

Categorical Exclusion

A. Background

DOI-BLM-AKF010-2013-0032-CX

BLM Office: Arctic Field Office LLAKF010

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: FF095588

Applicant: Brian Person, Ph.D.
Wildlife Biologist
North Slope Borough
Department of Wildlife Management
P.O. Box 69
Barrow, Alaska 99723

Proposed Action Title/Type: NPR-A Permit (298401)

Dates of Proposed Activity: July 5, 2013 – August 9, 2013

General Location of Proposed Action: Ikpikpuk River Delta, Lonely, Kogru River Area

Description of Proposed Action: The applicant, Brian Person with the North Slope Borough, has requested authorization for access and landing by a helicopter and fixed wing aircraft on lands within the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) in support of vegetation and Lesser Snow Goose research. The applicant has had NPR-A permits for similar work in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. This year Mr. Person is requesting authorization to land at the Kogru and Lonely landing strips as needed to eat lunch while they are out conducting their work. They anticipate 4 take off and landings.

The vegetation work would examine the impacts of goose grazing to vegetation and soils with the Ikpikpuk Delta Lesser Snow Goose colony. The three geo-referenced transects that were established in 2012 would be visited to measure elevation, soil characteristics and vegetation. The work would occur between approximately July 5 – 9 and July 31 – August 9. Transportation would take place with an R44 helicopter and require up to 30 take off and landings. Fifty-five gallons of aviation gas would be stored within fuel berms designed to hold over 110% of the fuel being stored. Fuel will be transported by snow machine from Barrow prior to break-up. There would be 3 people conducting the research who would camp on the Ikpikpuk Delta using light weight back-packing gear. Some of the vegetation work could be based out of the North Slope Borough Cabin located on the north shore of Teshekpuk Lake (70 43.4N 153 43.8 W) requiring up to 10 additional take off and landings.

The second project requested is to conduct nest success surveys on the Ikpikpuk Delta from approximately July 5-9. Transportation support would be provided by a Cessna 206 (2 landings and take offs). Three people would camp on the Delta using light weight back-packing gear. The nests would be accessed by foot and an R44 helicopter. Thirty take off and landings are anticipated. Fuel (110 gallons of av gas) would be stored within fuel berms designed to hold over 110% of the fuel being stored. Fuel would be delivered using a Beaver on approximately July 1st (1 flight to drop off and 1 flight to drop off 2 more full drums in support of project 3 at the time they pick up empty drums from project 2).

The third project is banding Lesser Snow Goose on the Ikpikpuk and Piasuk river deltas in the Smith Bay region from approximately July 31 – August 4. Transportation support would be provided by a Cessna 206 (10 landings and take offs) and an R44 helicopter (up to 30 take off and landings). Fuel (170 gallons of av gas) would be stored within fuel berms designed to hold over 110% of the fuel being stored. Eight to nine people would camp on the Ikpikpuk Delta using light weight back-packing gear.

Projects 2 and 3 would be carried out in collaboration with ABR, Inc. See Figure 1 for a map of the general study area for all 3 projects.

Solid human waste would be transported back to Barrow and disposed at the waste treatment plant. The emergency plan is to bring both a satellite phone and personal locator beacon (PLB) to the field. The PLB is registered with the North Slope Borough (NSB) Department of Search and Rescue and they would file a plan of operations with them prior to departing to the field. The projects have been vetted through the NSB Fish and Game Management Committee and flyers will be posted in Barrow (the most impacted community) allowing time to address any concerns the public may have.

