

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

A. Background

DOI-BLM-AKF010-2013-0024-CX

Arctic Field Office, Bureau of Land Management

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

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: FF095369

Applicant: Joe Liebezeit
Wildlife Conservation Society, Pacific West Program
718 SW Alder Street, Suite 210
Portland, OR 97205

Proposed Action Title/Type: Continuation of Arctic Shorebird Demographics Network project.

Dates of Proposed Activity: June 3 to July 21, 2013

General Location of Proposed Action: Ikpikpuk River in the NPR-A

Description of Proposed Action:

The applicant is proposing to camp near the Ikpikpuk River in T. 14N 11W, UM, Sec. 21. The main goal is to assess adult survivorship of four shorebird species: Dunlin, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Red and Red-necked Phalarope. Research will involve mark-recapture methodology by 1) re-sighting previously marked birds using binoculars and scopes 2) using rope-drag and behavioral nest searching techniques; 3) trapping the four shorebird species using bow nests; 4) banding captured birds 5) collecting basic morphometric measurements drawing blood, and extracting feathers.

Nests will be monitored regularly (every 3-7 days) to determine survival rates. They will use the egg flotation technique to estimate age of bird eggs enabling us to estimate nest initiation date and also time their nest checks so they can accurately determine nest fate. They will also assess the relative abundance of potential nest predators, and assess other variables that may influence breeding birds including habitat use, snow cover, weather conditions, and lemming abundance.

Workers will also conduct two geolocator studies to evaluate migration pathways and timing for two species. This will involve placing 30 geolocators on captured Semipalmated Sandpipers and 10 geolocators on American Golden-plovers. In 2014, they will attempt to recapture the geolocator-equipped birds to remove the devices for downloading data for a subsequent analysis.

There will be three people working at the camp during the study with two additional people visiting for approximately one or two weeks. All field crew members will arrive at the site (from Deadhorse) and depart via fixed-wing aircraft equipped with tundra tires (Helio Courier or Cessna 172) from charter service 70North, LCC. They will conduct daily field work by hiking to their study plots from their camp.

They propose to use approximately 4 gallons of unleaded gasoline for their camp generator while at the site. While they are at the site, it will be stored in a fuel container in a small drip pan outside the main tent. Any unused fuel will be flown out of the site at the end of the field season for storage in Deadhorse. They are storing items at the site as they have done in previous years. The items will be cached at the camp site on the Ikpikpuk River (N 70.55242° W 154.73222°). The items will be stored at the site until the end of July 2014. The items they will store include: weatherport tents, arctic oven tent, fence stakes, metal poles, bear-proof containers (within which they will keep tents, thermarests, folding tables, cookware, stoves, most field sampling gear, tools, books, first-aid supplies, etc.).

Figure 1: Applicant supplied map



Table 1: Legal Description (All Umiat Meridian):

Township	Range	Section	Latitude*	Longitude*	Site as named*
14N	11W	21,22,27	70.55343°N	154.697507°W	by USGS Ikpikpuk River

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

The proposed action is in conformance with the following planning document: National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS) dated November 2012 and associated Record of Decision dated February 2013.

The proposed action is in conformance with the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act, 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: FF095369 Joe Liebezeit Arctic Shorebird Demographics Network Project Permit Stipulations Summer 2013

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 and have determined that there is no potential for significant impacts.

/s/Lon Kelly
 Authorized Officer, Arctic Field Office

Date: June 10, 2013

Contact Person

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