

Decision Record - Memorandum
Gilbert Huntington, dba — Alaska Koyukuk
Guides

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Chapter 1. Gilbert Huntington, dba — Alaska Koyukuk Guides

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1.1. Compliance

The Central Yukon Resource Management Plan, March 1986.

1.2. Selected Action

The BLM is responding to an application filed under 43 CFR 2930, by Mr. Gilbert Huntington, dba —Alaska Koyukuk Guides. The purpose of this action is to provide guided spring (April 1 — June 15) grizzly/black bear and fall (August 1 — October 15) moose/grizzly/black bear hunts for up to four (4) clients each season on BLM lands. Location of the activity is in the Kateel, Nulato, Yukon and Gisasa River drainages of Guide Use Area 21-03 and the Koyukuk and Yukon River drainages of Guide Use Area 21-02. The Base Camp is on private land and spike camps for up to 14 days are allowed on BLM lands in the planning area.

1.3. Compliance with NEPA:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with the NEPA Handbook Appendix 1, 516 DM 11.9 (H), which states, “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.”

1.4. Public Involvement:

No public comment has been received on this permit renewal.

1.5. Rationale:

1. Authorizing the permit is specifically provided for in the Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan and the Central Yukon Resource Management Plan.
2. The action is categorically excluded and does not trigger any of the extraordinary circumstances found in CFR 46.215.
3. There will be no restriction to subsistence use (See attached ANILCA 810 documentation).
4. There will be no adverse impacts to cultural resources (See attached Assessment of Archaeological and Historic Resources Sec. 106 documentation).
5. There will be no impact on Essential Fish Habitat (see attached EFH determination).

1.6. Appeal or Protest Opportunities:

If you choose to protest this decision you must do so within 15 days of the receipt of permit determination. The protest must be filed with and received by the CYFO Field Manager within the allotted time. The protest must present any evidence that would show the decision is in error and should be vacated or modified. Within 15 days of receipt of a timely protest the Field Manager will review any evidence provided by you and forward a recommended final decision

to the Fairbanks District Manager. The decision of the District Manager will be the final BLM decision, and may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

1.7. Authorizing Official:

Having considered a full range of alternatives, associated impacts, and public and agency input, I approve the use of BLM lands by Gilbert Huntington, dba — Alaska Koyukuk Guides.

Signature
Nichelle W Jacobson
Field Office Manager
Central Yukon Field Office

Date

1.8. Contact Person

For additional information concerning this Finding, contact.

Kelly Egger, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Central Yukon Field Office
1150 University Ave.
Fairbanks, AK 99709
907/474-2242 email kegger@blm.gov

Appendix A.

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Chapter 2. Essential Fish Habitat Assessment

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NEPA Document No.: DOI-BLM-AK-0300-2014-0034-CX**Prepared by:** David A. Esse**Date:** 4/29/14

Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Finding: The rivers in the project area are known to contain anadromous fish species (ADF&G 2014). The Gisasa, Kateel, and Nulato rivers all contain spawning populations of Chinook and chum salmon. The mainstem Yukon and Koyukuk rivers are major migratory routes for all five salmon species. However, the effects of the action on EFH are expected to be insignificant in the area encompassed by this permit. It is also unlikely the impacts downstream of the project area will be significant. Based on these assumptions, the proposed action is assigned the EFH determination: *No effect*. No further EFH consultation is required.

References:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). 2014. Fish Distribution Database. Internet website at: <http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/SARR/FishDistrib/PDFListing/int/wisb1.pdf>.

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Appendix B.

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Chapter 3. Compliance with ANILCA Section 810

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NEPA Document No.: DOI-BLM-AK-0300–2014–0034–CX

Applicant(s): Gilbert Huntington

Case File/Serial No.: FF095867

Proposed Action: 2930 Special Recreation Permit

Location: Location of the activity is in the Kateel, Nulato, Yukon and Gisasa River drainages of Guide Use Area 21-03 and the Koyukuk and Yukon River drainages of Guide Use Area 21-02.

Township/Range:

Evaluation by: Erin Julianus and David Esse

Date: 5/6/2014

Type of Assessment/Sources: Review of application materials, subsistence database, local knowledge, interviews with staff knowledgeable about the area and the proposed action.

Effect of the proposal on subsistence uses and needs

Fisheries: The rivers in the project area are known to contain anadromous fish species (ADF&G 2014). The Gisasa, Kateel, and Nulato rivers all contain spawning populations of Chinook and chum salmon. The mainstem Yukon and Koyukuk rivers are major migratory routes for all five salmon species. These rivers also contain abundant numbers of non-salmon subsistence fish species including pike and five whitefish species. The area encompassed by this permit includes the communities of Koyukuk, Galena, Nulato, and Kaltag. These communities rely heavily on salmon and whitefish species for subsistence purposes. In 2008 these four villages harvested over 10,000 salmon and 5,000 non-salmon fish species for subsistence purposes (Busher et al. 2007). However, the proposed action it would not alter the distribution, migration or location of harvestable fisheries resources. The proposed action will not create any legal or physical barriers that would limit access by subsistence users of the fisheries resource.

Wildlife:

The proposed action is to occur on BLM lands in the Kateel, Gisasa, and Nulato River drainages and in the Nulato Hills of Unit 21D. Moose are abundant and populations are considered stable in Unit 21D, with an estimated population of 8103 ± 1000 moose (Stout 2010). Local moose densities in the Unit vary, but overall the density is 1.4 moose/sq. mi. Grizzly bear densities are thought to be low to moderate in Unit 21D (10–25 bears/100 sq. mi, Stout 2009). The federal subsistence hunting season in Unit 21D for grizzly bear is open from August 10–June 30. For moose, the federal subsistence hunting season in Unit 21D is open from August 22–31, September 5–25, and from March 1–5.

