PLAN CONFORMANCE/NEPA COMPLIANCE RECORD
DOI-BLM-AKF010-2013-17-CX

A. Background

BLM Office:

Arctic Field Office, Bureau of Land Management
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-3844
http://www.blm.gov/ak

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: FF096600, 2984.01 (AK012

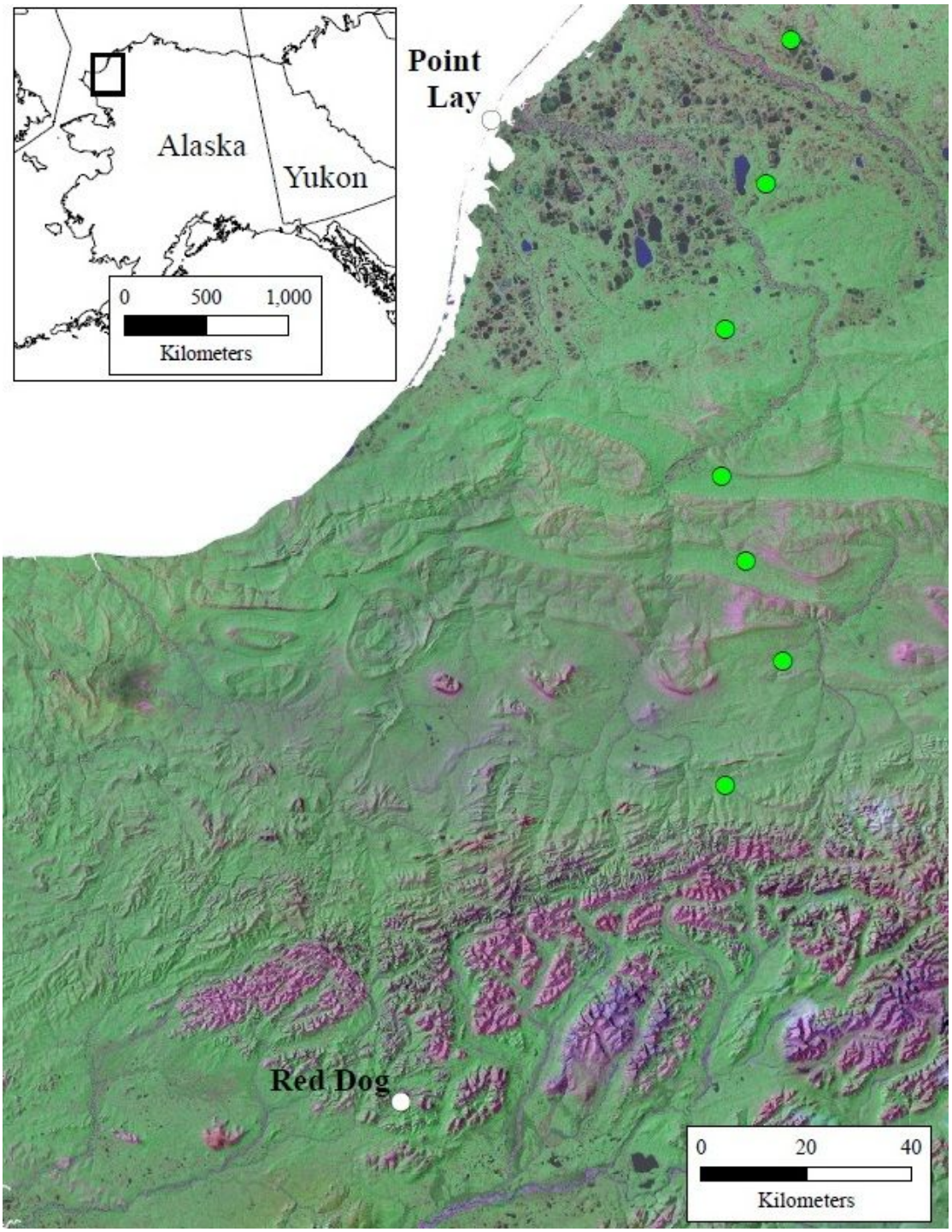
Proposed Action**:**Monitor temperature, soil characteristics, and the phenology, biomass, and nutrient concentration of caribou forage within macroplots near Pt. Lay, Alaska.

Date of Proposed Action: May 6th thru September 30th, 2013 and May thru September of 2014 and May thru September of 2015.

Applicant: David Gustine, Research Wildlife Biologist
U.S. Geological Survey
4210 University Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

Location: All in Umiat Meridian

Township	Range	BLM Managed Sections	
6 North	42 West	None	No BLM Lands
4 North	43 West	None	No BLM Lands
1 North	41 West	None	No BLM Lands
3 South	41 West	11	
4 South	40 West	33	
6 South	40 West	26	
9 South	41 West	17	



Description of Proposed Action: In NW Alaska in 2013-2015, USGS (David Gustine) will replicate for the western Arctic work conducted earlier by the USGS along the Dalton Highway to address the following goals: 1) assess changes in temperature and vegetative phenology and the spatiotemporal dynamics of nutrients and minerals in the key forages of calving and summering caribou; 2) determine abiotic and biotic factors that may contribute to nutrient and mineral availability to caribou; and 3) assess the nutritional implications of climate changes to the Western Arctic caribou herd.

No field camps will be used for this project because the team will be based out of Red Dog mine. The team will use an R-44 helicopter (Hermens Helicopters – owner Stan Hermens) and will use approximately 1300 gallons of aviation gas. No fuel storage in the NPR-A is necessary because fuel will be purchased from Red Dog. Approximately 25 gallons of extra fuel will be carried on board. Gustine, one other team member, and the helicopter pilot will be working at the 7 locations on May 4-8, June 8-12, July 20-24, August 10-14 and 24-28, and possibly September 21-35 to monitor and sample habitat conditions for caribou. They anticipate one landing per visit.

Human waste is expected to be minimal in the field due to lodging at Red Dog, but the team will manage in-field waste by burying it at least 10 inches deep and not near streams. However, the team will accommodate any specific BLM requirements. Field emergency and flight plans will be filed with USGS and Red Dog Mine as required for each trip. Satellite phone, firearm, and emergency survival equipment will be onboard the R-44.

The team presented this study plan to the Western Arctic Herd Working Group in December 2012, has received a NSB permit for the project, and is currently acquiring a permit from ASRC.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

IAP: National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS).

Date Approved/Amended: November 2012 and associated Record of Decision (ROD) 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): Studies and monitoring: "Studies and monitoring will be done to…" 3) provide updated scientific cultural and technological data needed to adapt management decisions to changing circumstances and conditions (ROD page 1).

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, or 516 DM 11.9, Specifically the 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 (F-10) BLM Categorical Exclusions

> **"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. Theproposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 apply.

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
2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		X
2.11 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).		X
2.12 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).		X

Recommendation: I have found that the proposed action is compatible with the LUP, 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 of Environmental Impact Statement is not needed.

D. Approval and Contact Information

/s/Linda Demientieff May 7, 2013
Realty Specialist, Arctic Field Office

Contact Person

Linda Demientieff'
Arctic Field Office
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
Phone: 907-474-2307
Email: ldemientieff@blm.gov