

## **A. Background**

**BLM Office:** Arctic Field Office LLAKF010

**Lease/Serial/Case File No.:** FF095714

**Applicant:** Kristin Simac  
U.S. Geological Survey  
4210 University Drive  
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

**Proposed Action Title/Type:** Aerial Surveys of Shore Based Polar Bears in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) (2984.01).

**Dates of Proposed Activity:** September 11, 2013 – September 25, 2013

**General Location of Proposed Action:** Along and near the coast from Barrow to the Colville Delta

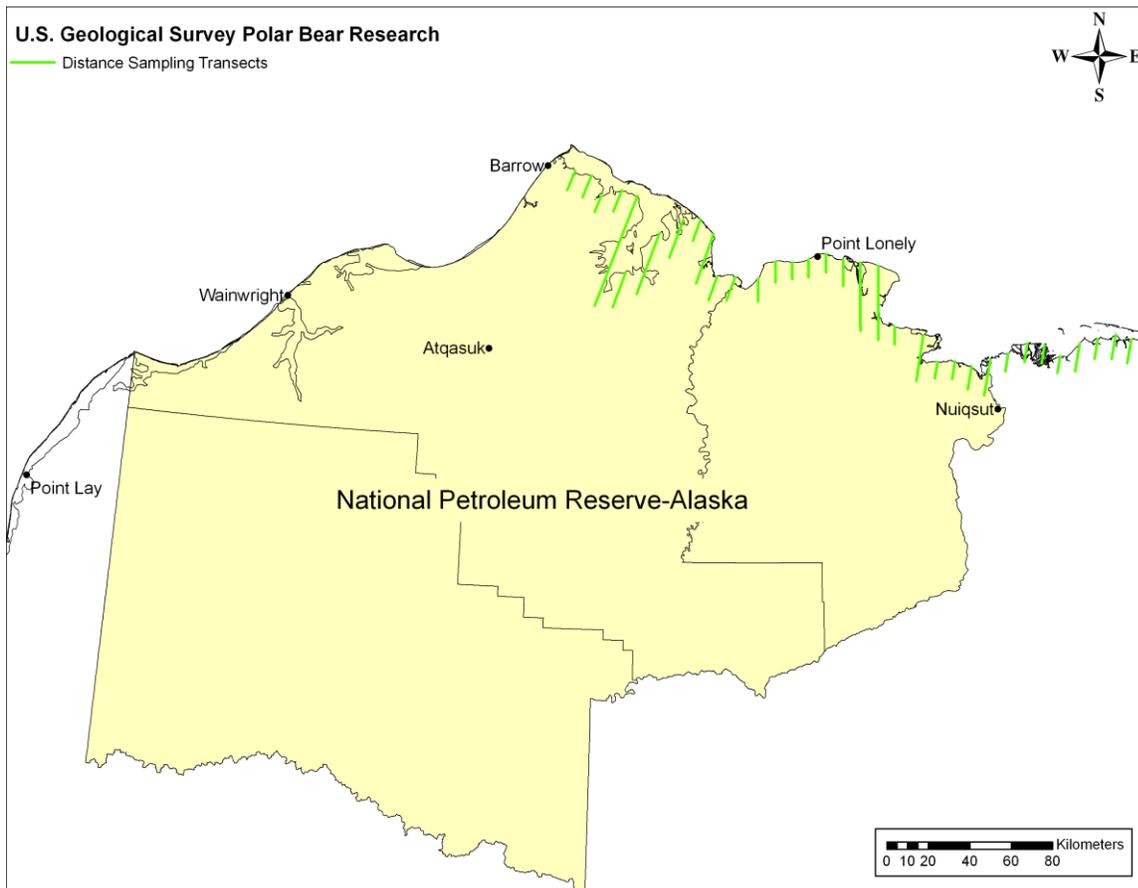
**Description of Proposed Action:** The applicant, Kristin Simac, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), has requested authorization for access and landing by a helicopter and access to lands within the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska (NPR-A) in support of polar bear research. The USGS proposes to document the patterns of terrestrial habitat use by polar bears during the season of minimum ice (August-October). They would examine the abundance, distribution, and habitat use of polar bears onshore during the summer and fall. There are two components to the work: aerial surveys and biopsy darting.

The aerial survey transects would be 8 km and flown perpendicular to the coast. All near shore islands and land spits would also be surveyed. The transects would be spaced 8 km apart from Barrow to the Canadian border, hence only a portion of this work will occur over NPR-A lands (see attached map).

