

Amended Bear Paw Mountain Seismic and Radio Repeater Site

DOI-BLM-AK-F030-2014-0013-CX

Introduction

The University of Alaska at Fairbanks has requested an amendment to renew their existing seismic and radio repeater site for another ten (10) years located on top of Bear Paw Mountain.

Summary

The amended proposal is necessary to improve data quality by auguring a posthole next to the existing seismic vault (on authorized footprint, no additional upgrades outside footprint) and the renewal grant issued for ten (10) years.

Alternatives Considered

The No Alternative Option is the only alternative considered and was not selected as it would not allow an amendment to the renewal of the seismic and radio repeater site which is essential for earthquake research purposes. All equipment would have to be removed.

Decision

I have decided to authorize a ten (10) year right-of-way for the renewal and upgrading of the existing seismic and radio repeater site on top of Bear Paw Mountain. This site is essential for earthquake research purposes.

Management Considerations

The Categorical Exclusion and supporting documentation have been prepared consistent with the requirements of various statutes and regulations, including but not limited to:

- Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA)
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA)
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA)

One BLM land use plan applies to the overall project area, the Southwest Framework Plan, Minchumina SubUnit.

Public Involvement

Due to the remoteness of this area it was determined that the general public would not be impacted.

Appeal or Protest Opportunities:

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, in accordance with 43 CFR Part 4 and DOI Form 1842-1. The notice of appeal must be filed in the Bureau of Land Management, Central Yukon Field Office, 1150 University Avenue, Fairbanks, Alaska 99709 within 30 days from receipt of this decision. If you decide to file an appeal, you must carefully follow the procedure described on the enclosed form 1842-1. If you don't file your appeal at the locations specified on the form within 30 days, the Board may dismiss your appeal as untimely without considering its merits. Be sure to send a copy of your notice of appeal to each party named in this decision and to all of the addresses on the enclosed form 1842-1. You may also ask the Board to stay or suspend the effect of this decision while your

appeal is pending. If you desire a stay, you must enclose your request for a stay with your notice of appeal. You have the burden of showing a stay is justified. The Board will grant a stay only if you provide sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the Board grants or denies the stay,
2. The likelihood of the success of your appeal on its merits,
3. The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the Board does not grant the stay, and;
4. Whether the public interest favors granting a stay.

Approval from Authorized Official:

Field Office Manager Decision

Having considered a full range of alternatives, associated impacts, and public and agency input, I have decided to adopt and implement the attached Approved Plan in conformance with the Southwest Framework Plan.

Gary M. Foreman
Signature
for Nichelle W. Jacobson
Field Manager
Central Yukon Field Office

March 17, 2014
Date

— Essential Fish Habitat

NEPA Document No.: DOI-BLM-AK-F030-2014-0013-CX

Prepared by: David G. Parker

Date: 3/11/14

The proposed action lies within the general range of Dolly Varden (*Salvelinus malma*); arctic char (*S. alpinus*); Lake Trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*); burbot (*Lota lota*); and whitefish (Coregonid spp.). Arctic grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*) and slimey sculpin (*Cottus cognatus*) are ubiquitous throughout the region (ADF&G 1978). The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recognizes fresh waters cataloged (ADF&G 2012) as being used by salmon under AS 41.14.870 (*Catalog of Waters Important for the Spawning, Rearing or Migration of Anadromous Fishes*) as essential fish habitat (EFH). The amended action is only to dig a post hole and install a PVC pipe with another seismic sensor, therefore there will be no effect on EFH.

Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Finding: No adverse affect. EFH consultation with NMFS is not required.

References:

State of Alaska, Alaska Department of Fish and Game. 1978. Alaska's Fisheries Atlas. Volume 2. Edited by R. McLean and K. Delaney. Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

State of Alaska, Alaska Department of Fish and Game. 2012. An Atlas to the Catalog of Waters Important for Spawning, Rearing, or Migration of Anadromous Fishes, Resource Management Region V. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Habitat and Restoration Division.

