

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

A. Background

DOI-BLM-AKF010-2013-0022-CX

Arctic Field Office, Bureau of Land Management

1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-3844
<http://www.blm.gov/ak>
907-474-2200

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: FF095671, FF095712, 2984.01 (AK012)

Applicant: ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc
Lynn DeGeorge
P.O. Box 100360
Anchorage, AK 99510-0360

Proposed Action Title/Type: Summer Activities in the NPR-A

Dates of Proposed Activity: May 15 – Oct. 15, 2013

General Location of Proposed Action: Northeastern NPR-A, specifically general area of Greater Mooses Tooth and Bear Tooth Units

Description of Proposed Action:

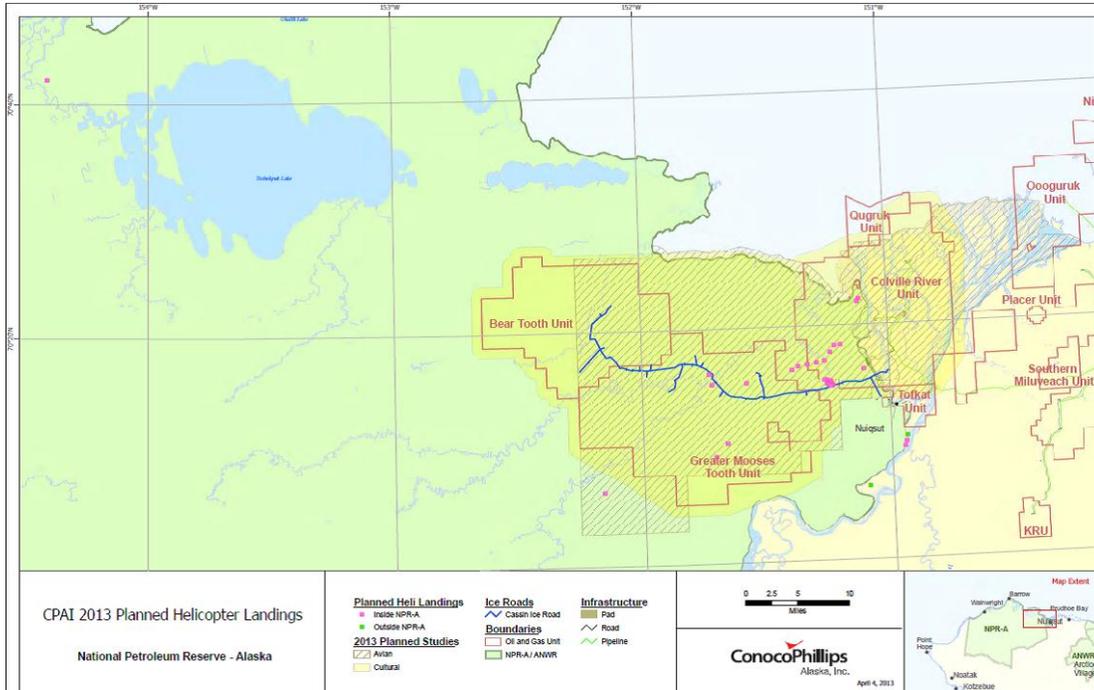
ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc. (CPAI) has requested authorization to conduct environmental studies, pre-development scouting, exploration well preparation and inspection, and other activities in the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska (NPR-A). The company and its contractors propose to conduct a variety of studies including but not limited to geological, biological, hydrological, archaeological, cultural, and or lake studies (See list of activities studies in Table 1). Additional studies concerning placement of oil wells and potential access routes are possible. The studies would commence in May and continue through freeze up in the fall of 2013. The authorization would expire October 15, 2013.

These studies would primarily be conducted using helicopters for transport to and from the study area (see Figure 1). On ground activities would be performed on foot, and crew size would be two to six people. Approximately 1,123 helicopter landings are expected during the season: this application is requesting permission for 534 helicopter flights (the same number that was permitted for CPAI last summer) and, after consultation with the Native Village of Nuiqsut regarding the extra flights and possible mitigation measures, a subsequent application will be submitted for the remainder of the season.

