

Categorical Exclusion

DOI-BLM-AKF010-2013-0029-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.: FF095370

Proposed Action: The USGS has applied to conduct summer research activity in the NPR-A

Date of Proposed Action: June 15-22 or July 10-17, 2013, and August 4-20, 2013

Applicant: U.S. Geological Survey
Ben Jones
4210 University Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

General Location of Proposed Action: Near Teshekpuk Lake, and near Itivluk River in NPR-A

Description of Proposed Action: The applicant, Ben Jones with the USGS, has applied to conduct summer research activity in the NPR-A. The activity could potentially start as early as June 15 and is anticipated to be completed by August 20, 2013. The proposed activity by the applicant falls into three projects: 1) cleaning up the cabin and area around what is called the Tesehekpuk Lake Observatory (TLO) or NARL cabin on the shore of Teshekpuk Lake; 2) retrieving and analyzing marine sediment samples from the bluff near the North Slope Borough (NSB) cabin at Teshekpuk Lake; and 3) conducting atmospheric and water studies along two transects within the NPR-A.

The clean-up activity at the TLO will take place either between June 15 -22 or July 10-17, depending on weather and conditions at the cabin. The cabin is located on the northwestern shore of Teshekpuk Lake, where the applicant and one helper would be dropped off by a helio-courier fixed wing aircraft. There is no request for a fuel cache, and both travelers would stay on site in the cabin. In conjunction with the clean-up activity, the researchers would walk to the bluff located near the NSB cabin, and collect sedimentary samples and fossil assemblages (mollusks, foraminifers, and marine mammals) from coastal and marine deposits from the last inter-glacial period. They samples would be analyzed in order to assess the presence or absence of various species during the last period of climate warming.

Project Locations:

Table 1. Legal Description of Lands Involved (all in Umiat Meridian)

Township	Range	Section	Managed by
16 North	8 Wesr	22	BLM
16 North	7 West		
10 South	19 West	12	

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 (ROD) 2013.

The proposed action is not inconsistent with the purposes of the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976. The applicant will be required to abide by stipulations attached to their Summer Right of Way Grant BLM serial number FF095370.

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,

“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

Recommendation: I have found that the proposed action is compatible with the IAP, 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/Lon Kelly
Authorized Officer, Arctic Field Office

June 10, 2013

Contact Person

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