

For
Egil Fjelheim
KME, LLC
6235 Seward Road
Fairbanks, Alaska

FF096580
DOI-BLM-AK-F020-2013-0018-EA

Located In:

Eastern Interior Field Office
White Mountains National Recreation Area and Steese National Conservation Area

Prepared By:

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Eastern Interior Field Office
1150 University Ave.
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-3844

Applicant's Purpose and Need

Mr. Egil Fjellheim with KME, LLC has applied for a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) to conduct no more than four guided river float-trips annually: two on Beaver Creek WSR and two on Birch Creek WSR. The proposed dates are between June 15 – September 15, 2013. Mr. Fjellheim needs to obtain a SRP in order to conduct commercial guiding activities on BLM managed lands.

BLM Decision to be Made

The BLM will decide whether or not to issue a 2930 SRP for the applicant's commercial operation. If a SRP is issued, the BLM will determine the terms, conditions and stipulations prior to issuance.

II. Potential Issues

Internal Scoping: No significant issues were identified for the proposed action.

External Scoping: The proposed action is consistent with the purposes and management of the WMNRA and SNCA. The proposed action is not expected to cause any public concern or controversy; therefore no external scoping was conducted.

III. Location, Land Status and Conformance with Land Use Plans:

Location: The proposed action is on Beaver Creek WSR in the White Mountains National Recreation Area, and Birch Creek WSR located in the Steese National Conservation Area.

The Beaver Creek guided river trips will start at Nome Creek, located in the White Mountains NRA, and terminate either at or near a take-out air strip near the confluence of Victoria Creek and Beaver Creek or at the Yukon River Bridge.

The guided float trips for Birch Creek will start at 94 mile on the Steese Highway. Trips will terminate at mile 147 of Steese Highway.

Land Status: For Beaver Creek WSR, the trip will be conducted on BLM-managed lands until mile 114 at Moose Creek where the trip will continue onto US Fish & Wildlife Service managed lands. For Birch Creek WSR, the entire trip will be conducted on BLM-managed lands.

Conformance with Land Use Plans: The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of December 2, 1980 (ANILCA, PL 96-487) classified and designated the WMNRA, SNCA, Beaver Creek WSR, and Birch Creek WSR.

The WMNRA encompasses nearly one million acres north of Fairbanks, located between the Steese and Elliott Highways. The proposed action conforms with and is tiered to the existing land use plan (LUP) and environmental documentation below.

- Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision for the WMNRA, February 1986.

- Goal 3: Provide for multiple-use where compatible with primitive and semi-primitive recreation.
- Objective 2: Where compatible with recreation goals, permit multiple-use of resources on land classified as semi-primitive.

The SNCA encompasses 1.2 million acres of public land about 100 miles northeast of Fairbanks. The proposed action conforms with and is tiered to the existing Land Use Plan (LUP) and environmental documentation below.

- Resource Management Plan/Record for the SNCA, February 1986.
 - **Management Direction:** Special Recreation Use Permits are required for commercial uses such as commercial outfitting and guiding and commercial river trips, etc.
- River Management Plan for Birch Creek WSR, October 1983.
 - **Management Objectives:** (5) Provide high quality primitive recreation opportunities for present and future generations.

IV. Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives:

Proposed Action Alternative:

Mr. Fjellheim of KME, LLC, is requesting to conduct guided river float trips on Beaver Creek WSR and Birch Creek WSR. Mr. Fjellheim is planning on no more than 2 float trips on Beaver Creek and 2 float trips on Birch Creek annually. The float trip dates are between June 15th and September 15th, 2013. Each trip will have a maximum of eight paying guests and two guides with a minimum of two guests and one guide.

Mr. Fjellheim anticipates 10-15 days per float trip on the Beaver Creek segment located within the White Mountains National Recreation Area, and 10 days per trip on Birch Creek.

The applicant mentions that he will provide fishing opportunities for grayling and pike, employing for the most part, a "catch and release" philosophy. Some fish may be eaten on the trip though.

The group will use minimum impact camping techniques, cooking will be over propane stoves, and all trash will be carried out. No items will be stored on BLM managed lands. The applicant states he will not engage in big game hunting activities.

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative would result in the applicant not being issued a permit to conduct guided river float trips on Beaver and Birch Creeks.

