

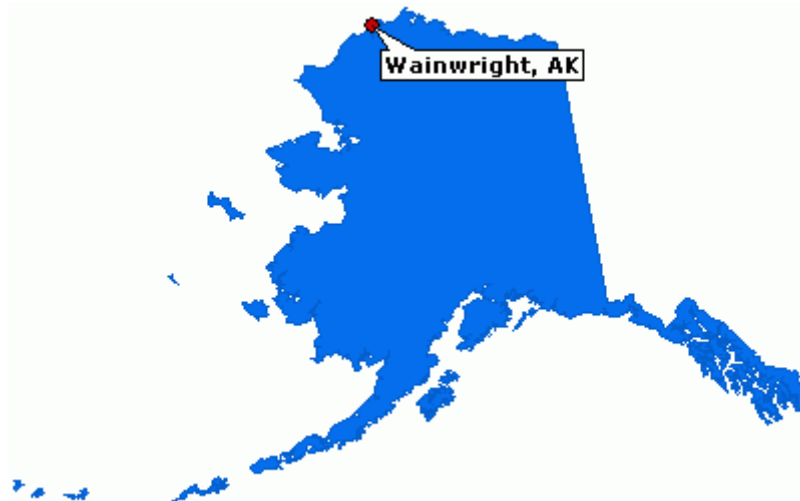


U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

June 2009

Environmental Assessment Wainwright Drilling Project BLM/USGS Alaska Rural Energy Program



FF-95392

DOI-BLM-LLAKF01200-2009-0031-DNA

Township 15 N., Range 32 W., Section 25, Umiat Meridian
Township 15 N., Range 32 W., Section 24, Umiat Meridian

**Prepared by:
Branch of Energy
Alaska State Office**

Worksheet
Documentation of Land Use Plan Conformance and Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

This worksheet is to be completed consistent with the ‘Guidelines for Using the DNA Worksheet’ located at the end of the worksheet. The signed CONCLUSION at the end of this worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM’s internal analysis process and does not constitute an appealable decision; however, it constitutes an administrative record to be provided as evidence in protest, appeals and legal procedures.

A. Project Information

BLM Office: Arctic Field Office

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: FF-095392

Proposed Action Title/Type

The Alaska Rural Energy Project plans continue drilling over the next five years with the addition of up to twenty wells. This is to further delineate the coalbed methane potential of the area.

Location of Proposed Action

The proposed project is located within a one-mile radius of the village of Wainwright, Alaska. All drilling activity will occur on existing pads.

Description of the Proposed Action

The wells will be a combination of exploratory, offset, or production test wells. In the event additional production test wells are drilled, they will be drilled as a cluster of wells (typically six) and spaced up to 300 feet apart. Offset wells are typically drilled to determine the lateral extent of large coal seams. These lands are covered within Umiat Meridian, Township 15 North, Range 32 West Sections 24 and 25 and Township 15 N., Range 31 W., Section 8. This drilling is consistent with the exploration and testing activities that occurred at Wainwright in June-July 2007 and June 2008, see EA-AK-023-08-026.

Applicant

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and United States Geological Survey (USGS).

B. Conformance with the Land Use Plan (LUP) and Consistency with Related Subordinate Implementation Plans

LUP Name†: Northwest NPR-A IAP/EIS ROD: January 22, 2004
Other Document*: N/A

†List applicable LUPs (e.g., Resource Management Plans, Management Framework Plans or applicable amendments).

*List applicable activity, project, management, water quality restoration, or program plans.

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUPs because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decisions:

The drilling location is within the Northwest NPR-A boundary. The 2004 NW IAP/EIS specifically analyzes impacts from oil and gas drilling activities. The surface land at this location is managed by the Olgoonik Corporation, and the subsurface lands are managed by the BLM.

- or -

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decisions (objectives, terms, and conditions) and, if applicable, implementation plan decisions:

C. Identify the applicable NEPA document(s) and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

List by name and date all applicable NEPA documents that cover the proposed action.

Environmental Assessment for Wainwright Drilling Project; BLM/USGS Alaska Rural Energy Program, EA-AK-023-08-026, May 2008.

A. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the current proposed action substantially the same action (or is a part of that action) as previously analyzed?

Yes

No

Documentation of answer and explanation:

Explain if, whether and how the existing documents analyzed the proposed action (include page numbers). If there are differences between the actions included in existing documents and the proposed action, explain why they are or are not considered to be substantial.

