

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

Project Name/ Applicant: BYU Rocket Dynamics

Project/Case File Number: ID-I010-RE-14-01

Project Lead: Monica Zimmerman

CX Number: ID-I010-2014-0002-CX

Date of Preparation: November 18, 2013

PROPOSED ACTION:

Brigham Young University-Idaho (BYUI) Rocket Dynamics submitted a request for a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) to test launch suborbital rockets an estimated 13 times on public land. The launch site is located in Jefferson County approximately 20 miles northwest of Idaho Falls near Sage Junction and is described below:

Boise Meridian, Idaho

T 6N R 36E Sec. 25, (see Exhibit A)

The proposed action is to issue an organized group SRP to BYU Rocket Dynamics. The purpose of this SRP is to allow BYU Rocket Dynamics to test rockets for a competition held in the spring at another location. The launch site requires a 10 foot by 10 foot launching area and may take place anywhere within the area identified in exhibit A. The rockets would be launched on a removable fire resistant blanket within the launching area. The test launches would be 1,000 to 25,000 foot launches. The organized group anticipates having approximately 20 participants involved in the test launches and launch attendance is expected to grow initially and then taper off. The most spectators expected to attend a launch would be about 100 people.

Standard Bureau of Land Management (BLM) terms and conditions will be included in the SRP stipulations. No additional rights would be granted beyond those of the SRP stipulations. All activities associated with the event would be in accordance with the permit's general and specific stipulations.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION:

On October 21, 2013, this project was brought before an Interdisciplinary Team consisting of BLM specialists. On October 25, 2013, BLM specialists visited proposed launch site locations to determine a well-suited launch site for the proposed activity. A description of the proposed action was posted to the online NEPA register. This is available to members of the public through the Upper Snake Field Office webpage. No comments were received and no issues/conflicts were identified for this project.

FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION:

The proposed action is categorically excluded as outlined in 516 DM 11.9 H (1) for issuance of Special Recreation Permits for day use or overnight use up to 14 consecutive nights; that impacts no more than 3 staging area acres; and/or for recreational travel along roads, trails, or in areas authorized in a land use plan. This CX cannot be used for commercial boating permits along Wild and Scenic Rivers. This CX cannot be used for the establishment or issuance of Special Recreation Permits for “Special Area” management (43 CFR 2932.5). Standard stipulations specific to the proposed activity would be incorporated.

I recommend that the SRP, ID-I010-RE-14-01 be granted through April 30, 2013. The SRP would be granted under current Bureau regulations found at 43 CFR 2930.

DECISION AND RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION:

It is my decision to issue an SRP to BYUI Rocket Dynamics for recreational rocket launching on public lands. The SRP would be issued through April 30, 2014, subject to the attached stipulations (see Exhibit B). Fees will be collected in accordance of 43 CFR 2930.

LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE:

The Proposed Action is located in Jefferson County, Idaho, within the boundaries of the Upper Snake Field Office. The BLM’s Medicine Lodge Resource Management Plan (BLM 1985) provides general guidelines “to manage for dispersed recreation opportunities in the area” (p. 1). While this action is not specifically addressed in the document, the plan does provide for the consideration of SRP applications.

APPEALS INFORMATION:

43 CFR 4.21 (58 FR 4939, January 19, 1993) or 43 CFR 2801.10

/s/Monica Zimmerman
Monica Zimmerman
Outdoor Recreation Planner
Date: 11/20/2013

/s/Marissa Guenther
Marissa Guenther
NEPA Reviewer
Date: 11/20/2013

/s/Jeremy Casterson
Jeremy Casterson

Upper Snake Field Manager
Date: 11/20/2013

Extraordinary Circumstances Requiring Preparation of an EA or EIS

(43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 46.215)

The action described in categorical exclusion # ID- I010-2013-0044-CX (IDI-013828) has been reviewed to determine that none of the extraordinary circumstances listed below pertain to the proposed action.

DM# Extraordinary Circumstance

- 2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety
- 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.
- 2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102(2)(E)].
- 2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.
- 2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.
- 2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.
- 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.
- 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.
- 2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.
- 2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).
- 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).
- 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).