Also proposed is to remotely collect tissue biopsies from observed polar bears with a dart system. The bears would be shot with a hollow tipped dart, which cuts a small tissue sample from the bear. The darts would fall off the bear and can be retrieved from the ground.

They intend to conduct the field research during September 11th to 25th<sup>th</sup> 2013. Transportation would be via a Bell 206 Long Ranger helicopter, with a total of four people on board. While working near and in the NPR-A, they would access fuel from the USGS tank located at the Point Lonely airfield. They would not establish any field camps or additional fuel caches.

They anticipate landing within the NPR-A approximately 10 times during this period to refuel at Point Lonely and to recover biopsy sample collection darts. Landings to recover biopsy darts should require no more than 5 minutes.



**Figure 1.** Applicant submitted map showing proposed 2013 sampling transects within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska for the USGS polar bear research program.

**Legal Description (All Umiat Meridian):**

Township	Range	Section	
22 North	16 West	16, 17, 20, 21, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34	No BLM Managed Lands
22 North	17 West	7, 8, 9, 10, 16, 21, 28, 29, 32	No BLM Managed Lands
22 North	18 West	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 12	No BLM Managed Lands
21 North	14 West	7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 21, 22, 28, 33	
21 North	15 West	1, 2, 11, 12, 14, 22, 23, 27, 34	
21 North	16 West	2, 3, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 23, 26, 34, 35	No BLM Managed Lands
21 North	17 West	5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 24	No BLM Managed Lands
20 North	11 West	19, 20, 21, 22, 28, 33	
20 North	12 West	22, 23, 24, 27, 34	Private Lands in the Vicinity
20 North	14 West	6, 7, 18	Adjacent to Private Land
20 North	15 West	5, 7, 8, 13, 24, 25, 35, 36	Private Lands in the Vicinity
20 North	16 West	4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	
19 North	10 West	7, 8, 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 30, 32	
19 North	11 West	4, 5, 8, 17, 19, 20, 25, 29, 30, 32, 36	Private Lands in the Vicinity

19 North	12 West	3, 4, 9, 16, 20, 21, 29, 32	
19 North	13 West	9, 10, 16, 17, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32	
19 North	14 West	36	
19 North	15 West	2, 11, 14, 15, 22, 27, 28, 33	Private Lands in the Vicinity
18 North	2 West	32	
18 North	3 West	28, 29, 30, 33	
18 North	4 West	22, 25, 26, 27, 34	
18 North	5 West	10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 26, 35	Lonely
18 North	6 West	24, 25, 30, 31, 36	Adjacent to Private Land
18 North	7 West	25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32	
18 North	10 West	5, 8, 17, 20, 29, 32	No Land Involved
18 North	11 West	1, 5, 8, 11, 12, 14, 17, 20, 23, 26, 27, 29, 32, 34	
18 North	12 West	5, 6, 7, 18, 19	
18 North	13 West	5, 7, 8, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26, 30, 34, 35	
18 North	14 West	1, 2, 10, 11, 15, 21, 22, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 36	Mostly Water
18 North	15 West	4, 8, 9, 17, 20, 29, 30, 31	Mostly Water
17 North	2 West	5, 8, 9, 16, 17, 20, 21, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34	Private Lands in the Vicinity
17 North	3 West	4, 9, 16, 21, 28, 33	
17 North	4 West	3, 10, 15, 19, 20, 22, 27, 28, 29, 33, 34	
17 North	5 West	2, 11, 13, 14, 24	
17 North	6 West	1, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23	
17 North	7 West	5, 8, 17, 20, 29, 30, 31	
17 North	8 West	19, 20, 21, 28, 33, 36	Private Lands in the Vicinity
17 North	9 West	13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 24, 29, 30, 31	
17 North	10 West	4, 5, 9, 16, 20, 21, 29, 32	
17 North	11 West	3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 20, 21, 28, 29	
17 North	13 West	3, 4, 8, 9, 17, 19, 20, 30	
17 North	14 West	1, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 23, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, 36	
17 North	15 West	6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 23, 26, 34, 35	
17 North	16 West	12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 35	Adjacent to Private Land
16 North	2 West	3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 15, 17, 20, 22, 26, 27, 29, 32, 35	
16 North	3 West	5, 8, 17, 20, 29, 32	
16 North	8 West	1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 29	
16 North	10 West	1, 6, 11, 12, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23	Private Lands in the Vicinity
16 North	11 West	1, 12, 13, 23, 24	
16 North	14 West	3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 17	Private Lands in the Vicinity
16 North	15 West	4, 8, 9, 17, 20, 29, 30, 31	