V. Affected Environment

The proposed action entails guided river floats in the WMNRA and the SNCA. Primarily the activity will be on a portion of the Beaver Creek Wild and Scenic River and Birch Creek Wild and Scenic River.

Groups floating Beaver Creek WSR would launch at the Nome Creek put-in site via the Steese Highway, US Creek, and Nome Creek roads. The Nome Creek area generally has a modest level of recreational use during the proposed dates and is developed to accommodate heavier use. Beaver Creek is designated as a "Wild" river and generally has limited use. There are few developments along the upper section of river including a couple of winter trail crossings and one public use cabin at the end of the planned float action.

The guided float trips for Birch Creek will start at 94 mile on the Steese Highway. Trips will terminate at mile 147 of Steese Highway. There are developed launch and take-out site at both locations. Birch Creek is designated as a "Wild" river and generally has limited use. There are no developed facilities along Birch Creek WSR.

VI. Impacts: Direct, Indirect, Cumulative:

No issues with the potential for significant impacts were identified for analysis during internal scoping. The proposed activity is compatible with the management guidance for the WMNRA, Beaver Creek WSR, the SNCA and Birch Creek WSR.

Mitigating Measures for Proposed Alternative

No issues requiring mitigation were identified. The applicant will follow "Leave No Trace" camping principals. Standard Operating Procedures developed for the recreation program will be attached to the permit.

Residual Impacts

There would be no residual impacts.

VII. Consultation and Coordination:

Persons/Agencies Consulted

Person	Title	Responsibility	Agency
Egil Fjellheim	Applicant		Applicant
Tim DuPont	Preparer	Environmental Justice, Farm Lands, Socioeconomics, Rivers, and , Access	BLM

Person	Title	Responsibility	Agency
Jim Herriges	Wildlife Biologist	ACECs, Vegetation, Invasive, Nonnative Species, Threatened/Endangered Species, Subsistence, Wildlife/Terrestrial	BLM
Rebecca Hile	Physical Scientist	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	BLM
Ben Kennedy	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Floodplains, Water Quality, Wetlands/Riparian, Soils	BLM
Eric Yeager and Holli McClain	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Visual Resources, Wilderness Characteristics, Wild and Scenic, Recreation	BLM
Robin Mills	Archeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns	BLM
Jason Post	Fisheries Biologist	Essential Fish Habitat, Wildlife/Aquatic	BLM
Skip Theisen	Fire Management Specialist	Fire Management	BLM
Matt Reese	Geologist	Minerals	BLM

VIII.

Attachment 1- Assessment of Archeological, Historical, and Paleontological Resources

Attachment 2- ANILCA Section 810 Evaluation and Findings

Attachment 3 - Standard Operating Procedures for Permit AA093276



Tim DuPont,
Outdoor Recreation Planner

Preparer's Signature:

6/27/2013 Date

Standard Operating Procedures for SRPs on BLM-managed lands

The permittee shall be required to distribute the following information along with "Leave No Trace" information to each group of clients prior to trip departure. The information shall include:

- All trip participants should stay on developed trails where they exist and use dispersed traveling techniques as described in "Leave No Trace" guidance in undeveloped areas.
- All equipment, including boot soles, rafts, and tents should be cleaned to assure that they are free of non-native seeds and plant parts before beginning the trips. Also be reminded that all felt or fibrous soled footwear is no longer allowed for sport fishing in Alaska waters(http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/species/nonnative/invasive/pdfs/felt_soled_waders_faq.pdf).
- All trash and human waste should be retrieved or dealt with accordingly using established facilities or by "Leave No Trace" guidance.
- Campsites with human or naturally hardened sites should be utilized. Camp areas will be located at least 25 feet from the nearest trail. Camp areas will be cleaned of all litter before departure.
- Respect wildlife. Do not feed animals and avoid disturbing them from natural activities. BLM also recommends the use of bear-proof or odor proof containers on the river to prevent habituation of bears and other wildlife.
- Firewood collection will be limited to dead and down wood. Gas stoves or U.S. Forest Service approved fire pans should be used for cooking meals and any fires. All dead and out ashes and cinders will be scattered to the wind, preferably on the gravel bars or rocky areas. All left over wood will likewise be scattered around the area.
- Avoid camping in areas that result in disturbance of birds of prey (raptors) such as peregrine falcons, bald eagle and red-tail (Harlan's) hawk. Nesting raptors will typically indicate disturbance by vocalizing loudly and often circle above people.