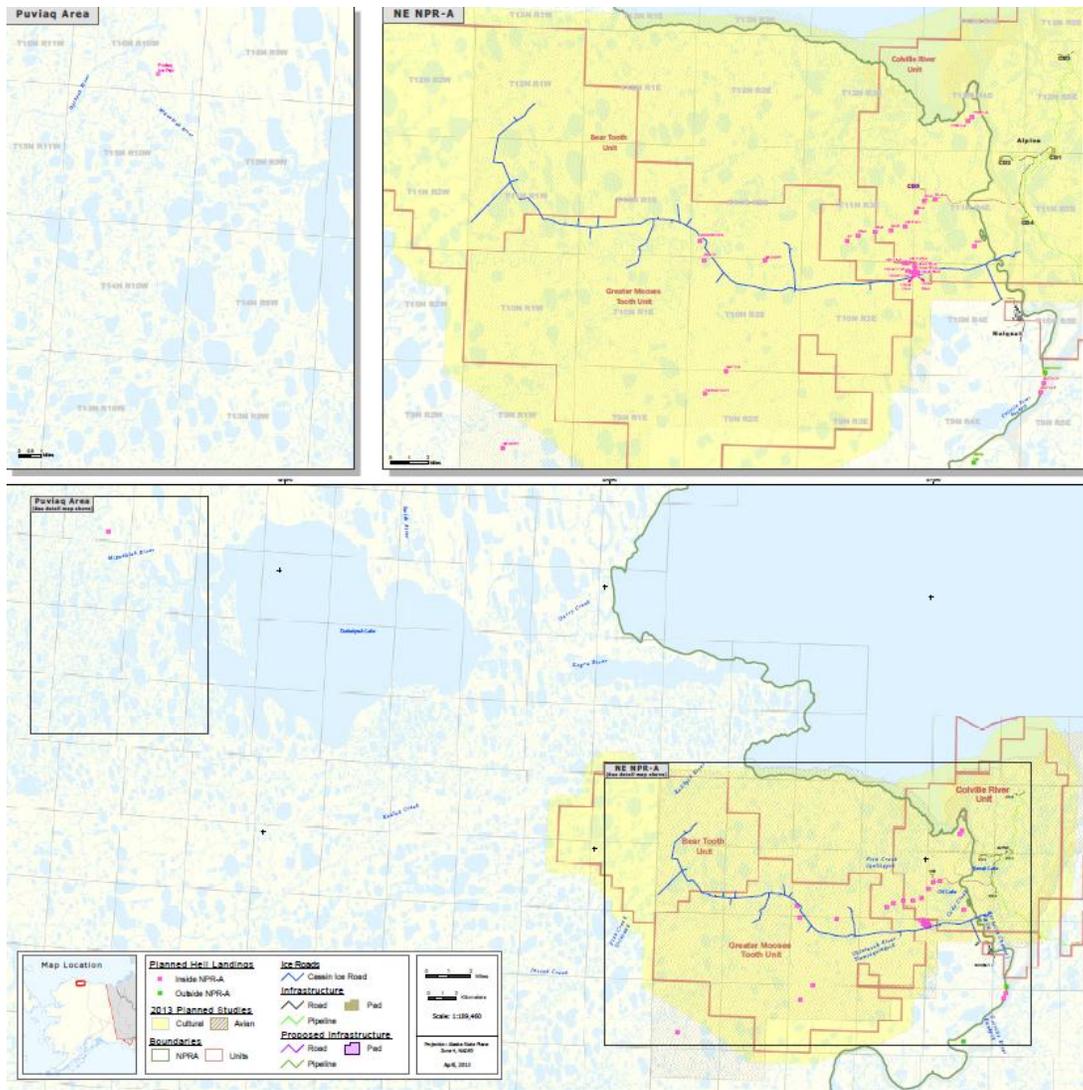
CPAI does not plan on any remote field camps or remote fuel storage for any of the proposed activities. CPAI and its contractors will adhere to all applicable stipulations and best management practices for the NPR-A during the performance of all study activities and the proponent would provide weekly updates to the Kuukpik Subsistence Oversight Panel (KSOP), Local Communities, the North Slope Borough, and other interested agencies and organizations.

Table 1. CPAI Summer Field Work, National Petroleum Reserve Alaska, 2013 Description of Proposed Activities. Consultation will include updates to Native Village of Nuiqsut as well as KSOP.