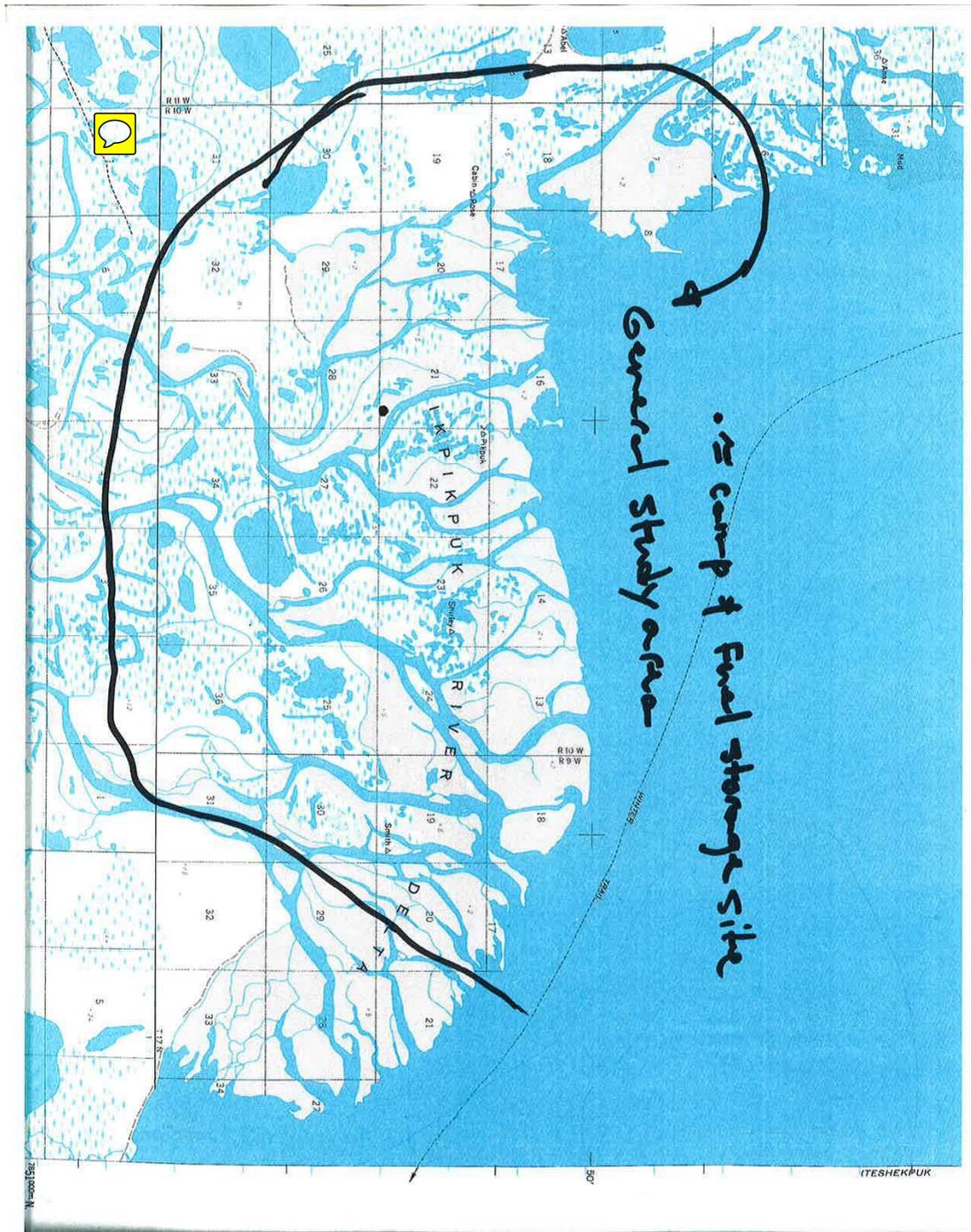


Figure 1. Applicant Submitted Map

Legal Description (All Umiat Meridian)

Township	Range	Sections
General Work Area		
17 North	11 West	1,12,13,24,25,36
17 North	10 West	6-8, 13-36
17 North	9 West	19-21, 27-34

16 North	10 West	1-6
NSB Cabin		
16 North	7 West	20
Kogru Landing Strip		
14 North	1 West	7,18
14 North	2 West	12,13
Lonely Landing Strip		
18 North	5 West	17

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: “FF095588 NSB Brian Person Summer 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 and have determined that there is no potential for significant impacts

/s/Lon Kelly
 Authorized Officer, Arctic Field Office

Date: June 17, 2013

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact:

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