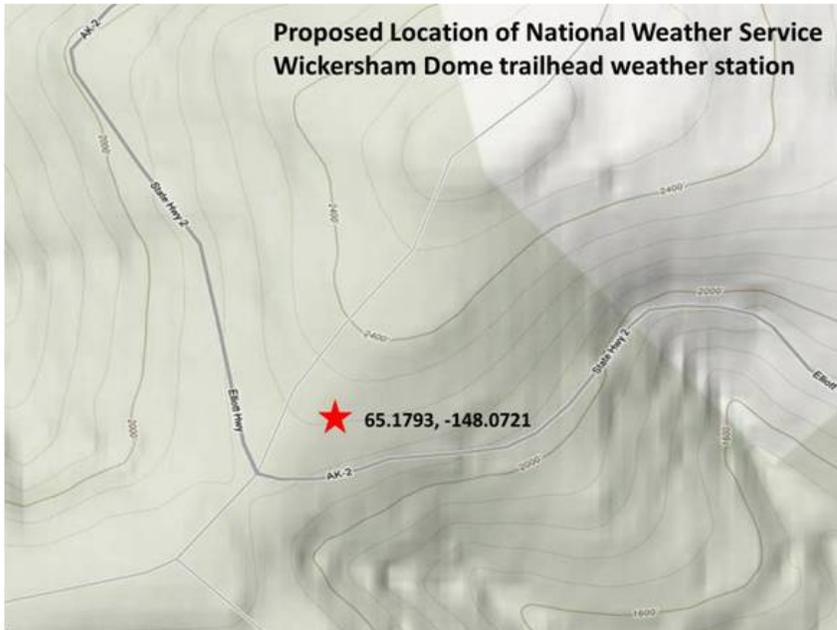
Date of Proposed Action: Installation would occur as soon as an authorization is obtained. The NOAA and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) would like to install the station by the end of October 2012 if possible. If granted, the ROW would be for a period of 20 years.

Location: Wickersham Dome Trailhead for the WMNRA located at Mile 28 of the Elliott Highway, within Fairbanks Meridian, Township 4 North, Range 3 West, section 13 NW¼.

Any location within the 40 acre parcel that suits the needs of both the BLM and NOAA may be acceptable. Preferably the location would be close enough to the trailhead clearing to allow the use of cameras that would project over the trailhead.

Applicant: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Weather Service.

Serial Number: FF096493 (289007)



Proposed NWS Wickersham Dome weather station location

1. From the 4-wheeler loading/unloading platform go north up the trail for 137'
2. At 137' you will observe a path heading NW with a clearing @ 75' marked with grey tape



Description of Proposed Action

The NOAA, NWS, proposes to install, operate, and maintain a weather station near the Wickersham Dome Trailhead. The station will be constructed outside the parking lot footprint, within a wooded area in order to provide some screening. The station footprint would be 10 feet by 10 feet with a tower height of 30 feet. The site would include two 12 VDC car batteries in parallel, supported by a wind generator and solar panel. The station would be telemetered and provide real-time weather data. Links would be available to the BLM and public. The system will be in use year around. No construction will be required and it will not be permanently affixed to the ground. It will be secured by screw anchors or something similar.



Example of the type of weather station to be installed.

Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: White Mountains Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision (WMRMP/ROD); approved February 2, 1986.

While the Wickersham Dome Trailhead is not within one of the designated management units within the WMRMP/ROD, it does state that “retention of federal lands outside of the WMNRA in the Wickersham Dome Area will provide road frontage on the Elliott Highway.” The Wickersham Dome Trailhead is located on land that has been retained in federal ownership and it is also within the boundaries of Right-of-way Reservation F-9622, which was created in order to enable the BLM to provide continued public access to the WMNRA and protect the investment made in the construction and maintenance of the trailhead. The right-of-way was issued in perpetuity.

The proposed action is in conformance with the WMRMP/ROD according to Part II, *Rights-of-way and Other Realty Actions*, which states in the management direction section that “other realty actions could be permitted if compatible with the land uses designated in this plan.” Within the rationale section it states further that “rights-of-way may be needed to provide access for recreation, for mining claims and for other purposes.” The weather station located at the trailhead would provide real time weather information that could be valuable to those who intend to use the WMNRA for recreational purposes. The weather station would not negatively impact

access or conflict with the purpose of the recreation area which is to provide for public outdoor recreational use and for the conservation of scenic, historic, cultural and wildlife values.

Compliance with NEPA

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 43 CFR §46.210(e), which lists “nondestructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research and monitoring activities” as Departmental categorical exclusion actions. The proposed action must be screened against the extraordinary circumstances found in 43 CFR §46.215 which are listed below. Any “yes” finding requires that an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement be prepared for the proposed action.

EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES 43 CFR §43.215	YES/NO
a) May have significant impacts on public health or safety.	No
b) May have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.	No
c) May have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.	No
d) May have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	No
e) Might establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	No
f) May have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	No
g) May have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.	No
h) May have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.	No
i) Might violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	No
j) May have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).	No
k) Might limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).	No
l) Could contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).	No

Recommendation

I have found that the proposed action is compatible with the White Mountains Resource Management Plan, and is an action that can be categorically excluded. The proposed action does not trigger any of the Extraordinary Circumstances found in 43 CFR §46.215. I recommend that the proposed action be allowed and that an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is not needed.

/s/ Victor Wallace

10/26/2012

Victor Wallace, Realty Specialist
Eastern Interior Field Office

Date

Concurrence

I concur that the above action is in conformance with the White Mountains Resource Management Plan, does not meet any of the extraordinary circumstances, and qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion.

/s/ Lenore Heppler

10/26/2012

Lenore Heppler, Field Manager
Eastern Interior Field Office

Date

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact Victor Wallace, Realty Specialist, Eastern Interior Field Office, at 907-474-2363 or by email at vwallace@blm.gov.