

In Reply Refer To:  
FF-093931/2

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION /PLAN CONFORMANCE DOCUMENTATION AND  
DECISION**

**DOI-BLM-AK-F020-2013-0012-CX**

Proposed Action: Issue a five year renewal Special Recreation Permit for a commercial tour company.

Date of Proposed Action: January 2013 through December 2017.

Location: The White Mountains National Recreation Area (WMNRA) and Steese National Conservation Area (SNCA).

Applicant: Alaska Expedition Service

Serial Number: FF093931/2

**Description of Proposed Action:**

Alaska Expedition Service has applied to renew their Special Recreation Use Permit for another five years. Their current permit is to outfit river floaters with equipment and provide transportation from Fairbanks to and from the Beaver Creek put-in site, and the Birch Creek put-in and take-out sites along the Steese Highway. These sites will be used as drop-off and pick-up points for client's independently floating Beaver Creek and Birch Creek Wild Rivers. The use period would be from May through September annually 2013 through 2017.

Alaska Expedition Service outfits independent travelers with canoes, emergency equipment and outdoor gear for independent travel along with drop-off and pick-up services. Alaska Expedition Services is proposing to continue offering outfitting services for up to a maximum of 8 (5 people) parties, annually between the Beaver Creek and Birch Creek Wild Rivers. Canoes will be used to float down both rivers. Most of the clients will spend 7 to 10 days along the rivers. Alaska Expedition Service promotes Leave No Trace Ethics to their clients. General equipment provided includes tents, sleeping bags, etc. Emergency equipment provided by Alaska Expedition Service includes emergency locator transmitters, personal flotation devices, maps, water filters, first aid kits, etc.

**Land Use Plan Conformance**

**Land Use Plans Name:**

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable Land Use Plans (LUP) because it specifically provided for the following in the LUP decision:

Steese National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision

Date Approved: February 6, 1986

Goal-3: Manage lands consistent with multiple use principles and maintain the environmental quality. Management Direction: Special Recreation Use Permits are required for commercial uses such as commercial outfitting and guiding, guiding for commercial river trips, etc.

This action in the Steese National Conservation Area has also been reviewed under past National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) actions: EA-AK-028-02-088 and CX-AK-024-08-009.

White Mountains Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision

Date Approved: February 2, 1986

Goal 1: Provide for a variety of public outdoor recreational opportunities which emphasize the existing natural primitive and semi-primitive values appropriate to the WMNRA designation. Objective 6: Provide for semi-primitive motorized recreation on lands along the southern and western boundaries of the WMNRA. Management Direction: Special Recreation Use Permits would be required for commercial use, competitive events, and special uses involving over 50 participants.

**Compliance with NEPA:**

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the NEPA in accordance with 516 DM 11.9 E (9) (DOI 2004), which states: “Renewals and assignments of leases, permits or rights-of-way where no additional rights are conveyed beyond those granted by the original authorization.”

The proposed action must be screened against the extraordinary circumstances found in 43 CFR 46.215 and listed below. Any “yes” finding requires that an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement be prepared for the Proposed Action.

<b>EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>
1) May have significant impacts on public health or safety.	No
2) 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
3) May have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.	No
4) May have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	No
5) Might establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	No
6) May have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	No
7) May have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the	No

<b>EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>
National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.	
8) 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
9) Might violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	No
10) May have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).	No
11) 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
12) 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 Steese National Conservation Area and White Mountain National Recreation Area Resource Management Plans, and is an action that can be categorically excluded. The Proposed Action does not trigger any of the Extraordinary Circumstances found in 516 DM Chapter 2, Appendix 2. I recommend that the Proposed Action be allowed and that an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is not needed.

/s/ Collin Cogley

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Collin Cogley, Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Eastern Interior Field Office

\_\_\_\_\_  
3/29/2013  
Date

### **Concurrence**

I concur that the above action is in conformance with the applicable land use plans, does not meet any of the extraordinary circumstances, and qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion (CX).

/s/ Lenore Heppler

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Lenore Heppler  
Field Manager  
Eastern Interior Field Office

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3/29/2013  
Date

### **Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact Collin Cogley, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Eastern Interior Field Office, at 907-474-2382.