

Categorical Exclusion

Prepared by
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

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Chapter 1. Alaska Gasline Development Corporation (AGDC) Alaska Stand Alone Gas Pipeline (*ASAP*) Temporary Use Permit

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A. Background

BLM Office: Central Yukon Field Office

LLAK03200

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: FF095641-A

Proposed Action Title/Type: Temporary Use Permit for Geotechnical Exploration

Location of Proposed Action: Yukon Crossing

SW¹/₄ SE¹/₄ Sec. 1, T. 12 N., R. 11 W., F.M. and NE¹/₄ Sec. 12, T. 12 N., R. 11 W., F.M.

Description of Proposed Action: The Alaska Gasline Development Corporation (AGDC) is planning to collect geotechnical data along the ASAP alignment for a study to delineate frost heave potential to support engineering activities for the Alaska Stand Alone Gas Pipeline (ASAP). The work would be conducted along the ASAP alignment in the area of the Yukon River.

Seven boreholes will be located north of the river on land under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Under contract with AGDC, Michael Baker Jr. Inc. (Baker) will coordinate with, and oversee, Discovery Drilling in the program to collect geotechnical data. At each location, an 8-inch borehole will be drilled to a depth of 50 feet with continuous core collected or soil samples taken at specified intervals. Recovered samples will be transported to a lab for testing (e.g., water content, particle size, specific gravity, porosity, and resistivity). The boreholes will be completed by installing a 1-inch diameter PVC casing that extends above the ground surface and then backfilling the borehole with auger cuttings. Temperature acquisition cables (TACs) will be inserted into the casings after drilling is complete. The TACs will be coupled to data loggers fastened to frangible fiberglass unistrut posts installed within 5 to 10 feet of the borehole. The data logger posts will be inserted into square steel tubing that will be driven into the ground. The top of the posts will be highlighted with a red/white reflector for visibility. The PVC casings, posts, and logger enclosures will be marked with the ASAP borehole designation.

The thermistor casings and the data logger post materials have been selected to mitigate the risk of potential impact while serving their primary function of collecting and reporting ground temperatures recorded from the TACs. The fiberglass unit-strut is frangible and will break away in case of impact by a snowmachine.

Access, Off Road Travel, and Vegetation Clearing

From 8,100 to 10,000 feet of off road travel on BLM land may be necessary to access the bore-holes. The routes are shown on the attached borehole location and access maps. To access the boreholes, the track mounted drill rig will be transported by truck and trailer to unload at the Yukon Camp, off Dalton Highway near Milepost 56. After unloading from the trailer, the rig will traverse to the west to the ASAP alignment along one of the east-west routes shown, returning to the Yukon Camp along the other east-west route. Travel would be one way along the route with out and back travel necessary to access ASAP_0547, ASAP_0548, ASAP_0549, ASAP_0550, ASAP_0551 and ASAP_1526. To access ASAP_0546 near the Dalton Highway, the drill rig would be off-loaded along the highway near Milepost 57.2, travel approximately 150 feet in the highway right-of-way, then 100 feet south on BLM land. Should unforeseen circumstances

