



# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Anchorage Field Office  
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Anchorage, Alaska 99507-2591  
<http://www.blm.gov/ak>

## CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (CX)

### A. BACKGROUND

**Project Name / Type:** State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT/PF) Shishmaref Geotechnical Studies

**NEPA Register Number:** DOI-BLM-AK-A010-2014-0016-CX

**Case File Number:** AA-93889

**Location / Legal Description:**      **Location:**

Kateel River Meridian, Alaska  
T. 8 N., R. 36 W., secs. 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22,  
23 (within),

**Applicant (if any):**      **State of Alaska DOT/PF**

### Description of Proposed Action:

The State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT/PF) proposes to use a track mounted drill rig to drill nine geotechnical borings to ascertain if soils will support a potential relocation site for the village of Shishmaref. The drill site would be located in a pond commonly known as the Old Pond Site. Up to nine drill holes, thirty feet in depth would be authorized. The nine holes would be drilled on three foot by three foot grids, each approximately 700 feet apart.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) would authorize a right-of-way (ROW) to DOT/PF from March 31, 2015 through May 1, 2015. Access would be permitted by snowmobiles over one of two proposed routes. Each route is approximately 4 miles long and 30 feet wide. Only one route will be utilized, however two routes are proposed for use so that the applicant may choose which route is ideal, based upon field conditions. The route to the proposed drill site begins at the village of Shishmaref, crosses Shishmaref Native Corporation lands, and terminates at public lands. The drill rig weighs less than 3500 pounds and would be pulled to the site using snowmobiles and sleds. The drilling rig uses no muds or water for drilling operations. Fuel for the drill rig and snowmobiles will be in 5 gallon "jerry jugs" and containment and absorbent pads will be required for operations. No camps will be constructed.

## B. LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE

**Applicable Land Use Plan(s):** Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Record of Decision and Approved Management Plan (RMP), September 2008

Rights-of-Way are addressed in the Kobuk-Seward RMP within Section H Lands and Realty. Goal number 1 of this section is to “Meet public needs for use authorizations such as ROW, leases, and permits while minimizing adverse impacts to other resource values.” The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable land use plan, because it is consistent with the following land use plan decisions (objectives, terms, and conditions) as well as the aforementioned Goal 1 in Section H-H-1:

### H. Lands and Realty

#### *H-2: Land Use Authorizations*

Land use authorizations include various authorizations and agreements to use BLM lands such as right-of-way grants, temporary use permits under several different authorities; leases, permits, and easements under Section 302 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA); airport leases under the Act of May 24, 1928; and Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) leases.

#### *H-2-a: Management Actions (Land Use Authorizations)*

##### **6. Rights-of-Way:**

- Right-of Way (ROWs) will be located near other ROWs or on already disturbed areas to the extent practical
- Communication site ROWs shall be co-located when feasible
- Public use cabins may be constructed under a ROW reservation

## C. CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with United States Department of the Interior 43 CFR 46.210 or United States Department of the Interior Manual, Part 516, Chapter 11, which provides:

**Realty E-20.** Issuance of short-term (3 years or less) rights-of-way or land use authorizations for such uses as storage sites, apiary sites, and construction sites where the proposal includes rehabilitation to restore the land to its natural or original condition.

## D. EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

The proposed action must be screened against the Extraordinary Circumstances found in 43 CFR § 46.215 (listed below). Any “yes” finding requires that an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement be prepared for the Proposed Action.

<b>EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>
1. Have significant adverse impacts on public health or safety.	No.
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands;	No.

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.	
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].	No.
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	No.
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	No.
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	No.
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.	No.
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.	No.
9. Violate Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	No.
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).	No.
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).	No.
12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or 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).	No.

## E. SIGNATURE

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable land use plan and is an action that can be categorically excluded. The Proposed Action does not trigger any of the Extraordinary Circumstances found in 516 FM Chapter 2, Appendix 2. I recommend that the Proposed Action be allowed and that no further environmental analysis is required.

*/s/ Alan Bittner*

*2/10/2015*

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 Alan Bittner  
 Anchorage Field Manager

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 Date

## Attachments

1. Map of proposed ROW