<http://extra.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/FishResourceMonitor/?mode=awc>

— Wilderness Characteristics Assessment

NEPA Document No.: DOI-BLM-AK-F030-2014-0013-CX

Serial No.: F-93750

Applicant: University of Alaska at Fairbanks, Geophysical Institute

Location: On top of Bear Paw Mountain more particularly described as SW¹/₄SE¹/₄, Sec. 25, T. 9 S., R. 18 W, Fairbanks Meridian, Alaska, containing 0.25 acre

Prepared by: Lisa Shon Jodwalis

Date: 10 March 2014

Evaluation

The basis for this evaluation is BLM Manual 6310 - Conducting Wilderness Characteristics Inventory on BLM Lands, and BLM Manual 6320 - Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the BLM Land Use Planning Process, which direct offices to conduct and maintain inventories regarding the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics, and to consider identified Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC) in land use plans and when analyzing projects under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

An inventory of lands with wilderness characteristics was completed for the area in which this project is located (Area Unique Identifier CYFO-North Fork Kuskokwim-001). The BLM-managed and State-selected land in this inventory unit that includes Bearpaw Mountain encompasses 2,599,000 acres and is entirely natural and undisturbed and was determined to have wilderness characteristics. The proposed posthole and encased seismometer will not be substantially noticeable or affect naturalness.

FINDING

The proposed action will not negatively affect wilderness characteristics.

Type of Assessment/Sources

- Barns, Chris, BLM Representative, Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, 9 September 2011. Wilderness Characteristics Guidance for the BLM, Training Module IID – Inventory Procedures-Naturalness.
- aerial reconnaissance, USGS topographic maps, GIS data, Google Earth images

— Section 810 Analysis

NEPA Document No.: DOI-BLM-AK-F030–2014–0013–CX

Applicant: University of Alaska at Fairbanks, Geophysical Institute

Serial No.: F-93750

Proposed Action: In Categorical Exclusion DOI-BLM-AK-F030–2014–0003, which has already been completed and signed, the University of Alaska at Fairbanks (UAF) proposed to renew their existing seismic and radio repeater site on top of Bear Paw Mountain for ten (10) years with no changes. After the completion of the NEPA action the UAF would like to amend their proposal to improve data quality by auguring a posthole next to the existing seismic vault. The posthole would be 3m-5m deep and 20cm in diameter. The hole would be cased with PVC pipe and would house their broadband seismometer, while the existing vault would continue to house the datalogger and strong motion instrument. This new proposal is the only action to be analyzed.

Location: On top of Bear Paw Mountain

Township/Range: SW¼SE¼, Sec. 25, T. 9 S., R. 18 W, Fairbanks Meridian, Alaska, containing .25 acre

Evaluation by: Erin Julianus (Wildlife) and Dave Parker (Fisheries)

Date: 03/11/2014

Type of Assessment/Sources:

Effect of the proposal on subsistence uses and needs

Fisheries:

The proposed action is a renewal of an existing lease to continue to operate seismic and radio repeater equipment on a mountaintop, and does not involve removal or replacement of existing equipment. Previously this action has not adversely affected fish resources, and in the proposed 10 year lease it is not expected to significantly reduce harvestable fisheries resources that are available for subsistence use. The amended proposed action would not alter the distribution, migration, or location of harvestable fisheries resources. Approved mitigation measures would prevent degradation of adjacent water sources and fisheries habitat. The proposed action will not create any legal or physical barriers that would limit access by subsistence users of the fisheries resource.

Wildlife:

None. The proposed action of installing a posthole and equipment in the vicinity of the existing radio repeater lease site will not interfere with subsistence uses and needs. The proposed action would not alter the distribution, migration, or location of harvestable wildlife resources. The proposed action will not create any legal or physical barriers that would limit access by subsistence users to wildlife resources. Permittees should practice localized avoidance of big game such as moose and bear when installing the structure and in the vicinity.

Other resources:

The proposed action is not anticipated to change or impact any other harvestable resources such as wood, water, berries, or vegetation.

Expected reduction, if any, in the availability of resources due to alteration in resource distribution, migration, or location:

None. Wildlife resources may avoid the area while permitted personnel are in the vicinity, but avoidance will be temporary.

Expected limitation, if any, in the access of subsistence users resulting from the proposal:

None. Access to subsistence resources will not be hampered by the proposed action.

Availability of other lands, if any, for the purpose sought to be achieved:

The permit application is for activities associated with an existing lease and structure. Therefore, no other alternative locations were considered.

Other alternatives, if any, which would reduce or eliminate the use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands needed for subsistence purposes:

None.

Findings:

The proposed action will not significantly restrict subsistence uses. No reasonably foreseeable and significant decrease in the abundance of harvestable resources or in the distribution of harvestable resources have been forecast to emerge as a function of the action analyzed in this document.

References