



**Environmental Assessment
National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska
Special Recreation Permit
2010**

DOI-BLM-LLAK01000-2010-0011-EA

Arctic Wild

Preparing Office: Arctic Field Office

Project Title/Type of Action: **National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A)
Special Recreation Permit**

Case File Number: **FF094257**

Land Use Plans: **Western Arctic Resource Management Plan (RMP) Management
Situation Analysis evaluated 2/5/1990
Final Environmental Impact Statement on Oil and Gas Leasing in
The National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska and Record of Decision
approved 5/1983
The National Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976**

Applicant: Arctic Wild

Address: P.O. Box 80562
Fairbanks, AK 99708

Date: May 28, 2010

Lands Involved:

Land Description (BLM Managed Lands)

Legal Description (All Umiat Meridian)

Trip A (Nuka River)

Meridian	Township	Range	Section	
Umiat	7 South	32 West	1 – 36	Trip Start
Umiat	7 South	31 West	4 – 9	
Umiat	6 South	31 West	13 -36	
Umiat	6 South	30 West	4-9, 16-21, 28-33	
Umiat	5 South	30 West	1-3, 10-15, 22-27, 34-36	
Umiat	5South	29 West	1 – 36	
Umiat	5 South	28 West	1 - 18	
Umiat	5 South	27 West	1 -18	Trip End

Trip B (Utukok – Kokolik)

Meridian	Township	Range	Section		
Umiat	3 South	36 West	1 - 36		Trip Start
Umiat	3 South	37 West	1 - 36		
Umiat	3 South	38 West	1 - 36		
Umiat	3 South	39 West	1 - 36		
Umiat	3 South	40 West	1 - 36		
Umiat	3 South	41 West	1 – 5, 8-17, 20-29, 32-36	Other Sections Private Lands	Trip End

Umiat	3 South	42 West		Private Lands	
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Trip C (Kokolik River)

Meridian	Township	Range	Section		
Umiat	8 South	42 West	1-3, 10-15, 22-27, 34-36	Other Sections Private Lands	Trip Start
Umiat	7 South	42 West	1-3, 10-15, 22-27, 34-36	Other Sections Private Lands	
Umiat	6 South	42 West	1 -3, 10-15, 22-27, 34-36	Other Sections Private Lands	
Umiat	5 South	42 West	1-3, 10-15, 22-27, 34-36	Other Sections Private Lands	
Umiat	4 South	42 West		Private Lands	
Umiat	3 South	42 West		Private Lands	Trip End

Trip D (Kokolik River)

Meridian	Township	Range	Section		
Umiat	8 South	42 West	1-3, 10-15, 22-27, 34-36	Other Sections Private Lands	Trip Start
Umiat	7 South	42 West	1-3, 10-15, 22-27, 34-36	Other Sections Private Lands	
Umiat	6 South	42 West	1 -3, 10-15, 22-27, 34-36	Other Sections Private Lands	

Umiat	5 South	42 West	1-3, 10-15, 22-27, 34-36	Other Sections Private Lands	
Umiat	4 South	42 West		Private Lands	
Umiat	3 South	42 West		Private Lands	
Umiat	2 South	42 West		Private Lands	
Umiat	2 South	41 West	12-14, 21- 29,32	Other Sections Private Lands	
Umiat	2 South	40 West	1 - 36		
Umiat	1 South	40 West	1 - 36		
Umiat	1 South	39 West	1 -36		
Umiat	1 North	39 West	1-3, 10-15, 22-27, 34-36		
Umiat	2 North	39 West	10,11 13-15		Trip End

Environmental Assessment

for a Special Recreation Permit

DOI-BLM-LLAK010-2010-0011-EA

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to meet requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and to support U.S. Department of Interior (USDO I) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) decision-making on permits required to construct and implement the proposed project. The scope of this EA includes analysis of the effects of the proposed activity and alternatives.

Impacts of this type of activity have been evaluated in the referenced planning documents.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Arctic Wild of Fairbanks, Alaska has requested authorization to conduct guiding operations on BLM managed lands within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). Customers guided by Arctic Wild utilizing a Special Recreation Permit. The proposed action would involve trips on the Nuka, Utukok, and Kokolik Rivers. Effects of activities on the Utukok and Kokolik Rivers were analyzed in a previous EA, *National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska/Utility Corridor Film Permit/Special Recreation Permit 2009* (DOI-BLM-LLAK01000-2009-0017-EA).

