



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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DETERMINATION OF NEPA ADEQUACY (DNA) WORKSHEET

Proposed Action Title/Type: UNAVCO GPS Station Right-of-Way Authorization

NEPA Register Number: DOI-BLM-AK-A010-2013-0020-DNA

Case File Number: AA-93532

Location / Legal Description: NW1/4SW1/4, Sec. 1., T. 13N., R. 2W., Seward Meridian, Alaska. Arctic Valley Road, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER).

Applicant (if any): UNAVCO, Inc.

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Plate Boundary Observatory (PBO) is the geodetic component of EarthScope, operated by UNAVCO, Inc. and funded by the National Science Foundation. PBO has a network of 1,100 permanent, continuously operating Global Positioning System (GPS) stations, many of which provide data in real-time. EarthScope provides a foundation for applied research throughout the United States that will contribute to the mitigation of risks from geological hazards, the development of natural resources, and the public's understanding of the dynamic Earth.

One of UNAVCO's GPS stations, "Site AC44," is located on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) lands withdrawn for military purposes. At this particular site, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages all surface natural resources for non-military uses. The BLM has responsibility for reviewing and authorizing all activities proposed for non-military purposes with concurrence from the military. Site AC44 was authorized by the U.S. Department of the Army in July 2008 (Army License No. DACA85-3-08-00067). However, the site has never been authorized by the BLM.

Site AC44 was installed in 2008. The 900 sq. ft. site is comprised of a monument assembly and an electronics enclosure hut (see photos in AC44 Installation Report, attached). The GPS system consists of a monument with a stable platform made of five sections of stainless steel rod. There is a vertical leg braced by four diagonal legs inclined at ~55 degrees to the ground. All of the legs extend approximately six feet into the earth. The legs converge approximately four feet above the ground surface. A leveling adapter, geodetic grade GPS antenna and radome (16"

diameter) are attached to the top of the vertical leg. The entire above-ground monument assembly is approximately five feet high and has a footprint approximately five feet in diameter. The GPS station also consists of a 5'Lx4'Wx6'H equipment enclosure hut with three 80 watt solar panels mounted to the south facing wall of the hut. The electronics hut is located within 20 feet of the monument. The GPS receiver, radio transceiver, solar power regulator and batteries for station power are located inside the electronics enclosure. Data is downloaded and processed daily by the PBO Operations Center in Boulder, Colorado via a data connection.

In February 2013, UNAVCO applied to the BLM Anchorage Field Office for a right-of-way authorization for Site AC44. The BLM will decide whether to authorize the site and, if authorized, what terms and conditions will apply to the authorization. At a minimum, the grant stipulations will include:

- 1) the, "Required Operating Procedures, Environmental Protection Measures, and Other Conditions of the Proposed Action Alternative," where applicable, as described in Section 2.3 of the 2012 Environmental Assessment (EA) cited below (pp. 10-11), and
- 2) the applicable "Mitigation Measures," identified in Section 4.1.3 of the 2008 EA cited below (p. 21).

B. LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE

The proposed action is in conformance with the Ring of Fire Approved Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (March 2008). Specifically, the proposed action conforms to Lands and Realty decision I-2n: Rights-of-way:

I-2n: Rights-of-Way

The BLM may issue rights-of-way for a variety of uses including but not limited to: roads, water pipelines, electric lines and communication sites under the authority of Title V of FLPMA.

C. IDENTIFY APPLICABLE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) DOCUMENTS AND OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS THAT COVER THE PROPOSED ACTION

NEPA Documents:

Joint Base Elmendorf – Richardson Communication Site Authorizations Environmental Assessment, DOI-BLM-AK-A010-2012-0013-EA. Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record signed August 9, 2012.

Continuous Global Positioning System Station, UNAVCO, Inc., Plate Boundary Observatory Environmental Assessment, AK-010-08-EA-033. Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record signed June 16, 2008.

Other Related Documents:

Final Environmental Condition of Property Report. Site AC44, Fort Richardson, Arctic Valley Road, Fort Richardson, AK 99505. August 4, 2010. (Note: this is not a NEPA document; however, it does provide valuable information about the site's characteristics, environmental conditions, etc.)

D. NEPA ADEQUACY CRITERIA

1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?

