



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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Off Road Warriors DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2014-0016-EA

Applicant: Original Productions LLC Case File:AA093824

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Background

In March of 2014, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) received an application from Original Productions LLC to perform commercial filming activities on area trails for the creation of a television show entitled Off Road Warriors. Dates of filming would occur from June 20 through August 30, 2014. Up to six 4x4 vehicles, three to five OHV's, and a crew of fifteen people are authorized to film and travel upon specific trails included within this proposal. Additionally basecamps at trailheads may be utilized to accommodate up to thirty personnel. Filming activities would utilize five Go-pro digital cameras and four Sony digital cameras. Trails authorized for filming activities include Coal Mine Road, Onemile Creek, Swede Lake Trail, and 54 Mile Trail. An Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2014-0016-EA) analyzing the effects of the proposed action was completed in June of 2014.

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 existing trails primarily utilized by off-highway vehicles (OHVs). The authorized trails are considered multiple use routes that are commonly traveled by, were constructed with, or are maintained by motorized equipment. Total BLM managed miles of trail contained within the authorization is approximately 27 miles. Up to 16 hours of filming activity could occur on each trail. The anticipated impacts are local in nature.

Intensity

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The EA considered and disclosed potential beneficial and adverse effects of the alternatives. For example, the EA discloses that the Proposed Action Alternative could cause direct impacts to trail tread (EA, p. 18). The EA also acknowledges that the Proposed Action Alternative would result in user conflicts with federally qualified subsistence users on the 54-mile Trail and Swede Lake Trail during the permitted federal subsistence moose and caribou seasons (EA p. 11). Within Alternative 3 the EA discloses that effects to trail tread would be significantly reduced (EA p. 18) and conflicts with federally qualified subsistence users would be minimized (EA p. 11). 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.

Commercial filming and associated activities could have an effect on public health and safety if conducted in an unregulated manner. Project Design Features # 7 and # 8 (EA p. 9) 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. Filming activity and overland travel would take place on existing trails primarily utilized by off-highway vehicles (OHVs) which have been previously surveyed for cultural resources. Although some activities would occur within wet sections of trail they are not considered unique in relation to context of the landscape along the Denali Highway, Richardson Highways, and field office trail system. No activities will occur within the Gulkana National Wild and Scenic River corridor and the authorized applicant will be subject to all other trail rules and management practices identified within the East Alaska Resource Management Plan and Tangle Lakes Archaeological District OHV restrictions.

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. The BLM has no control over how the action may be perceived by a viewing audience and no activities under consideration for authorization exceed those allowable to a private party public land user.

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, Delta Wind, and Valdez Star the week of May 5, 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 the village of Chickaloon on May 1, 2014. A radio announcement was placed on the regional radio station KCHU.

Comment deadline was Friday May 16, 2014. Twenty four comments were received. One was in support of the action and twenty three were generally opposed. Two comments were received that raised new issues not identified by the interdisciplinary review team. These issues consisted of addressing the safety of trail users during filming activities and the social perceptions that permitting the proposed activity might depict about allowed uses of public lands. Two comments were received past the comment deadline date of May 16. These two comments did not reveal any new issues or provide any new information not already identified by previous comments.

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. Project Design Features, Actions Common to all Alternatives, and Recommended Mitigations 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 (EA, p. 5). the five OHV trails have been previously surveyed for archaeological resources; no heritage or paleontological resources were located in or immediately near those trails. The project is similar to current OHV use of the trail and is unlikely to cause more than one square meter of new surface disturbance in previously disturbed OHV trails.

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 (EA, p. 3).

Conclusion

Therefore, on the basis of the information contained in the 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 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 Environmental Impact Statement nor a supplement to the existing EA is necessary and neither will be prepared.

/s/ Dennis C. Teitzel

June 20, 2014

Dennis C. Teitzel
Glennallen Field Manager

Date

Attachments

BLM 2014. Environmental Assessment: Off Road Warriors, DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2014-0016-EA