Moose and grizzly bears are highly mobile animals that cover relatively large home ranges. As such, their distribution is subject to seasonality and largely dependent on available habitat. Federal subsistence harvest records for moose and grizzly bears in Unit 21D are scant. State harvest records for grizzly bears in Units 21B, 21C, and 21D are low (average = 7.3 bears/year; Stout 2009). By contrast, general harvest of moose in Unit 21D averaged 228 moose per year between 2005 and 2009, with an average success rate of 35%. Between 2005 and 2009, harvest was highest (263) in 2008 and lowest (201) in 2005 (FSPS 2014).

The applicant proposes to take up to four (4) hunters in the spring for grizzly bears and up to four (4) hunters in the fall. Given low subsistence harvest of grizzly bears in Unit 21D and the harvest objective of 700 moose per year, the proposed action will not significantly affect subsistence uses and needs.

Other resources:

The proposed action will not affect other resources such as wood, water, or berries. Subsistence activities that target these resources occur in a much broader area than where the proposed action is to take place. Therefore, the proposed action will not significantly restrict subsistence uses and needs.

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

None. Fish and wildlife resources may temporarily avoid the area while the permittee and associated hunting activity are present. Wildlife (brown bear) may be harvested as part of the activities of the permittee. However, there is no expected major reduction in the availability of resources due to alteration in resource distribution, migration, or location.

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

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

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

Other public lands are available for the purpose to be achieved. However, the applicant is permitted to practice commercial guiding activities in Guide Use Areas (GUAs) 21-02 and 21-03. Therefore, no other lands were considered.

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

The only alternative that would reduce or eliminate the use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands needed for subsistence purposes is to not allow or permit any activities that conflict with subsistence uses. However, such an alternative is not viable because the BLM manages public lands for multiple uses.

Findings:

The proposed action will not significantly restrict subsistence uses. Access to subsistence resources will not be hampered by the proposed activity. There is no reasonably foreseeable significant decrease in the abundance of harvestable resources and in the distribution of harvestable resources due to the proposed action.

References

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). 2014. Fish Distribution Database. Internet website at: <http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/SARR/FishDistrib/PDFListing/int/wisb1.pdf>.

Busher, W.H., T. Hamazaki, and D. M. Jallen. 2009. Subsistence and personal use salmon harvests in the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River drainage, 2008. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fishery Data Series No. 09-73, Anchorage, AK.

Federal Subsistence Permit System. 2014. (<http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/fsps.cfml>) accessed 05 May 2014.

Stout, G.W. 2010. Unit 21D moose. Pages 477–521 in P. Harper, editor. Moose management report of survey and inventory activities 1 July 2007–30 June 2009. Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Project 1.0. Juneau, Alaska.

Stout G.W. 2009. Units 21B, 21C, 21D, and 24 brown bear. Pages 258–269 in P. Harper, editor. Brown bear management report of survey and inventory activities 1 July 2006–30 June 2008. Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Project 4.0. Juneau, Alaska.

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Appendix C.

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Chapter 4. Wilderness Characteristics Assessment

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NEPA Document No.: DOI-BLM-AK-0300–2014–0034–CX

Case File/Serial No.: FF095867

Applicant(s): Gilbert Huntington

Location: Location of the activity is in the Kateel, Nulato, Yukon and Gisasa River drainages of Guide Use Area 21-03 and the Koyukuk and Yukon River drainages of Guide Use Area 21-02.

Prepared by: Karen Deatherage

Date: July 25, 2014

Proposed Action

The BLM is responding to an application filed under 43 CFR 2930, by Mr. Gilbert Huntington, dba —Alaska Koyukuk Guides. The purpose of this action is to provide guided spring (April 1 — June 15) grizzly/black bear and fall (August 1 — October 15) moose/grizzly/black bear hunts for up to four (4) clients each season on BLM lands. Location of the activity is in the Kateel, Nulato, Yukon and Gisasa River drainages of Guide Use Area 21-03 and the Koyukuk and Yukon River drainages of Guide Use Area 21-02. The Base Camp is on private land and spike camps for up to 14 days are allowed on BLM lands in the planning area.

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 in land use plans and when analyzing projects under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The location for a portion of the proposed action is an area inventoried for wilderness characteristics (Area Unique Identifiers CYFO-Nulato Hills-002). Because the region is extremely vast and remote, there are outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation such as hunting and backpacking. BLM Manual 6310 includes hunting, hiking, and backpacking as examples of primitive and unconfined recreation suitable for lands characterized as wilderness. BLM has also determined that if a project or activity does not negatively affect wilderness characteristics, the permitting process may proceed as usual. (Chris Barns, 2012). .

FINDING

The proposed activities in this area do not significantly impair the size or naturalness of this area, or the opportunities for solitude and recreation of a primitive and unconfined nature. The stipulations attached to this permit will further minimize the effects of human activities. The proposed action will not impair existing wilderness characteristics.

Type of Assessment/Sources

- Chris Barns, BLM Representative, Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, 9 September 2012. “Wilderness Characteristics Guidance for the BLM. Training Module IIID, LWCs and Proposed Projects”
- USGS topographic maps, GIS data, Google Earth images