

PLAN CONFORMANCE / NEPA COMPLIANCE RECORD

DOI-BLM-AKF012-2013-0011-CX

A. Background

BLM Office:

Arctic Field Office, Bureau of Land Management
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, AK 99712

Applicant:

Jim Campbell
Carol Kasza
P.O. Box 73452
Fairbanks, Alaska 99707

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: FF095144, 2930.00 (AK012)

Proposed Action Title/Type:

Special Recreation Permit to conduct wildlife viewing in the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska (NPR-A).

Description of Proposed Action:

The applicant, Jim Campbell and Carol Kasza, of Arctic Treks have requested to renew their authorization for a special recreation permit to conduct wildlife viewing operations on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands within the NPR-A. They established their business in 1979.

The proposed action would authorize a renewal of a Special Recreation Authorization to Arctic Treks to conduct commercial rafting trips on the Utukok, Nigu, Etivlik and Colville rivers. Also proposed this year is the addition of a basecamp at a location on the south side of Teshekpuk Lake from which wildlife viewing from camp and from the water via canoe would take place. If it is not possible to use the Teshekpuk Lake site due to poor weather conditions, a site at Pik Dunes will be utilized as a base camp for wildlife viewing. The rafting trips would be similar in nature to those permitted the past four summers by BLM. Arctic Treks uses 12-foot rafts. The trips would take place between the dates of June 1 and August 31, 2013. There are two proposed trips on the Utukok, June 10 – 16 and June 13 – 19. Arctic Treks is requesting authorizations for two Utukok routes, one being a backup route if the preferred route does not work out. There are also two trips proposed on the Nigu River from June 19 -26 and August 2 – 11. The Nigu rafting trips would raft into the Etivlik, to its junction with the Colville. They anticipate having a maximum of 12 people per trip, including a maximum of 9 clients and 3 guides per raft trip. The groups would fly by charter air service in a wheeled Beaver that can carry 4 people plus gear, and be dropped off and picked up on gravel bars. The proposed dates for use of the Teshekpuk Lake or the Pik Dunes basecamp are July 22 – 26 and the number of people at the utilized site would be 7.

Arctic Trek guides have 8 to 30+ years of wilderness guiding experience. Guides are trained Wilderness First Responders and trained in Whitewater Safety/Rescue and Bear Safety. They carry satellite phones, handheld VHF radios and are equipped with survival gear. Emergencies

would be dealt with using private companies or established search and rescue resources depending on the nature of the emergency and the prevailing conditions and resources available at that time.

Arctic Trek would practice self-contained, expedition style camping and implement Leave No Trace practices. They would carry out all trip garbage. Arctic Trek would not use fuel or gear caches.

Location of Proposed Action:

Nigu Trail
<u>Township Range Meridian Section</u>
32 N 12 E KM 3, 4
33 N 12 E KM 29, 30, 32
33 N 11 E KM 5, 6, 8, 14-17, 23, 24
34 N 11 E KM 7, 17-20, 29,30,32,33
12 S 19 W UM 5-8, 17-19, 29, 30
11 S 19 W UM 6, 7, 18, 19, 29-32
11 S 20 W UM 1
10 S 20 W UM 36
10 S 19 W UM 1, 2, 11, 14, 15, 20-22, 30, 31
9 S 19 W UM 1, 12, 13,24,25,36
9 S 18 W UM 19, 30, 31
8 S 18 W UM 3,9,10,15,16,20,21,28,29,32
7 S 18 W UM 2,11,14,15,21,22,27,28,33,34
6 S 18 W UM 24-26, 35, 36
6 S 17 W UM 17-20

Alternative Utukok River
<u>Township Range Meridian Section</u>
7 S 39 W UM 3, 10-13
6 S 39 W UM 4, 5,8,9,16,21,28,33,34
5 S 39 W UM 25, 26, 32-35
5 S 38 W UM 3, 4, 8, 9, 17-20, 30
4 S 37 W UM 1, 3-5, 8, 17, 20, 29-31
3 S 37 W UM 33-36
4 S 36 W UM 6

3 S 36 W UM 3,4,9,10,15,16,20,21,28,29,31-33
2 S 36 W UM 25-27, 33-36
2 S 35 W UM 25-30, 32-36
2 S 34 W UM 13, 14, 22, 23, 27-31
2 S 33 W UM 1, 2, 10, 11, 14-19, 21, 22
1 S 33 W UM 14, 23, 25,26,35,36

Utukok River Preferred Route

Township Range Meridian Section

6 N 39 W UM 11-14
6 N 38 W UM 17, 18, 20-27, 36
6 N 37 W UM 30, 31
5 N 37 W UM 3-6, 9-11, 13, 14, 24-26, 36
5 N 36 W UM 19, 30-33
4 N 37 W UM 1, 2, 12, 25
4 N 36 W UM 7, 8,19,30,31
3 N 36 W UM 5, 6, 8-11, 13-16, 23, 24
3 N 35 W UM 10, 11, 13-21
3 N 34 W UM 15-18, 21-23, 25, 26, 36
3 N 33 W UM 31
2 N 33 W UM 5, 6, 8,17,20,21,28,29,32
1 N 33 W UM 5, 8,17,19,20,28,29,33
1 S 34 W UM 1,2,12
1 S 33 W UM 14, 23, 25,26,35,36

Teshkepuk Basecamp – Pik Dunes

14N 5 W UM27-36 Excluding Private Lands
11N 5W UM 32-35
10N 5W UM 3-5, 1-10, 15-22, 27-29

Part I: Plan Conformance Review

The proposed action is in conformance with the following planning document: National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS) dated November 2012 and associated Record of Decision dated February 2013.

The proposed action is in conformance with the IAP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following IAP decision (including objectives, terms, and conditions): The stipulations and best management practices will regulate permitted activities to meet resource and use objectives and thereby mitigate impacts of those activities.

The proposed action is also consistent with the purposes of the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976.

The applicant will be provided with stipulations entitled “FF095144 Arctic Treks 2013 Summer Stipulations” and “United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management Commercial Land Based Special Recreation Permit Stipulations.”

Date May 17, 2013

/s/Donna L. Wixon
Natural Resource Specialist, Arctic Field Office

Part II: NEPA Review and Decision

This proposed action meets the criteria for a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 11.9, BLM H-1790-1 national Environmental Policy Act Handbook Appendix 4- H. BLM Categorical Exclusions.

“Issuance of Special Recreation Permits for day use or overnight use up to 14 consecutive nights; that impacts no more than 3 staging area acres; and/or for recreational travel along roads, trails, or in areas authorized in a land use plan.”

The proposed action has been reviewed to determine if any extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.210 and 46.215, apply.

The proposed action will not meet any of the extraordinary circumstances listed below.

Extraordinary Circumstances	Yes	No
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
2.2 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.		X
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2) (E)].		X
2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
2.7 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.		X
2.8 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.		X

