

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

**Anchorage Field Office  
4700 BLM Road  
Anchorage, AK 99507  
Phone: (907)267-1246  
Fax: (907)267-1267**

**DECISION RECORD**

**Applicant: USGS  
Lease/Serial/Case File Number: AA-92392  
Environmental Document No: DOI-BLM-AK-A010-2010-0023-CX**

**DECISION TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED ACTION ALTERNATIVE:**

It is my decision as Manager of the Bureau of Land management (BLM) Anchorage Field Office (AFO) to accept the proposed action as stated in the categorical exclusion assessment (CX). BLM proposes to authorize USGS to conduct gravity and magnetometer surveys to assess potential local energy sources for Nome Alaska, near the Pilgrim Hot Springs.

**RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION:**

No significant impact will occur to resources as a result of implementing the proposed action. The proposed action is not expected to be controversial, does not establish a precedent, or represent a decision in principle about future considerations, nor is it related to any other proposed actions representing cumulatively significant impacts.

The proposed action is in conformance with the approved BLM Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Management Plan, under Lands and Realty Goals H-1: (RMP-18), approved September 4, 2008. The project has been considered in the context of public health and safety and consistency with regards to Federal, State, and local laws.

The proposed action will ensure that potential alternative energy resources can be assessed by USGS.

**ANILCA SECTION 810 COMPLIANCE:**

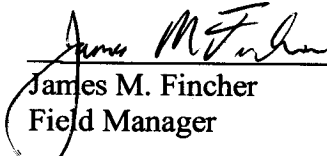
The proposed action will not significantly restrict Federal subsistence uses, decrease the abundance of federal subsistence resources, alter the distribution of federal subsistence resources, or limit qualified Federal subsistence user access.

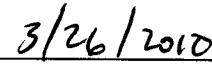
**ADVERSE ENERGY IMPACT COMPLIANCE:**

This action has been analyzed as required by Washington Office Instruction Memorandum 2002-053 to determine if it will cause an adverse impact on energy development. The action will not have an adverse direct or indirect impact on energy development, production or distribution. The preparation of a Statement of Adverse Energy Impact is not required.

**COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING PLAN:**

Ground inspections will take place prior to activities and after activities by the Nome Field Station. Stipulations are attached as exhibit A.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
James M. Fincher  
Field Manager

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

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<http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/fo/ado.html>

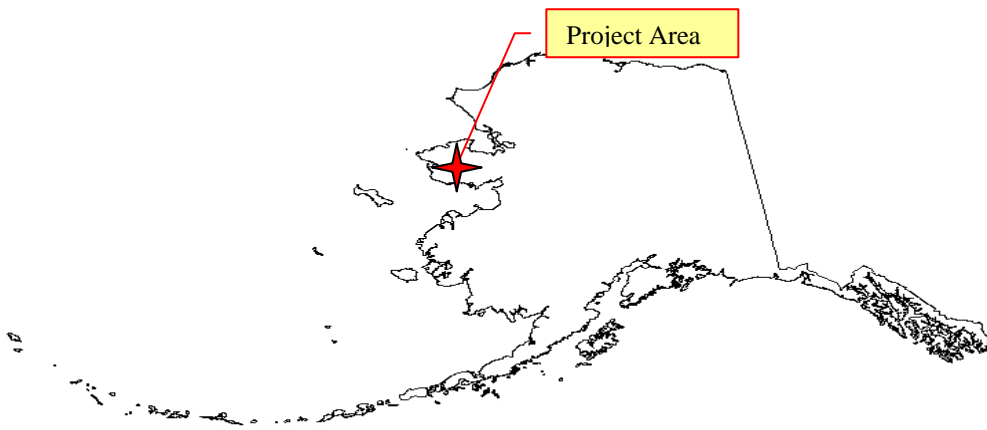
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### Land Use Permit, Categorical Exclusion Gravity and magnetometer survey data collection

**Applicant: United States Geologic Survey (USGS)**

**Lease/Serial/Case File Number: AA-92392**

**Environmental Document No: DOI-BLM-AK-A010-2010-0023-CX**



#### **Location:**

##### **Near Nome, Alaska**

T. 4 S., R. 30 W., Secs. 19-22 (inclusive), and 28;

T. 5 S., R. 30 W., Secs. 4-9 (inclusive);

T. 5 S., R. 31 W., Secs. 1, and 11-18 (inclusive);

T. 5 S., R. 32 W., Secs. 1, 2, and 11-14 (inclusive), within.

##### **In the Kateel River Meridian, Alaska**

**Prepared By:**

**Thomas Sparks**

**Anchorage Field Office**

**AK013**

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## **1.0. Description of Proposed Action:**

BLM proposes to authorize a proposal from USGS to conduct gravity and magnetometer surveys to assess potential local energy sources for Nome, Alaska near the Pilgrim Hot Springs under Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (P.L. 94-579). The USGS-BLM Alaska Rural Energy Program is planning to conduct a field investigation on an area of approximately 63 square miles in the area of the Pilgrim Hot springs north of Nome. The field investigations will be conducted on land owned/manage by Mary's Igloo Native Corp., Bering Straits Native Corp., State of Alaska, BLM, Catholic Church Fairbanks Diocese and will include approximately 35 miles of gravity surveys and magnetometer surveys. These surveys will be used in conjunction with data collected by the University of Fairbanks (UAF) to characterize the geothermal feature and to identify an optimum location for a drilling well to further assess the geothermal system. Data collected by UAF will be airborne Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) and is not a part of this proposal.