Exhibit A- Map

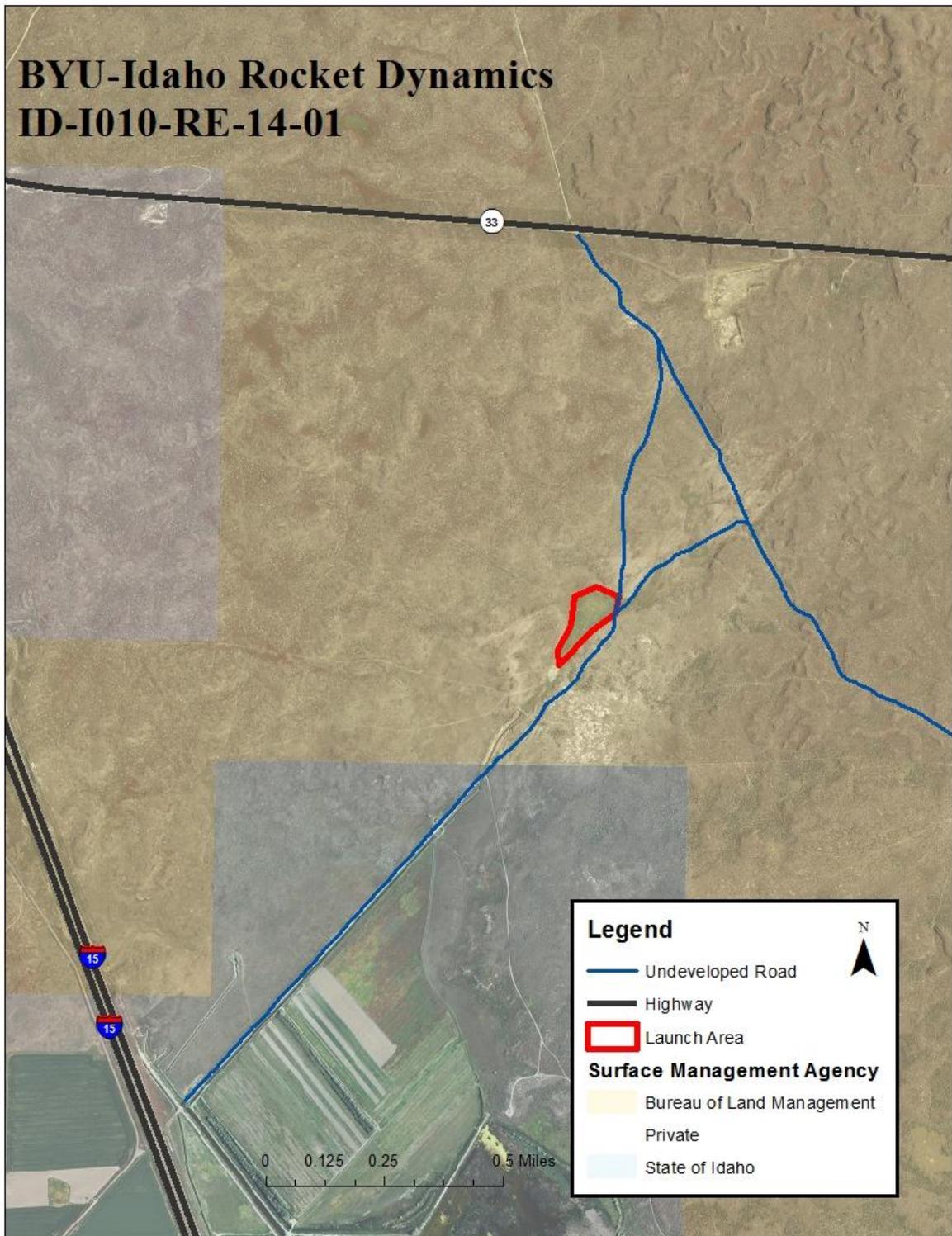


Exhibit B- Stipulations

Special Recreation Use Permit ID-I010-RE-14-01

Special Stipulations

BYU Idaho Rocket Dynamics

1. The event will not occur if fire danger within 24 hours of the event is classified as Extreme, High, or Very High by the BLM Idaho Falls District Fire Management Officer (FMO), or Fire Control Officer (FCO). If the Fire Danger is classified as Moderate, the event will be allowed at the discretion of the FMO/FCO. The permittee will contact the permit administrator at 524-7543 one week before the proposed event to determine the fire danger classification, and again within 24 hours of the event for the final authorization.
2. The permittee will employ the following measures to prevent wildfires and minimize disturbance to permitted livestock grazing and general recreation use in the rocket launch area:
 - a. The launch area will be located in a lightly vegetated area, preferably on rock or gravel (See attached map).
 - b. A deflector such as a flame resistant tarp will be placed on the ground surface beneath the launch vehicle, so that no open flame makes contact with the ground surface during launch. Fire suppression equipment, including extinguisher for chemical fires, water, shovels and buckets will be on site and easily available for use at every launch.
 - c. Rockets will be tracked and followed by spotters, and promptly recovered. Spotters will be required to carry an extinguisher, shovel and water, should a returning rocket cause a fire downrange from the launch site.
3. The permittee accepts financial responsibility for all fire suppression and rehabilitation costs of any fire determined to have been caused by their actions.
4. The permittee and spectators will not use any vehicles (including ATVs) off-road. All vehicles will stay on existing roads and trails. Parking of vehicles will occur on the edges of the nearby road. Cross-country use of ATVs or other vehicles will not be allowed as chase vehicles to recover rockets after flight. All rocket recovery off a road or trail will be done by foot.
5. The permittee will not harass livestock found in the area of the launch site. During active, permitted grazing periods, launch facilities will not be located within 1/4 mile of troughs or springs where livestock or wildlife may congregate.
6. The permittee must obtain any other necessary permits in advance of the launch dates, including Federal Aviation Administration clearances for high elevation flight, and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms permits for high power rocket engines.
7. To avoid disturbing lekking sage-grouse a seasonal restriction will be implemented. No launches will take place from 6PM to 10AM between the dates of March 15th to May 15th.

8. The area north of the Highway 33 is closed to human entry from December 1st to April 30th. If it is necessary for the permittee to enter this area during the winter closure to retrieve any portion of their materials, they must first contact the Bureau of Land Management, Upper Snake Field Office permit administrator.

Tentative Launch Schedule

November 23rd, 30th

December 21st – 10,000 ft. launch

January 18th, 25th – 1,000 ft. and 10,000 ft. launches

February 8th, 22nd – 1,000 ft. and 10,000 ft. launches

March 15th, 29th – 10,000 ft. and 25,000 launches

April 19th – 25,000 ft. launch

May 17th, 31st – 10,000 ft. and 25,000 ft. launch

June 14th – 25,000 ft. launch

*Approximately 20 participants per launch. The launch attendance is expected to grow initially and then taper off. The highest expected attendance is estimated at 100 spectators.

These launch dates are tentative and depend on factors such as weather, budget, and/or class schedule. Launch dates different than identified must be approved by the BLM permit administrator prior to a launch.