United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Glennallen Field Office
P.O. Box 147
Glennallen, Alaska 99588
http://www.blm.gov/ak

Thompson Pass Helicopter Supported Special Recreation Permit Renewal
DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2016-0005-DNA

Case Files:
AA81350 / AA81716 / AA093344 /AA82942/ AA93376

Applicants:
Scott Raynor, Valdez Heli Guides
Dean Cummings, H20 Guides
Alexandra Meiners, Alaska Rendezvous Guides
Joshua Swierk, Black Ops
Dave Geis, Alaska Snowboard Guides

DECISION RECORD

Background

The BLM Glennallen Field Office has received five Special Recreation Permit (SRP) applications for commercial heli-ski operations on BLM-administered lands north and south of Thompson Pass, Alaska. Operations would occur on snow-covered slopes, ridge tops and in valley bottoms. These permit renewals would be valid for the 2016 operating season, February 15th through May 15th.

Decision

It is my decision to authorize the requested SRPs to the applicants listed above as well as in the attached Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2016-0005-DNA).

Specifically, it is my decision to authorize:

- Five one-year SRPs for the 2016 heli-skiing season (February 15th through May 15th) in the Thompson Pass area to Valdez Heli-Ski Guides, H20 Guides, Alaska Rendezvous Guides , Black Ops Valdez and Alaska Snowboard Guides.
- All stipulations in the 2001 and 2005 Environmental Assessments apply to these permits unless otherwise approved by the BLM.

Two Findings of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were prepared in 2001 and 2005, respectively, documenting that the selected alternative, authorization of an SRP for heli-skiing activities for up to five applicants would have no significant effects.

The Proposed Action, consisting of reauthorizing 5 commercial heli-ski SRPs, is identical to the alternatives selected in the 2001 and 2005 Environmental Assessments (EA number AK-050-EA-01-22 and EA number AK-050-EA-05-02), therefore the preparation of a new FONSI is not necessary. The 2001 and 2005 FONSI's indicate that the current Proposed Action has been analyzed in an EA(s) and has been found to have no significant environmental effects.

Rationale for the Decision

Since the 2001 and 2005 Decision Records for the initial SRP authorizations, the Glennallen Field Office has completed the East Alaska Resource Management Plan (EARMP) and Record of Decision (ROD) (BLM 2007). The No Action Alternative would not fulfill the EARMP decision to provide commercial recreation opportunities where consistent with area objectives.

The selected alternative will help meet public demand for guided winter recreational activities in the Copper River region. The purpose underlying the BLM's consideration of these permit renewals is to retain commercial activities such as helicopter-supported recreation, backcountry ski touring and competitive skiing events as part of the range of quality recreational opportunities offered on BLM-managed lands within the Thompson Pass area.

ANILCA Section 810 Compliance

The Proposed Action will not result in a significant restriction in abundance, availability, or access of harvestable resources used for subsistence purposes

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

The Proposed Action has been reviewed for wilderness characteristics and was found to contain a least one condition for meeting lands with wilderness characteristics. The stipulations and conditions attached to this authorization will ensure existing wilderness characteristics, such as size, naturalness; solitude and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation will not be impaired.

Consultation and Coordination

Internal scoping was conducted by the Glennallen Field Office staff and included threatened and endangered species, cultural clearances and ANILCA 810 analysis.

Compliance and Monitoring

Compliance and monitoring of theses authorizations will be conducted by the BLM Glennallen Field Office. Inspections and annual performance evaluations shall be documented and saved within the case file for these authorizations.

Appeal Opportunities

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR § 4. To appeal you must file a notice of appeal at the BLM Glennallen Field Office, P.O. Box 147, Milepost 186.5 Glenn Highway, Glennallen, Alaska 99588, within 30 days from the date of this decision. The appeal must be in writing and delivered in person, via the United States Postal Service mail system, or other common carrier, to the Anchorage Field Office as noted above. *The BLM does not accept appeals by facsimile or email*. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulation 43 CFR § 4.21 (58 FR 4939, January 19, 1993) for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards: (a) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied, (b) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits, (c) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and (d) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR § 4.413); Office of the Regional Solicitor, Alaska Region, U.S. Department of the Interior, 4230 University Drive, Suite 300, Anchorage, Alaska 99508; at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

/s/ Mike Sondergaard for Dennis Teitzel 2/5/2016

Dennis C. Teitzel, Glennallen Field Manager Date

Attachments

1. DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2016-0005-DNA
2. 2016 Permit Stipulations