

Categorical Exclusion

DOI-BLM-AKF010-2013-0039-CX

A. Background

BLM Office: Arctic Field Office LLAKF010

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: FF096620

Applicant: Glenn Ruckhaus, VP Contracts and Permitting
Nordaq Energy, Inc.
3000 A Street, Suite 410
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

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

Dates of Proposed Activity: August 18 – August 22, 2013

General Location of Proposed Action: Teshekpuk Lake, Alaska Area

Description of Proposed Action: The applicant, Glenn Ruckhaus with Nordaq Energy, Inc. has requested authorization for access and landing by a helicopter on lands within the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) in support of a fisheries project and an archaeological survey. The activity would be conducted as a precursor to the tundra travel Right-of-Way that Nordaq Energy, Inc. would apply for use in winter 2014. The general area for the proposed activities is shown in Figure 1.

The purpose of the archeological survey is to accurately identify known and unknown cultural and historical sites that exist in the area, as required by the Bureau of Land Management. The work would include aerial helicopter surveys at an elevation of approximately 500 feet. One day of work is anticipated to review portions of the proposed route that have not been cleared by previous projects. Landings would be conducted (estimated up to 10 landings and 10 take offs) only to verify potential archaeological sites. Dr. Richard Reanier would conduct the work. The crew would consist of Dr. Reanier and the helicopter pilot. The area of the proposed work is the 2 red circles shown on Figure 1.

The lake studies would include the identification and presence of fish, bathymetry to calculate volumes, and water quality. The studies would require a helicopter landing and takeoff for each lake (Figure 2). The helicopter would remain on the ground during the study, reducing the number of takeoff and landings. The fisheries crew would have an inflatable raft, an 8 horsepower gasoline engine, fyke nets, minnow traps, and weighted nets. For large lakes, a second landing and take-off may be necessary. Dr. Larry Moulton would conduct the work. The crew would consist of two biologists and the helicopter pilot. This activity is expected to result in a maximum of 20 landings and takeoffs, and last three to four days.

The timing of the proposed activity is dictated by helicopter availability and is scheduled for August 18 – August 22. Crews would stage from Deadhorse to Barrow. A fuel cache of 55-gallon drums of aviation fuel is proposed at Point Lonely. The total volume would not exceed 800 gallons (15 drums). The helicopter company is providing communications, 3-day survival gear, weapons for wildlife protection, ELT, and satellite phone. The crews would be demobilized from

Figure 2. Applicant Map of Study Lakes

Legal Description (All Umiat Meridian)

Township	Range	BLM Managed Lands	Private Lands (Partial Sections)
Western Most Study Area (Archeology Study)			
17 North	9 West	17-21, 27-34, 36	
17 North	8 West	1-3, 9-16, 20-36 (Excluding Private Lands)	29, 32
16 North	10 West	12-14, 23-26, 35-36	
16 North	9 West	1-36 (Excluding Private Lands)	24, 25
16 North	8 West	1-36	
15 North	10 West	1-2, 11-14 (Excluding Private Land) , 23-26, 36	10, 11
15 North	9 West	1-36 (Excluding Private Land)	7-9, 21, 22, 27, 28
15 North	8 West	2-9, 15-22, 27-35	
14 North	10 West	1, 12	
14 North	9 West	1-36	
14 North	8 West	2-6, 9-11, 14-20, 23-25, 30-33, 36	
13 North	9 West	1-5	
Eastern Most Study Area (Archeology Study)			
15 North	5 West	19 -36	
15 North	4 West	1-36	
15 North	3 West	1-36 (Excluding Private Lands)	19, 20, 29-32
15 North	2 West	4-8, 17-20, 28-36	
14 North	5 West	27-36	34
14 North	4 West	1-5, 9-17, 19-36 (Excluding Private Lands)	15,16
14 North	3 West	1-36	
14 North	2 West	5-8	
Fisheries Study			
17 North	8 West	1-3, 9-16, 20-36 (Excluding Private Lands)	29, 32
17 North	7 West	1-36	
17 North	6 West	1-36 (Excluding Private Lands)	2-5, 9-11
16 North	9 West	1-36 (Excluding Private Lands)	24, 25
16 North	8 West	1-36	

Lands used in both the archeology and fisheries work.

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: “FF096620 Nordaq Energy, Inc. Summer Stipulations 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: July 22, 2013

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact:

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