16 North	16 West	4, 9, 16, 17, 20, 29, 31, 32	
15 North	2 West	2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31, 36	
15 North	3 West	5, 8, 17, 20, 29, 32	Adjacent to Private Land
15 North	15 West	6	Adjacent to Private Land
15 North	16 West	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	
14 North	1 East	21, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34	
14 North	2 West	1, 6, 7, 12, 13, 18, 19, 24, 25, 30, 36	
14 North	3 West	5, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 23, 24	
13 North	2 West	1	
13 North	1 West	6, 7, 17, 18, 20, 28, 29, 33	
13 North	1 East	3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31, 36	
13 North	2 East	31, 36	No BLM Managed Land
13 North	4 East	34, 35, 36	
13 North	5 East	28, 29, 30, 31, 33	No BLM Managed Land
13 North	6 East	9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 21, 28, 29, 32	No BLM Managed Land
13 North	7 East	7, 8, 17, 20, 29, 32	No BLM Managed Land
13 North	8 East	13, 14, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 36	No BLM Managed Land
13 North	9 East	12, 13, 18, 23, 24, 26, 35	No BLM Managed Land
13 North	10 East	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 14, 23, 26, 27, 34	No BLM Managed Land
13 North	11 East	10, 13, 14, 15, 21, 22, 28, 33	No BLM Managed Land
13 North	12 East	18, 19, 20, 21, 28, 32, 33	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	1 West	3, 4, 10, 11, 14, 23, 24, 25, 36	
12 North	1 East	6, 7, 12, 13, 18, 19, 24, 25	
12 North	2 East	14, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30	
		1, 6, 7, 11, 12	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	3 East	3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 14, 22, 23, 27, 34	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	4 East	2, 3, 10, 15, 22, 27, 28, 33	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	5 East	3, 4, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	6 East	4, 5, 7, 8	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	7 East	5, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	8 East	1, 6, 7, 12, 13, 18, 19, 24, 25	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	9 East	1, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 30	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	10 East	2, 11, 12, 13	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	11 East	3, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	12 East	3, 4, 9, 16, 21, 26, 27, 28, 35, 36	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	13 East	3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 20, 29, 31, 32, 36	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	14 East	7, 18, 19, 25, 30, 31, 36	No BLM Managed Land
12 North	15 East	31, 32	No BLM Managed Land
11 North	3 East	10, 14, 15, 16, 23	
		3, 24	No BLM Managed Land
11 North	4 East	4, 9, 16, 19, 20, 21, 29, 30	No BLM Managed Land
11 North	13 East	1, 6, 12	No BLM Managed Land
11 North	14 East	1, 2, 7, 11, 14, 18, 19, 20, 23, 26,	No BLM Managed Land