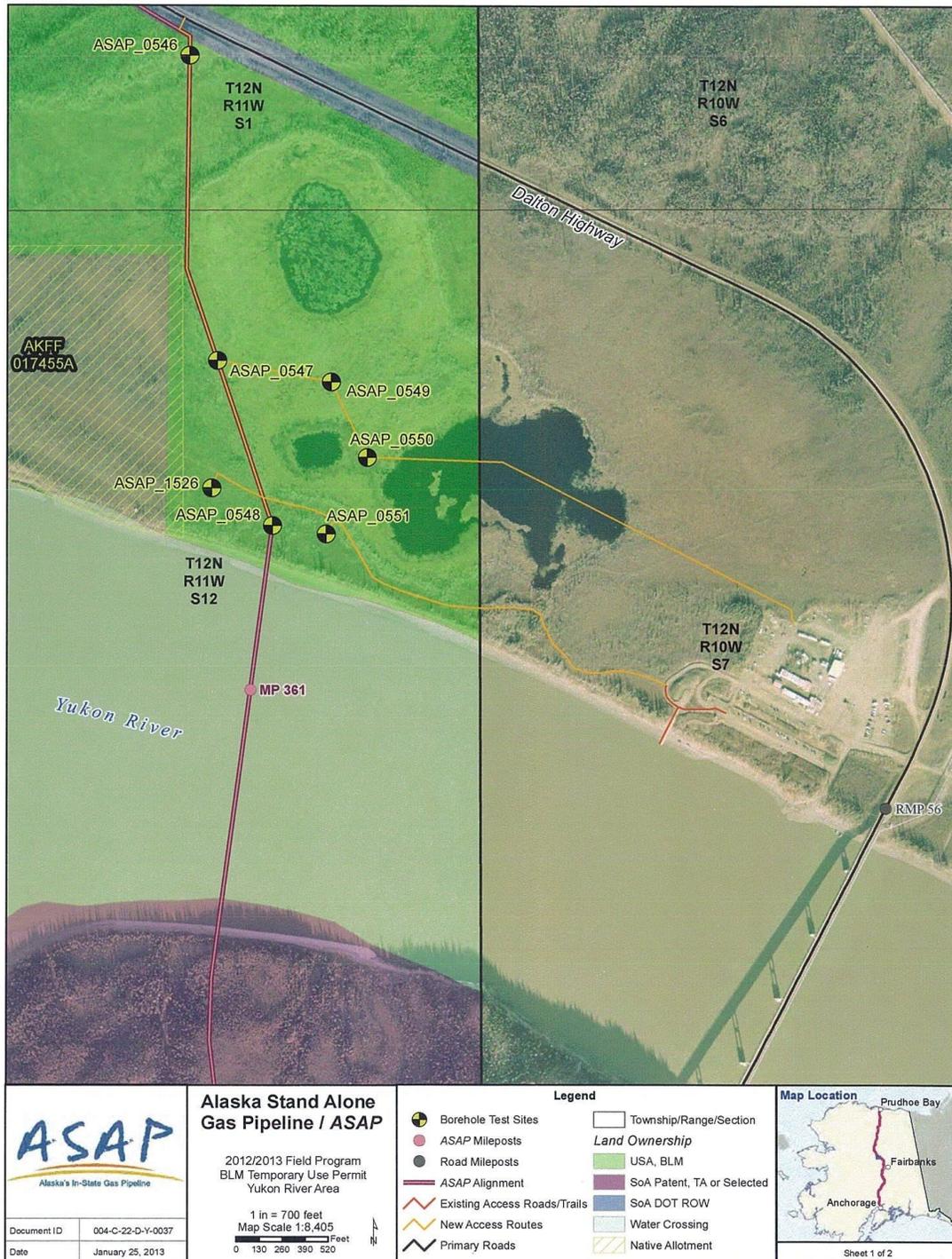
prevent travel west from the Yukon Camp, the rig would follow the route south of ASAP_0546 to access the boreholes. The geotechnical engineer will drive a Ranger 4x4 off road vehicle, or walk on foot, traveling the same routes as the drill rig to access the borehole locations.

Most of the off road travel can be accomplished without cutting or clearing vegetation. The drill rig can track over small diameter shrubs (up to 2 inches diameter) without damage to the rig and with limited long-term distress to live vegetation. It will be necessary, however, to cut larger woody vegetation in a 10 to 12 foot wide path in the northern 300 feet of the access route. In addition, for the safety of the drill crew during drilling operations, it will be necessary to cut woody vegetation around borehole ASAP_0546; in a radius no greater than 25 feet. Clearing woody vegetation will not entail disturbance of roots or soil; hand tools such as chain saws will be used to cut the vegetation just above the ground level.

Schedule

The work of installing the boreholes will occur in April 2013, and would be completed over a period of 7 to 10 consecutive days. Baker staff will return to the borehole location monthly during the winter by snowmachine to maintain the data loggers and to record snow depth and density measurements. The TACs, PVC casing, data loggers, and posts will be removed from the borehole upon completion of a 1-year data collection period, in late-Spring 2014.

The project Area of Potential Effect (APE) includes the borehole locations and associated access routes, as identified on Map 1.



B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan

Date Approved/Amended: January 11, 1991

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions) : Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan Approved 1/11/1991

The proposed action is in conformance with the Utility Corridor RMP, because it is clearly consistent with the following RMP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

Appendix N Lands Program Objectives (page N 7- 9)

5. Make lands available to Federal and State agencies and research organizations for needed administrative and facilities support, and locate facilities development to minimize environmental impacts with emphasis given to previously disturbed sites.

7. Process applications for land use authorizations from the general public, federal and state agencies, and research organizations on a case by case basis.

C. Compliance with NEPA:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, Appendix 3, 1.6, which states, “Nondestructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research and monitoring activities.”

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 apply.

D. Approval and Contact Information

/S/ Gary M. Foreman (for) – 8/9/13

Nichelle W Jacobson
Manager, Central Yukon Field Office

Date

Contact Person

Peggy Thigpen, Realty Specialist
Central Yukon Field Office
1150 University Ave.
Fairbanks, AK 99709
907/474-2237

*Chapter 1 Alaska Gasline Development Corporation
(AGDC) Alaska Stand Alone Gas Pipeline (ASAP)*

Temporary Use Permit
C. Compliance with NEPA:

email: mthigpen@blm.gov