

Quintillion Fiber Optic Line

Introduction

Quintillion Networks, Inc., has filed an application with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on June 10, 2015 proposing to install a fiber optic line. Previously AT&T Alascom installed fiber optic cable line from Fairbanks to Coldfoot for private use only. This proposed action would continue the installation from Coldfoot to Prudhoe Bay, with 125 miles on public lands.

Summary

Quintillion, Networks, LLC proposes to install fiber optic cable and supporting regeneration site on public lands from Coldfoot (mile post 175) to Slope Mountain (mile post 300) off the Dalton Highway, containing approximately 378.78 acres. The work would begin October 2015 and continue through December 2017. They also propose to have one crew camp located at Atigun Pass (MP 250 old man camp) and one equipment/material storage area located at mile post 211 (material pit) on the Dalton Highway.

Decision

I have decided to authorize a right-of-way grant to Quintillion Networks, LLC on public lands for the purpose of installing fiber optic cable from Coldfoot mile post 175 to Slope Mountain mile post 300 on the Dalton Highway from October 2015 through December 2017 pursuant to their plan of operation and the stipulations (Exhibit A) attached to the authorization. Additionally I have decided to authorize one crew camp at mile post 250 (Atigun Pass) and one storage site located at mile post 211 (material pit) and a regeneration site located at 68°05'07.2' -149°33'39.9' off the Dalton Highway. The use of ATVs and snow machines is authorized utilizing established roads and trails where available.

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 Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan.

Public Involvement

It was determined that due to the remoteness of the action, there would be no impact to the general public. Additionally, this document was published to the electronic Central Yukon Field Office NEPA Register on September 23, 2015. No comments have been received as of October 16, 2015.

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 Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan.

Nichelle W. Jacobson
Signature
Nichelle W. Jacobson
Field Manager
Central Yukon Field Office

October 27, 2015
Date

— Appendix A — Essential Fish Habitat

NEPA Document No.: DOI-BLM-AK-F030–2015–0035-DNA

Prepared by: David G. Parker

Date: 10/15/15

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). Northern pike (*Esox lucius*), Alaska blackfish (*Dallia pectoralis*), longnose sucker (*Catostomus catostomus*) and ninespine stickleback (*Pungitius pungitius*) are also found in select streams and lakes in the area (BLM 2010 and Mecklenberg et al. 2002). The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recognizes fresh waters cataloged (ADF&G 2014) 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 proposed action described in this Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) is the installation of a fiber optic cable line adjacent to an already approved fiber optic line. There are no anticipated effects on fish habitat as long as the described stream crossing and boring techniques are adhered to.

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

References:

Bureau of Land Management, 2010. Fish Streams Along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, A Compilation of Selected References with Current TAPS Stationing. BLM Open File Report 105. 43 p.

Mecklenburg, Catherine W., T. Anthony Mecklenberg, and Lyman K. Thorsteinson, 2002. Fishes of Alaska. American Fisheries Society. Bethesda, Maryland. 1037 p. 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. 2014. 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>

— Appendix B — Wilderness Characteristics Assessment

NEPA Document No.: DOI-BLM-AK-F030–2015–0035-DNA

Serial No.: F-97000

Applicant: Quintillion Networks, LLC

Location: Mile post 175 Coldfoot to mile post 300 Slope Mountain

Prepared by: Nichelle Jacobson

Date: September 24, 2015

Proposed Action

Quintillion, Networks LLC proposes to install fiber optic cable within the transportation and utility corridor along the Dalton Highway from Coldfoot mile post 175 to Slope Mountain mile post 300, Alaska. They propose to install this line approximately five (5) feet from the approved BorTek, Incorporated fiber optic cable line. The proposed project would involve clearing using hydro-axes and/or a prime tech (a drum type clearing device propelled on tracks), trenching and/or excavation and replacement of soils to allow the burial of fiber optic cable. Construction of this cable is scheduled to begin October 2015 and continue through December 2017.

For major stream crossings, cable installation would be done by directional boring. Most minor drainages crossed will be worked during frozen conditions. Small streams crossed during thawed conditions will be completed using the plow method and by crossing at right angles, with the disturbed plow line immediately track walked.

The installation of the fiber optic cable will require the setting of handholes every 5,000 feet and manholes (splice vaults) every 20,000 feet along the project. These handholes and/or manholes would be installed by excavating a hole for placement using the “mini-excavators” and backfilling.