The above referenced EA thoroughly analyzed the same proposed action (beginning on page 10). This DNA is just a continuation of the same 2008 project.

- 2. *Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the current proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, resource values, and circumstances?***

Yes

No

Documentation of answer and explanation:

Explain whether the alternatives to the current proposed action that were analyzed in the existing NEPA documents and associated records constitute appropriate alternatives with respect to the current proposed action. Identify if, and how current issues and concerns were addressed within the range of alternatives in existing NEPA documents. If new alternatives are being raised by the public to address current issues and concerns, explain why they should or should not be further analyzed.

The alternatives analysis is valid for this DNA. Current issues and concerns have been addressed. Zero comments were received by the public during the 30 day comment period. A notice of public hearing was advertised through Alaska Oil and Gas Commission for May 28, 2009 at 9 a.m. at the Commission: 333 West 7th Avenue, Suite 100, Anchorage, AK 99501. The hearing was not held as no interest was expressed.

- 3. *Is existing analysis adequate in light of any new information or circumstances (including, for example, riparian proper functioning condition [PFC] reports; rangeland health standards assessments; Unified Watershed Assessment categorizations; inventory and monitoring data; most recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists of threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species; most recent BLM lists of sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that all new information and all new circumstances are insignificant with regard to analysis of the proposed action?***

Yes

No

Documentation of answer and explanation:

If new information or new circumstances, including the items listed below, are applicable, you need to demonstrate whether they are pertinent and worthy of further analysis; or irrelevant and

insignificant as applied to the existing analysis of the proposed action. It should not be assumed that new information is automatically “significant.” New information or circumstances is significant if the information conveys a seriously different picture of the affected environment and environmental impacts than those addressed in existing NEPA documents. New information and circumstances could include the following:

a. New standards or goals for managing resources. Standards and goals include, but are not limited to, BLM’s land health standards and guidelines, recovery plans for listed species prepared by the Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service, requirements contained in agency habitat conservation strategies, a biological opinion, or a conference report related to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act; Environmental Protection Agency water quality regulations for Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) (40 CFR 130); and the requirement to address disproportionate impacts on minority populations and low income communities (E.O. 12898).

b. Changes in resource conditions within the affected area where the existing NEPA analyses were conducted, for example, changes in habitat condition and trend; changes in the legal status of listed, proposed, candidate, and BLM-designated sensitive species; water quality, including any identified impaired water bodies under Section 303 of the Clean Water Act; air quality; vegetation condition and trend; soil stability; visual quality; cultural resource condition; wildlife population trend(s); etc.

c. Changes of resource-related plans, policies, or programs of state and local governments, Indian tribes, or other Federal agencies. This includes water quality restoration plans approved by the state or the Environmental Protection Agency.

d. Designations established in the affected area since the existing NEPA analysis and documentation was prepared. Designations include, but are not limited to, designated wilderness, wilderness study areas, National Natural Landmarks, National Conservation Areas, National Monuments, National Register properties, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Research Natural Areas, areas designated under the source Water Protection Program of the State or the Environmental Protection Agency, and listing of critical habitats by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

e. Other changed legal requirements, such as changes in statutes, case law, or regulations.

Refer to 40 CFR 1508.27 for further guidance on the determining the significance of potential impacts.

There have been no documented environmental, legal and/or resource changes from the Final NW NPR-A EIS/IAP in 2004. Therefore, the analysis is adequate.

4. Does the methodology and analytical approach used in the existing NEPA document(s) continue to be appropriate for the current proposed action?

 X Yes

No

Documentation of answer and explanation:

Explain how the methodologies and analytical approach used in the existing NEPA document(s) are either out of date or sufficient for supporting approval of the proposed action. If valid new technologies and methodologies exist (e.g., air quality modeling), explain why it is either reasonable or unreasonable to rely on the method previously used.

The methodology and analytical approach completed in the EA AK-023-08-026 is adequate. The proposed action is nearly identical as it covers the same area, limits drilling to existing roads and pads, same drilling rig, same well spacing, and similar well depths. No objections were identified during the public scoping period..

5. Are the direct and indirect impacts of the current proposed action substantially unchanged from those identified in the existing NEPA document(s)? Does the existing NEPA documents analyze impacts related to the current proposed action at a level of specificity appropriate to the proposal (plan level, programmatic level, project level)?

