

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Arctic Field Office
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-3844
<http://www.blm.gov/ak>

In reply refer to:
FF081469
& FF081490
2361.00 (AK012)

PLAN CONFORMANCE / NEPA COMPLIANCE RECORD

DOI-BLM-LLAKF012-2010-0032-CX

A. Background

BLM Office: Arctic Field Office, Bureau of Land Management

Case File No.: FF081469 & FF081490

Proposed Action Title/Type: PLO Withdrawal Extension.

Location of Proposed Action: T. 23 North, 18 West, Umiat Meridian

Description of Proposed Action: The applicants, Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and United States Geological Survey (USGS) Geomagnetism Group have requested a withdrawal extension. The original withdrawal was approved April 2, 1991 for a period of twenty years with Public Land Order 6839 and consisted of 216 acres. The requested extension is also for a period of twenty years.

Since 1973 the NOAA has operated an atmospheric chemistry research observatory at the current location of their facilities at Barrow, Alaska. The Barrow Observatory is part of a six observatory network of the Earth System Research Laboratory of the NOAA, implemented to gather baseline data. The other observatories are located at Trinidad Head, California; Mauna Loa, Hawaii; American Samoa, South Pacific; South Pole, Antarctica; and Summit, Greenland.

The goals of the program as provided by NOAA are:

- 1) To measure in the remote arctic atmosphere the radiative, physical and chemical properties of atmospheric gases that influence weather and climate, including CO₂, O₃, halocarbons, and other pollutants.
- 2) To measure in the remote arctic atmosphere the optical properties, chemical composition, size distributions and concentrations of atmospheric aerosols, their relationship to the radiative properties of the atmosphere and their potential for contributing to weather and climate modifications.
- 3) To participate in the evaluation, development and deployment of instruments and measurement techniques at a remote clean air observatory to precisely measure trace amounts of atmospheric gases and aerosols.
- 4) To conduct research to identify the characteristics of climatically active atmospheric trace elements (both gases and aerosols) on a daily, seasonal and annual basis to determine global burdens and to detect long-term changes in sources and sinks. To conduct research to determine the combined effect that these trace elements and their changing concentrations have on weather and climate, especially in the area of the change in global temperature and the redistribution of climate regimes.

5) To collect, process and disseminate a data set of global background levels at atmospheric trace constituents which may be important in determining the mechanisms of climate change.

The USGS have operated the Barrow Geomagnetic Observatory since 1949. The observatory plays a major role in the U.S. national geomagnetism programs. It is the northern-most control point in the United States for magnetic data. It provides basic control in northern Alaska for the magnetic data that is required for nautical and aeronautical charts used for commercial and national defense organizations. Magnetic data recorded at Barrow is widely used by the international scientific community in many research efforts to study upper atmospheric and space physics phenomena. The observatory provides important data for the global effort to better understand predict and utilize the natural fluctuations in the earth's magnetic field.



Barrow, Alaska
USGS, NOAA, NAVY Land Withdrawals; DEW-Line; UIC NARL and BEO

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Withdrawal of the area is covered under the Northwest National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NW NPR-A) Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement

Date Approved: 1/22/2004. (Chapter III-137):

BLM manages several withdrawals within the Planning Area including a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) research site used as a climate monitoring and diagnostics laboratory, and a research site assigned to the United States Geological Service (USGS) for a geomagnetic observatory.

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable IAP/EIS, because it is specifically provided for in the following IAP/EIS decision: NW NPR-A IAP/EIS Record of Decision

C. Compliance with NEPA:

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9; this proposed action qualifies as a BLM Categorical Exclusion E.1. Realty (BLM H-1790-1),

“Withdrawal extensions or modifications, which only establish a new time period and entail no changes in segregative effect or use”.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM2 apply. The proposed action will not meet any of the extraordinary circumstances listed below.

Extraordinary Circumstances	Yes	No
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
2.2 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.		X
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2) (E)].		X
2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
2.7 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.		X
2.8 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.		X
2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		X
2.11 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).		X
2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or 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 considered the effects of the withdrawal extension of 216 acres for NOAA and USGS so they can continue atmospheric studies at the Barrow Observatory. Any additional construction or abandonment of facilities is not considered in this CX and such action will require additional environmental review and analysis if proposed.

D. Signature

Authorizing Official: _____ Date: November 18,2010
/s/Lon Kelly

Name: Lon Kelly
Title: Arctic Field Office Manager

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact Donna L Wixon, Natural Resource Specialist, Arctic Field Office, 1150 University Avenue, Fairbanks, Alaska 99709, 907-474-2301.