If the geothermal resource could be developed, Nome would have an alternative energy source and be relieved of their dependence upon the high cost of importing diesel fuel, which must be transported, transferred and stored at a great expense to the state and local government. Identifying and producing clean, locally-derived and economic energy resources will provide great benefit to the State, to rural communities like Nome, and to the citizens of Alaska.

### **Land Status**

The location of the survey area is shown on the attached map and is described as follows (all lands located within the Kateel River Meridian):

#### **Federal Land (BLM) – 26 sections**

- Township 4 S. Range 30 W. Sec. 19, 20, 21, 22, 28
- Township 5 S. Range 30 W. Sec. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
- Township 5 S. Range 31 W. Sec. 1, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18
- Township 5 S. Range 32 W. Sec. 1, 2, 11, 12, 13, 14

#### **State of Alaska Land – 6 sections**

- T. 4 S. R. 30 W. Sec. 23, 26, 27, 33, 34, 35

#### **Mary's Igloo Native Corp Land – 31 Sections**

- Township 4 S. Range 30 W. Sec. 29 – 32 (some Fairbanks Diocese land in Sec. 31)
- Township 4 S. Range 31 W. Sec. 19 – 36 (some Fairbanks Diocese land in Sec. 36)
- Township 5 S. Range 31 W. Sec. 2 – 10 (some Fairbanks Diocese land in Sec. 3)

#### **Catholic Church Fairbanks Diocese – parts of 3 sections (approximately 320 acres)**

- Township 4 S. Range 30 W. Sec. 31
- Township 4 S. Range 31 W. Sec. 36
- Township 5 S. Range 31 W. Sec. 3

The project is planned for March 28, 2010 – April 10, 2010 and would require that the following personnel travel from Nome to the Bering Straits Native Corp (BSNC) cabins located on the

Pilgrim River in Township 3 South, Range 30 West, Section 14. Travel would be by snowcat and snowmobile.

6 USGS Scientists  
2 BLM Surveyors  
1 Cat Operator  
1 Camp Manager

The party would base operations out of the BSNC cabins and travel by snowcat and snowmachine to the survey area each day. The access route to the survey area would be from the cabins down the main road in a southerly direction, leaving the main road toward the survey area in a westerly direction at approximately Township 4 South, Range 30 West, Section 24. For the survey work, the snowcat would travel along approximately 35 miles of gridlines to pack a trail and provide a working surface for the USGS scientists. Surveyors would follow the snowcat and mark and survey data points with lathe along the gridlines at approximately 300 – 500 meter intervals. The USGS Scientists would follow the surveyors and take readings at the surveyed points. The equipment used by the USGS Scientists consists of two small instruments weighing approx. 20 lbs. The instruments would be pulled behind the snowmachines in a sled. The instruments take gravity readings and magnetic readings and no surface disturbance would occur. Areas of heavy trees and/or brush would not be traveled by the snowcat. If it is determined that readings are needed in areas of heavy trees or brush the USGS personnel would access them by snowshoe. No brush or trees would be destroyed, cut, or trampled. All lathes would be removed at the conclusion of the operation. All fuel would be stored in cans near the BSNC cabins. No refueling would take place on BLM managed land.

## **2.0. Statutory Authorities provide:**

Section 302(b) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, 43 U.S.C. Section 1737(b), P.L. 94-579 authorizes the Secretary of Interior to grant, issue or renew rights of way for “roads, trails, highways”.

## **3.0. Categorical Exclusions:**

- A. The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 43 CFR 46.210 (see page Appendix 3-145 BLM National Environmental Handbook H-1790-1 Rel. 1-1710 1/30/2008):

“1.6 Nondestructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research, and monitoring activities”

- B. Departmental List of Extraordinary Circumstances Review.  
The following Departmental List of Extraordinary Circumstances apply to individual actions. Departmental instructions mandate that environmental documents **MUST BE PREPARED** for actions which may: (Mark applicable answer for each item. If "yes", prepare an EA/EIS and append this form to it.)

	YES	NO
1. Have significant adverse impacts on public health or safety.	<u>          </u>	<u>  X  </u>
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; 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.	<u>          </u>	<u>  X  </u>
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].	<u>          </u>	<u>  X  </u>
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	<u>          </u>	<u>  X  </u>
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	<u>          </u>	<u>  X  </u>
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	<u>          </u>	<u>  X  </u>
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.	<u>          </u>	<u>  X  </u>
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.	<u>          </u>	<u>  X  </u>
9. Violate Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	<u>          </u>	<u>  X  </u>
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).	<u>          </u>	<u>  X  </u>
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).	<u>          </u>	<u>  X  </u>

12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112). \_\_\_\_\_ X

I certify that none of the Departmental Extraordinary Circumstances listed in the above Part B (516 DM 2, Appendix 2) apply to this action.

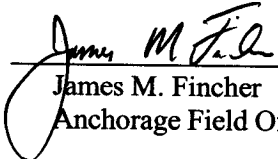
**5.0. Decision**

The proposed action is in conformance with a management framework plan or a resource management plan, 43 C.F.R. § 1610.8(a)(3) (2006). See the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement dated September, 2008, Section H. Lands and Realty Goals: (page Approved RMP-18). The Department of the Interior has determined and found that the proposed action is within a category of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and that neither an environmental assessment nor an environmental impact statement is required, 40 C.F.R. §1508.4 (2006). It is therefore my decision to implement the action, as described, with appropriate mitigation measures or stipulations.

I have reviewed the proposal to ensure the appropriate categorical exclusion, as described in Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, has been correctly applied.

It is therefore my decision to implement the action, as described.

Authorized Officer: \_\_\_\_\_

  
James M. Fincher  
Anchorage Field Office Manager

Date \_\_\_\_\_

3/26/2010

Appendix A Maps