A regeneration site, 60 feet long by 100 feet wide, would be necessary to support the fiber optic line and is proposed at mile post 240.0 Dalton Highway (68°05'07.2' -149°33'39.9')including associated structures and appurtenances. Site would be located approximately 200 feet from the centerline of the highway and the fiber optic cable line would be buried alongside the entrance access road to the site. A 6 foot high chain link fence would surround the site with three strands of barb wire on top. Improvements inside consist of: one building 12 feet x 16 feet housing two generators, a day tank, associated power, controls and fire suppression system. A 2nd building 12 feet x 20 feet would house communication equipment including two racks of -48v batteries, equipment racks, fire suppression system; and a 4,000 gallon diesel tank.

The regeneration site would require a 4,000 gallon AST for diesel to supply the generators. The regeneration site AST would be a secondary containment tank fitted with leak detection monitoring equipment.

A temporary camp would be necessary to house the crew and stage equipment and materials. Within the camps would be 12-15 personal camp trailers or RVs, 2 office trailers, 1 generator, one chemical toilet, up to 8,000 gallon diesel fuel tank, 3,000 gallon unleaded gasoline tank, dumpster, and parking for personal vehicles and trucks. A Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure

Plan will be prepared and maintained for the fuel storage for this project. This camp location is planned for the Atigun Camp at Dalton Highway MP 250.

A second location for use as a materials lay down yard would be planned for Dalton Highway MP 211 at an existing pull-out on the east side of the highway just south of an unnamed creek. This site would not be used for camping or storage of fuels in secondary containment, but only for temporary storage of reels of duct, fiber, and manholes.

A hazardous material control plan would be developed in association with the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for the project.

A SWPPP would be developed in accordance with the Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Construction General Permit (APDES CGP) for this project.

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).

Effects on wilderness characteristics on BLM lands within the Utility Corridor are evaluated according to the Nonwilderness Assessment, a special project approved by the BLM Director and conducted by the BLM along portions of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) corridor in 1980. This assessment identified lands under BLM administration that were considered lacking in the wilderness characteristics as defined by the Wilderness Act of 1964. The assessment was conducted in a manner that met the requirements of Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).

The action being considered is located within the Yukon and Prospect Segments of the Nonwilderness Assessment, which covered approximately 1,280,000 acres total in 1980. Portions of this segment meet the 5,000 acre minimum size. However it was determined that the lands where the proposed action will occur did not meet the standards for naturalness due to roads, camps, airfields, pipelines, material sites and associated facilities.

FINDING

The proposed action will occur on lands identified as lacking wilderness characteristics and therefore will not affect wilderness characteristics.

Type of Assessment/Sources

U.S. Department of Interior, BLM, 1980. Nonwilderness Assessment: The Alaska Natural Gas Transportation System, Final Decision. Anchorage, Alaska

USGS topographic maps, GIS data, Google Earth images

Personal knowledge of the area and 2013 aerial survey

— Appendix C — Section 810 Assessment

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Location: Mile post 175 Coldfoot to mile post 300 Slope Mountain

Township/Range: Starting in Sec. 3, T. 28 N., R.12 W., Fairbanks Meridian and ending in Sec. 2, T. 17 S., R. 10 E., Umiat Meridian, encompassing multiple sections, townships, ranges and meridians.

Evaluation by: Erin Julianus and David G. Parker

Date: 10/15/2015

Type of Assessment/Sources:

Effect of the proposal on subsistence uses and needs

Fisheries:

The 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 resources.

Wildlife:

During construction activities associated with the proposed action, general disturbance of subsistence wildlife species and their habitat could result in unavailability of subsistence resources. Big game animals such as moose and caribou will likely temporarily avoid areas where human disturbance is ongoing. Noise associated with construction, in addition to increased vehicular traffic in the right-of-way and increased human presence at active construction sites may be catalysts for local avoidance of areas. During construction, the potential effect of resource displacement on subsistence uses due to disturbance is likely greatest for federal subsistence users in the communities of Coldfoot and Wiseman. Impacts to caribou migration activities would be minimal with regards to the project location. Caribou migrate through the area seasonally and are not anticipated to be in the vicinity of the proposed action when construction activities are ongoing during the summer months. Traffic can be a physical barrier to moose and caribou in transit (Wolfe et al. 2000). However, since the project will only take place in the right-of-way it is unlikely that the slight increase in traffic and noise will measurably affect large animal movement patterns.

Other resources:

Other resources such as wood, water, and berries are not anticipated to be measurably impacted by the proposed action.

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

None

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

None

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

None

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

None

Finding:

The proposed action will not significantly impact subsistence resource abundance, availability or access.

References:

Wolfe, S.A., B. Griffith, and C.A.G. Wolfe. 2000. Response of reindeer and caribou to human activities. *Polar Research*. 19(1):63–73.