



United States Department of the Interior



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North Slana Land Sales (Voight and Riley)
Environmental Assessment, DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2013-0002-EA

Case File, AA-092892 and AA-092949

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Background

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is considering whether to dispose of up to three parcels of public land in North Slana, Alaska by non-competitive direct sales to resolve failed claims and unauthorized continued use. The subject parcels are located within the North Slana community, accessed by the Bear Valley and Suslositna trail systems from the Tok Highway. (For a description of the subject parcels, refer to Section 1.2 of the EA.)

The BLM's Proposed Action (Alternative 2) consists of two independent direct non-competitive land sales (see EA Section 2.2). The BLM has had all parcels appraised and has documented the fair market value of each parcel. The failed claimants have agreed to resolve the unauthorized use and occupancy through purchase of the parcels at the full fair market value. The BLM would prepare the necessary patent documents to complete the sale of the public land only to the failed claimants. Upon closing/sale, the lands would leave Federal management permanently.

Finding of No Significant Impact

This action and its effects have been evaluated consistent with the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for determining *significance*. Per 40 CFR § 1508.27, a determination of *significance* requires consideration of both context and intensity. The former refers to the relative context in which the action would occur such as society as a whole, affected region, affected interests, etc. The latter refers to the severity of the impact.

Context

The North Slana settlement area is Federal unencumbered land, withdrawn as a homestead area. North Slana is located approximately 70 miles northeast of Glennallen along the Glenn highway (Tok cutoff), near the community and Village of Mentasta. The 10,000-acre Slana settlement is remote, even though it is accessible by road. The sale of 20 acres of land is negligible in the context of the Slana settlement area (10,000 acres) and East Alaska region, overall.

Intensity

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The EA identifies proposed action impacts that would be both beneficial and adverse. For example, the EA highlights that the proposed action would resolve the failed claim and would essentially eliminate the concerns about the accumulation of personal property on public lands since those public lands would be transferred to private ownership (EA, p. 8). This is a benefit to the American public. However, the EA also acknowledges that the land sales would result in a loss of access to and use of these parcels (EA, p. 12). This loss is negligible in the context of the greater Slana area and public lands in eastern Alaska overall.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.

The proposed land sales would have no impact on public health and safety. The land sales are an administrative action and would not result in any ground disturbing actions that could affect public safety in this area (EA, p. 6).

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

The proposed sale parcels do not contain any unique characteristics such as historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas (EA, pp. 5-6).

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

The effects of land sales are well documented in both the private and public sectors. The land sale is an administrative action and would not result in any ground disturbing activities (EA, p. 6). The EA indicates that the effects on the quality of the human environment are limited and not controversial.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

Similar to intensity criteria #4, the possible effects to the human environment as a result of the proposed land sales are well understood and do not involve any highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks. The effects of land sales are well documented in both the private and public sectors. The land sale is an administrative action and would not result in any ground disturbing activities (EA, p. 6).

- 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.*

The proposed lands sales do not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about future considerations. In fact, the proposed land sales are identified as a viable method of resolving failed Homestead Act claims under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and the 2007 East Alaska Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (EA, pp. 3-5).

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

The Proposed Action is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Section 3.0 of the EA identifies limited cumulative effects, none of which would be significant.

- 8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

Archaeological surveys along the access trails to the sale areas, as well as in and around the proposed lands sales located no cultural resources (EA, p. 5). There would be no effect to district, sites, highways, structures or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

- 9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

There are no threatened or endangered species present on the subject parcels. Therefore, there would be no impact to endangered or threatened species or habitat (EA, p. 5).

- 10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The proposed land sales do no threaten to violate Federal, State, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. In fact, the proposed land sales are identified as a viable method of resolving failed Homestead Act claims under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and the 2007 East Alaska Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (EA, pp. 3-5).

Conclusion

Therefore, on the basis of the information contained in the EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that:

1. None of the environmental effects identified meet the definition of significance as defined by context and intensity considerations at 40 CFR § 1508.27;

2. The alternatives are in conformance with 2007 East Alaska Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision; and
3. The Proposed Action and alternatives do not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment.

Therefore, neither Environmental Impact Statement nor a supplement to the existing EA is necessary and neither will be prepared.

/s/ Dennis C. Teitzel

October 10, 2014

Dennis C. Teitzel
Glennallen Field Manager

Date

Attachments

BLM 2014. North Slana Land Sales (Voight and Riley), Environmental Assessment, DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2013-0002-EA (September 2014).