Yes

No

Documentation of answer and explanation:

Review the impact analysis in the existing NEPA document(s). Explain how the direct and indirect impacts of the proposed action are or are not analyzed in the existing NEPA documents. Explain how these impacts would, or would not, differ from those identified in the existing NEPA document. Consider the effect new information or circumstances may have on the environmental impacts predicted in the existing NEPA document. Consider whether the impacts related to the current proposed action are analyzed in sufficient site-specific detail for the proposed action. A plan level decision may be analyzed at a more general level than a site-specific project or implementation level decision. Maps and text included in plan level documents may allow site-specific identification of impacts from programmatic or project level proposals.

The existing EA adequately analyzes the proposed action’s potential direct and indirect impacts.

6. Can you conclude without additional analysis or information that the cumulative impacts that would result from implementation of the current proposed action are substantially unchanged from those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)?

Yes

No

Documentation of answer and explanation:

Would the current proposed action, if implemented, change the cumulative impact analysis? Consider the impact analysis in existing NEPA document(s), the effects of relevant activities that have been implemented or projected since existing NEPA documents were completed, and the effects of the current proposed action.

The 2008 cumulative impacts identified in the previous EA AK-0023-08-026 are adequate. In addition, the BLM has evaluated the cumulative effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable activities, including oil and gas and other actions, in and around the NPR-A in a series of recent NEPA analyses. This EA tiers to the most recent cumulative impact analysis in the NW NPR-A IAP/EIS (USDOJ BLM and MMS 2003, Volume 1). That analysis was based on a timeframe of approximately 1950 through 2020, and a geographic range incorporating the entire North Slope of Alaska and adjacent marine waters. Based on the requirements of 40 CFR 1508.7, and guidance in the Council on Environmental Quality handbook on cumulative effects (CEQ, 1997), this analysis considers a similar temporal scale (1950 through 2020), but a narrower spatial framework (i.e., limited to coastal areas in Northwest NPR-A).

For wildlife (including non-threatened / endangered birds, polar bears, and threatened and endangered species), the cumulative effects analysis considered oil and gas activity, routine resources management actions, research and surveys, subsistence and sport harvest, predation, fishing, development, environmental contamination, shipping, and recreation (USDOJ BLM and MMS 2003). The analysis concluded that cumulative disturbance from aircraft and human activity could result in minor decreases in bird nesting as well as losses due to predation or collision with structures, but the effects would not cause significant population effects. Activities could also affect polar bear denning or movements, but such effects would be short-term and minor. The effects of a large offshore spill could cause a significant effect to birds and threatened and endangered species, including eiders and polar bears (USDOJ BLM and MMS 2003, pages IV 439 and IV 449).

7. *Are the public involvement and interagency reviews associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?*

Yes

No

Documentation of answer and explanation:

Explain how the nature of public involvement in previous NEPA documents is inadequate or remains in compliance with NEPA public involvement requirements; consider public involvement in light of new conditions, information, and issues; identify any postings or public notices that have been made for the proposal being considered, and the level of public interest that has been expressed.

The BLM has worked closely with the village of Wainwright, the Olgoonik Corporation, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, North Slope Borough, and the United States Geological Survey. Additionally, AOGCC submitted postings for a public hearing notice to both locally and statewide news sources. Comments were to be received back to AOGCC by May 23, 2008 and May 28, 2009. No comments on the proposed action were received by state agencies, tribes, local agencies, organizations and/or individuals.

B. Interdisciplinary Analysis

Identify those team members conducting or participating in the preparation of this worksheet.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Resource Represented</u>
Roger Sayre	Planning Env. Coord.	NEPA
Shane Walker	Natural Resource Specialist	Natural Resources
Susan Flora	Environmental Scientist	Hazmat and Waste

C. Mitigation Measures

List any applicable mitigation measures that were identified, analyzed, and approved in relevant LUPs and existing NEPA document(s). List the specific mitigation measures or identify an attachment that includes those specific mitigation measures. Document that these applicable mitigation measures must be incorporated and implemented.

This Proposed Action is subject to the Required Operating Procedures and Stipulations outlined in the 2004 NW NPR-A IAP/EIS.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that:

Plan Conformance:

- This proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan.
- This proposal does not conform to the applicable land use plan

Determination of NEPA Adequacy

- The existing NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitutes BLM’s compliance with the requirements of NEPA.
- The existing NEPA documentation does not fully cover the proposed action. Additional NEPA documentation is needed if the project is to be further considered.

Signature of the Authorized Officer

Date