



# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
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MMG, Mineral Exploration  
Environmental Assessment, DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2014-0013-EA

Applicant: MMG USA Exploration, LLC  
Case file: AA093554

## **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

### **Background**

In March 2013, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) received an application from MMG, USA Exploration, LLC, to conduct mineral exploration (drilling) on lands that are managed by the BLM. Exploration would occur from July 2014 until completed or September 30, 2015 whichever comes first. This consists of up to 6 drill holes at different locations, each hole approximately 3.8 inches in diameter and drilled approximately 1000 feet deep at each site. Each site will only be used for approximately 7 days. Each site will have a drill pad that is normally 16ft X 16ft and will be constructed using timbers to minimize the amount of earthmoving and reclamation. All sites will be reclaimed when the drilling is complete. Reclamation will include plugging each hole with bentonite slurry or equivalent for a minimum of 10 feet within the top 20 feet of the hole, the remainder of the hole to the surface will be backfilled with drill cuttings. The drill will be working 24 hours per day with 2 crews working. All access will be done by helicopter.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact**

This action and its effects have been evaluated consistent with the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for determining *significance*. Per 40 CFR § 1508.27, a determination of *significance* requires consideration of both context and intensity. The former refers to the relative context in which the action would occur such as society as a whole, affected region, affected interests, etc. The latter refers to the severity of the impact.

#### *Context*

The project would occur on BLM managed lands above tree level utilizing helicopter for access. The area that will be utilized is managed for multiple use. The total area impacted for each site would be approximately 1 acre. The anticipated impacts are local in nature.

## *Intensity*

### *1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The EA considered and disclosed potential and adverse effects of the alternatives. For example, the EA discloses that the Proposed Action Alternative could cause direct impacts to local wildlife and recreational users in the area. Within the No Action Alternative there are no effects to the issues or resources identified within the EA.

### *2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.*

Mineral exploration could have an effect on public health and safety if conducted in an unregulated manner. The mitigation measures and stipulations adequately address the issues identified by the public and the interdisciplinary team and eliminate any effects to public health and safety.

### *3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

No unique characteristics would be affected by the Proposed Action. Mineral exploration will be conducted above tree line where it is believed that no cultural resources exist.

### *4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

Moderate controversy concerning the effects of this action on the quality of the human environment can be expected. However these effects are primarily perception based. A summary of the proposed project was posted to the BLM's national NEPA register website, ePlanning on April 21, 2014. A scoping notice was placed in the Copper River Record the week of April 25, 2014. Notice of the Proposed Action and solicitation of comments were published on the What's Up Alaska list server, and mailed to Ahtna, Incorporated, and commercial guides that work in the area during the week of April 25, 2014.

Comment deadline was Thursday May 15, 2014. Eight comments were received during the comment period, and two comments were received after the comment period closed. One new issue was raised that was not identified by the interdisciplinary review team. This issue consisted of the impacts of noise on the affected environment including the Nelchina Caribou calving grounds. All other comments were generally opposed to the project and concern was expressed over the project taking place in and around the Nelchina Caribou calving grounds.

### *5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

There are no unique or unknown risks associated with the action. Recommended Mitigation and stipulations eliminate any highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks.

- 6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

This decision would not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects. Significant effects revealed in the EA are addressed adequately through Alternatives, Project Design Features, and Recommended Mitigations. Future projects similar in nature would be individually analyzed in separate NEPA documents.

- 7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

No cumulatively significant impacts were identified within the EA.

- 8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

The Proposed Action would not affect any scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

- 9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

There are no threatened or endangered species within the project area.

- 10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The Proposed Action does not threaten to violate any law. The East Alaska Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (RMP/ROD) of September 2007 provide the overall long-term management direction for lands encompassed by the Proposed Action.

## **Conclusion**

Therefore, on the basis of the information contained in the EA (DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2014-0013-EA), and all other information available to me, it is my determination that:

1. None of the environmental effects identified meet the definition of significance as defined by context and intensity considerations at 40 CFR § 1508.27;
2. The alternatives are in conformance with the East Alaska RMP/ROD (2007); and
3. The Proposed Action and alternatives do not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment.

Therefore, neither an Environmental Impact Statement nor a supplement to the existing EA is necessary and neither will be prepared.

*/s/ Dennis C. Teitzel*

*June 30, 2014*

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Dennis C. Teitzel  
Glennallen Field Manager

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Date

**Attachments**

BLM 2014. Environmental Assessment: MMG Exploratory Drilling, DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2014-0013-EA.