		27, 29, 32, 33, 34	
11 North	15 East	3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 15, 22, 27, 33, 34	No BLM Managed Land
11 North	16 East	14, 15, 16, 21, 23, 24, 28, 33	No BLM Managed Land
11 North	17 East	19, 29, 30, 32	No BLM Managed Land
10 North	14 East	3, 4, 9, 10, 15	No BLM Managed Land
10 North	15 East	4, 9, 10, 11, 12	No BLM Managed Land
10 North	16 East	4, 7, 8, 9, 36	No BLM Managed Land
10 North	17 East	5, 7, 8, 18, 19, 24, 25, 30, 31, 35, 36	No BLM Managed Land
10 North	18 East	19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 35	No BLM Managed Land
10 North	19 East	25, 26, 27, 34, 36	No BLM Managed Land
10 North	20 East	31	No BLM Managed Land
10 North	21 East	32, 33, 34, 35, 36	No BLM Managed Land
10 North	22 East	31, 32	No BLM Managed Land
10 North	23 East	31, 32, 33, 34	No BLM Managed Land
9 North	17 East	2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15	No BLM Managed Land
9 North	18 East	2, 3, 10, 15, 22, 23, 24, 25	No BLM Managed Land
9 North	19 East	3, 9, 10, 16, 21, 28, 29, 30	No BLM Managed Land
9 North	20 East	5, 6, 8, 9, 17, 20, 29, 31, 32	No BLM Managed Land
9 North	21 East	5, 8, 17, 18, 19, 25, 30, 31	No BLM Managed Land
9 North	22 East	1, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30	No BLM Managed Land
9 North	23 East	1, 2, 3, 6, 11, 12, 14, 23, 26, 34, 35	No BLM Managed Land
9 North	24 East	13, 14, 15, 22, 27, 34	No BLM Managed Land
9 North	25 East	15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 27, 28, 33	No BLM Managed Land
9 North	34 East	35, 36	No BLM Managed Land
9 North	35 East	31, 32, 33, 34	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	20 East	1, 2, 3, 4	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	21 East	4, 5, 6	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	24 East	1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	25 East	2, 11, 14, 23, 24, 25	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	26 East	2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 15, 22, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	27 East	7, 17, 18, 20, 21, 28, 32, 33	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	30 East	34, 35, 36	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	31 East	24, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	32 East	14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 30, 31, 36	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	33 East	1, 2, 3, 10, 14, 15, 23, 26, 35	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	34 East	4, 5, 6, 9, 15, 16, 22, 27, 34, 35, 36	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	35 East	4, 5, 9, 16, 21, 28, 29, 31, 32	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	36 East	5, 8, 17, 20, 29, 32, 33, 34, 36	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	37 East	13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 24, 30, 31, 36	No BLM Managed Land
8 North	38 East	19, 20, 30, 31	No BLM Managed Land
7 North	26 East	4, 5, 8, 9	No BLM Managed Land
7 North	27 East	5, 8, 17, 19, 20, 24, 25, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36	No BLM Managed Land
7 North	28 East	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19,	No BLM Managed Land

		24, 25, 35, 36	
7 North	29 East	7, 12, 13, 23, 24, 26, 35	No BLM Managed Land
7 North	30 East	3, 4, 5, 6, 7	No BLM Managed Land
7 North	31 East	5, 8, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29	No BLM Managed Land
7 North	32 East	1, 6, 7, 12, 13, 18, 19	No BLM Managed Land
7 North	33 East	2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 18	No BLM Managed Land
7 North	36 East	1, 2, 3	No BLM Managed Land
7 North	37 East	1, 2, 11, 13, 14, 24, 25	No BLM Managed Land
7 North	38 East	13, 14, 15, 22, 24, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33	No BLM Managed Land
7 North	39 East	19, 20, 28, 29, 32, 33	No BLM Managed Land
6 North	27 East	1, 2	No BLM Managed Land
6 North	28 East	1, 2	No BLM Managed Land
6 North	29 East	2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	No BLM Managed Land
6 North	38 East	5, 6, 8, 24, 25	No BLM Managed Land
6 North	39 East	5, 7, 8, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31, 32, 35	No BLM Managed Land
6 North	40 East	19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28, 35	No BLM Managed Land
5 North	39 East	2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10	No BLM Managed Land
5 North	40 East	2, 3, 9, 10, 16, 20, 21, 28, 29, 33, 34, 35	No BLM Managed Land
5 North	41 East	9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 20, 21, 29, 31, 32	No BLM Managed Land
5 North	42 East	18, 19, 20, 29, 30, 31	No BLM Managed Land
4 North	41 East	2, 3, 4	No BLM Managed Land
4 North	42 East	2, 3, 10, 14, 15, 23, 24, 25	No BLM Managed Land
4 North	43 East	3, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32	No BLM Managed Land
4 North	44 East	30, 31	No BLM Managed Land
4 North	45 East	29, 31, 32	No BLM Managed Land
3 North	43 East	12, 13, 14, 23, 25, 26, 27, 36	No BLM Managed Land
3 North	44 East	6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 23, 26, 27, 31, 32, 34	No BLM Managed Land
3 North	45 East	6, 7	No BLM Managed Land
2 North	44 East	3, 4, 5	No BLM Managed Land

## **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: “FF095714 USGS Simac Summer Permit 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.

<b>Extraordinary Circumstances</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		<b>X</b>
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.		<b>X</b>
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2) (E)].		<b>X</b>
2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		<b>X</b>
2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		<b>X</b>
2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		<b>X</b>
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.		<b>X</b>
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.		<b>X</b>
2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		<b>X</b>

2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		<b>X</b>
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).		<b>X</b>
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).		<b>X</b>

#### **D. Approval and Contact Information**

I considered the proposed action and have determined that there is no potential for significant impacts.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Lon Kelly  
 Authorized Officer, Arctic Field Office

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

#### **Contact Person:**

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact:

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