Yes, the current proposed action, authorization of an existing GPS station, is essentially similar to the Proposed Action Alternatives evaluated in the 2008 and 2012 EAs noted above.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action in the 2012 JBER Communication Site Authorizations EA. Alternative 2 evaluates, “authorization of an existing tower in a developed area that has been authorized by the military, but not by the BLM,” (2012 EA, p. 7). Additionally, EA Section 1.6 specifically identifies this type of action as covered by the EA,

Authorization of existing sites: In some cases, communication sites have been constructed under authorization from the military. However, a BLM authorization is also required. In these cases, the BLM would authorize existing communication sites if compatible with resource management objectives, (EA, p. 4).

Site AC44 also meets the 2012 EA definition of “Communication Site.” Although not used for cellular telephone communication like the four authorizations evaluated in the 2012 EA, Site AC44 does consist of a free-standing tower-like structure, a cabinet box (enclosure) for power supply, antenna, and existing access. Site AC44 transmits data via a radio transceiver.

Site AC44 is located within the same general analysis area (on JBER) as described in the 2012 EA. The exact location of Site AC44 was not analyzed in the EA, but the geographic and resource conditions are sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the 2012 EA. Site AC44 is located in a “non-developed area” on JBER.

Additionally, the current Proposed Action is identical to the Proposed Action Alternative (“Farewell Mountain site”) evaluated in the 2008 EA noted above, with the exception of the site location. Site AC44 is in a different geographic location than the Farewell Mountain site, but the characteristics are similar: barren, rocky mountain tops. The differences between the sites, primarily the proximity to a major urban area and location on an active military base, are adequately accounted for in the 2012 EA.

2. *Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values?*

Yes, the ranges of alternatives analyzed in the 2008 and 2012 EAs are appropriate with respect to the new proposed action. Given that Site AC44 is already constructed, the options are limited to either authorizing the site in place, with appropriate stipulations for maintenance and site monitoring, or denying the requested authorization and altogether removing equipment. Both of these options are evaluated in the 2008 and 2012 EAs (pp.8-12 and p. 7, respectively).

3. *Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?*

Yes, the existing analysis remains valid. No new information or circumstances have come to light since the 2008 and 2012 EAs were completed.

4. *Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?*

The 2012 EA did not evaluate the potential for effects to cultural resources in undeveloped areas of JBER because, at the time, there were no pending applications in undeveloped areas. All proposals, regardless of whether they are in developed or undeveloped areas, are subject to individual National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 clearances and effects analysis on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, a Section 106 review process was initiated for this action in June 2013. The results of this review indicate that the proposed action would have no effect on historic properties. A copy of the Section 106 review is available on file at the Anchorage Field Office.

For other resources, the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from authorization of Site AC44 are similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA documents. Given the small footprint of the site (less than 1,000 sq. ft.), Site AC44 would not inhibit access to recreational areas. Additionally, at only five feet in height, Site AC44 is not expected to dominate vistas from hiking or ski trails (2012 EA, p. 17).

5. *Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?*

The 2012 EA was made available for public review for two weeks prior to signing the attached Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and this Decision Record. No public comments were received. The DNA and FONSI for Site AC44 will be made available for a brief public review period prior to issuing a decision on the requested authorization.

E. PERSONS, AGENCIES, AND BLM STAFF CONSULTED

Note: Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents.

Jenny Blanchard	BLM, Archaeologist
Brian Bourdon	BLM, Lands and Realty Specialist
Merben Cebrian	BLM, Subsistence Biologist
Molly Cobbs	BLM, Planning and Environmental Coordinator
Jeff Kowalczyk	BLM, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Bruce Seppi	BLM, Wildlife Biologist
Laurie Thorpe	BLM, Natural Resources Specialist

F. CONCLUSION

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation identified in Part C of this DNA Worksheet fully covers the proposed action and constitutes BLM's compliance with the requirements of the NEPA.

/s/ Alan Bittner, Anchorage Field Manager

August 6, 2013

Signature of the Responsible Official

Date

Note: The signed Conclusion on this worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR § 4 and the program-specific regulations.

Attachments

Joint Base Elmendorf – Richardson Communication Site Authorizations Environmental Assessment, DOI-BLM-AK-A010-2012-0013-EA. Including Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record, signed August 9, 2012.

Final Environmental Condition of Property Report. Site AC44, Fort Richardson, Arctic Valley Road, Fort Richardson, AK 99505. August 4, 2010. (Note: this is not a NEPA document; however, it does provide valuable information about the site's characteristics, environmental conditions, etc.)

Continuous Global Positioning System Station, UNAVCO, Inc., Plate Boundary Observatory Environmental Assessment, AK-010-08-EA-033. Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record signed June 16, 2008. (Case File: AA-086836).