Activity	Description	Time Period(s)	Number Personnel	Access	Forecasted for 2013	Consultation
Puvlaq Tundra Rehabilitation	Puvlaq site inspection.	July-August	Approximately 4 people	Helicopter	4	Weekly updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
Possible route recon/staking to Rendezvous 3 and Stony Hill	Inspections & obtaining GPS PIs for the ice road routes.	July-August	Approximately 4 people	Helicopter	30	Weekly updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
Environmental Studies - Hydrology	Hydrology monitoring in the Fish Creek Basin area, proposed GMT road corridor, west bank of the Colville River, and northwest of CD2.	Spring breakup - late May, early June through September (end of season).	Approximately 4 people	Helicopter	200	Weekly updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
Environmental Studies - Arctic Transportation, Water Use	Hydrology monitoring, weather station maintenance in the Fish Creek Basin area and west bank of the Colville River	Spring breakup - late May, early June through September (end of season).	Approximately 2 people	Helicopter	34	Weekly updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
Environmental Studies - Wildlife Studies	Wildlife surveys in the northeast NPRA area	May-September	Approximately 4 people	Helicopter	50	Weekly updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
Environmental Studies - Archaeology/Cultural Surveys	Cultural resources survey in the Colville River Delta area and areas west and south	June-August	Approximately 2 people	Helicopter	40	Weekly updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
Environmental Studies - Avian	Avian surveys in the northeast NPRA area	June-August	Approximately 4 people	Helicopter	100	Weekly flight updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
Environmental Studies - Lake and Stream Studies	Stream, lake, and fish sampling as needed	June - September	Approximately 4 people	Helicopter	140	Weekly flight updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
Environmental Studies - Habitat Mapping	Habitat mapping in the northeast NPRA	June-September	Approximately 4 people	Helicopter	20	Weekly updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
Potential surveying/engineering site visits related to the potential NPRA developments	Potential surveying/engineering site visits related to the potential NPRA developments	June-September	Approximately 3 people	Helicopter	90	Weekly flight updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
Cassin Ice Road Slickpicking	Winter ice road route cleanup	July-September	Approximately 3 People	Helicopter	200	Weekly flight updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
ARGOS Sites	Servicing existing ARGOS stations	May-September	Approximately 2 people	Helicopter	10	Weekly flight updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
Winter 2013 CD-5 Ice Road Staking	Potential surveying/engineering site visits related to the potential NPRA developments	June-September	Approximately 3 people	Helicopter	180	Weekly flight updates to KSOP, Local Communities, NSB and others.
Site visits and tours, inspections	Agency, Stakeholder, Kuukpik/Nuiqsut elders to currently proposed drill sites and other points. (Yet to be determined)	June-September	Approximately 6 persons	Helicopter	35	Many of these trips may involve local community members. Flights will also be communicated on the weekly updates.
Total NPRA Landings					1123	



Map 1a. Location of proposed activity by CPAI



Map 1b. Location of additional proposed activity by CPAI

Land Description (All Umiat Meridian):

NE NPR-A		
Township	Range	Section
13 North	2 West	31-36
12 North	3 West	1-36
12 North	2 West	1,12,13,24,25,36
12 North	1 West	1-36
12 North	1 East	1-36
12 North	2 East	13-36
12 North	3 East	No BLM Managed Lands
12 North	4 East	No BLM Managed Lands
12 North	5 East	No BLM Managed Lands
11 North	3 West	1-36
11 North	2 West	1,12,13,24,25,36
11 North	1 West	1-36
11 North	1 East	1-36

11 North	2 East	1-15,19-22,27-33, (13,14,23 Reg/Sel)
11 North	3 East	8-10, 14-17, 20-23, 26-36
11 North	4 East	31
11 North	5 East	No BLM Managed Lands
10 North	2 West	1,12,13,24,25,36
10 North	1 West	1-36
10 North	1 East	1-36
10 North	2 East	25-27, 34-36 (4,11-15,19,22-24,28,30-33 Reg/Sel)
10 North	3 East	1-36
10 North	4 East	6,7,15-19,30,31
10 North	5 East	No BLM Managed Lands
9 North	2 West	1,12,13,24,25,36
9 North	1 West	1-36
9 North	1 East	1-36
9 North	2 East	1-36 Excluding State Land
9 North	3 East	1-36 Excluding State Land
9 North	4 East	1-13,23-27,31-34 Excluding Private Land
9 North	5 East	5-8 Excluding Private Land
8 North	1 East	1-36
8 North	2 East	2-11, 14-23, 26-34 Excluding Private Land

Puviaq Area		
Township	Range	Section
16 North	11 West	22-27,34-36
16 North	10 West	19-36 Excluding Private Land
16 North	9 West	13-36 Excluding Private Land
16 North	8 West	19,30,31
15 North	11 West	1-3,10-15,22-27,34-36
15 North	10 West	1-36 Excluding Private Land
15 North	9 West	1-36 Excluding Private Land
15 North	8 West	5-8,17-20,29-32
14 North	11 West	1-3
14 North	10 West	1-6
14 North	9 West	1-6
14 North	8 West	5-6

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

The proposed action is subject to the following planning document: National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS) 2012 and Record of Decision 2013.

The proposed action is in conformance with the purposes of the Naval Petroleum Reserve Production Act of 1976 which allows for the authorization of uses consistent with the purposes of the Act.

C. Compliance with NEPA:

The IAP/EIS Record of Decision for the NPR-A developed stipulations and best management practices applicable to all activities in NPR-A. The stipulations and best management practices applicable to the proposed action will be provided, along with project-specific mitigation, to the applicant and are entitled: The applicant will be provided with stipulations entitled “FF095671 and FF095712 ConocoPhillips Summer Permit Studies 2013 Stipulations.”

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. The proposed 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

D. Approval and Contact Information

I considered the proposed action, with incorporation of design features and stipulations (described in FF095671 and FF095712 ConocoPhillips Summer Permit Studies 2013 Stipulations), and have determined that there is no potential for significant impacts.

Contact Person

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