May 10, 2017

Dear Interested Public:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) San Juan Islands National Monument has prepared a draft categorical exclusion for the Iceberg Point Fieldschool project. A categorical exclusion is a form of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance, without the analysis that occurs in an Environmental Assessment of Environmental Impact Statement. Categorical exclusions are only used for projects that fit within categories of actions that do not have significant effects on the quality of the human environment.

The field school has been proposed for several purposes. First, partnering with Central Washington University allows BLM to complete needed inventory of the public lands at Iceberg Point in a cost effective manner. Second, this partnership allows Central Washington University to provide cultural resources education to university students. Finally, use of these public lands as a learning laboratory allows BLM and Central Washington University to share information with interested community members and visitors.

BLM has determined that the proposed Iceberg Point Fieldschool and associated cultural resource inventory fits within a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have significant effect on the human environment. The proposed action falls within the following category of actions identified in the Department of the Interior NEPA regulations: Nondestructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research, and monitoring activities (see 43 CFR 46.210(e)). As part of preparing a categorical exclusion BLM also considers extraordinary circumstances in which a normally excluded action may require additional analysis. The extraordinary circumstances and BLM’s initial determination are contained in the draft categorical exclusion.

Because I have determined that there may be high public interest in the proposed field school, I have elected to involve the public by providing a public comment period on the draft categorical exclusion. As described in the attached document, there will be approximately 25 students along with a university professor and his assistants on public lands at Iceberg Point during the field school activities. During the field school, interested community members and others visitors to the area can visit the site and learn more. The field school will lead organized site visits that
allows visitors to tour and observe the field school activities. Tours of the field laboratory and discussions about the results of the fieldwork will also be integrated into local talks at museums, libraries, or other public venues.

At this time, the BLM is requesting public comments on the proposed field school activities described in the draft categorical exclusion. Your comments would be most helpful if received on or before May 27, 2017. You may submit comments via U.S. Postal Service or other common carrier at:

San Juan Islands National Monument  
P.O. Box 3  
37 Washburn Place  
Lopez, WA 98261

Via email: blm_or_sp_mail@blm.gov  
Via fax: (509) 536-1275

Please include “Iceberg Point Field School” in the subject line of your comments.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information, be advised that your entire comment - including your personal information - may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Sincerely,

/s/ Marcia deChadenedes  
Marcia deChadenedes  
Monument Manager

Enclosure - Draft Categorical Exclusion

cc: Central Washington University  
U.S. Coast Guard