1.1 Purpose and Need

The BLM's organic act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLMPA) (43 USC 1701), requires that the agency provide for multiple uses of the public lands. Lands in the arctic are difficult and expensive to access by the general public. Allowing the public to have access to arctic resources provides an opportunity to experience the ecology of the Western Arctic Caribou herd and other resources in their natural habitat to a broad public, with minimal environmental impact. A permit issued by the BLM is needed to provide guidelines to ensure that the resources on BLM managed lands are conserved and to minimize environmental impacts from the proposed action. The purpose of the proposed action is to allow Arctic Wild a permit to view natural resources and to guide on BLM managed lands in the NPR-A.

1.2 Laws, regulations, other EAs that influence this EA

This EA will be based on the findings, management controls, and protective measures of the 2004 Northwest NPR-A Integrated Activity Plan (IAP)/EIS Record of Decision (ROD), the 2008 Northeast NPR-A Supplemental IAP/EIS ROD, and the 2008 Colville River Special Area Management Plan (CRSAMP), as well as other laws and regulations. The action, as proposed, is consistent with the objectives outlined in these documents and not in conflict with other resources in the area. The proposed use is in conformance with current policy of the BLM Arctic Field Office. The proposed action is in conformance with the Final Environmental Impact Statement on Oil and Gas Leasing in The National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska and Record of

Decision and associated ROD, the CRSAMP, and the National Petroleum Reserve Product Act (NPRPA), FLPMA, Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). Endangered Species Act, Executive Orders (EO) 11988, and EO 11990.

1.3 The Decision to be Made

The BLM must conduct a project-specific NEPA analysis and determine whether the proposed project should be approved, rejected, or approved with modifications, and if additional mitigation is needed. This EA will be based on the findings, management controls, and protective measures of the Final Environmental Impact Statement on Oil and Gas Leasing in The National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska and Record of Decision, as well as other laws and regulations. The scope of this EA includes analysis that enables the BLM to select among alternatives that meet the purpose and need, and are within the BLM's jurisdiction (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1506.1(a) (2)).

1.4 Scoping and Issues

The proposed action has been announced on the BLM Arctic Field Office website NEPA register March 18, 2010. To date no comments have been received.

BLM guidelines define environmental issues as points of disagreement, debate, or dispute resulting from the proposed action (BLM NEPA Handbook, H-1790-1, 2008). Issues are identified through internal and external scoping through a process of considering environmental effects of the proposed action. Some elements are not present in the project area and are, therefore, not discussed further. A summary listing of related issues considered by AFO Field Staff is provided in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1 Issues Considered in Evaluating Impacts

Resources/Environmental Considerations for Issues and Analysis	Determination	Basis of Determination (See Note)
ACEC's	Not Present	Protection provided by:
Air Quality	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by: State of Alaska Air Non-Point and Mobile Program and regulations (18 AAC 50)
Cultural and Paleontological Resources	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by: Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act,
Environmental Justice	Not Present	Protection provided by: EO 12898
Fish	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by: Non Oil & Gas Permit Stipulations IIA, IIB, and VIIIA, XIB. EFH finding "not likely to adversely affect".
Flood Plains/Wetlands and Riparian Zones	Minimally Impacted	Protections provided by: EO 11988 and EO 11990
Invasive, Non-native species	Not Present	Protections provided by: not applicable to this action

Native American Religious Concerns	Not Present	Protection provided by:
Recreation	Not Present	Protection provided by:
Socialcultural Systems	Not Present	Protection provided by:
Subsistence	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by: ANILCA
Threatened & Endangered Species Spectacled and Steller's eider	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. (J),
Threatened & Endangered Species Polar Bear	Minimally Impacted	In accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA)
non-T&E birds	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided Non Oil and Gas Permit Stipulations, III.A, III.B, XII.C, and XII.D Raptor code of conduct.
non-T&E mammals	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by Non Oil and Gas Permit Stipulations III. A, III. D, XI.A.1, XII.A, and XII.G.
Vegetation	Minimally Impacted	Protections provided by: Non Oil and Gas Permit Stipulation X.A.
Visual Resource Management	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by: IV, VIIA, VIII.A, XIA,B
Water Resources	Minimally Impacted	Protections provided by: Non Oil and Gas Permit Stipulation II.
Waste (Hazardous/Solid)	Minimally Impacted	Protections provided by State of Alaska 18 AAC 30, 60, 62, 63, 72, and 75;
Wild & Scenic Rivers	Not Present	Protection provided by:
Wilderness	Not Present	

Key to Table 1.2:

BLM – Bureau of Land Management

EFH – Essential Fish Habitat

Potentially Affected: The proposed action or alternative could result in potential impacts to resource or issues to the level that additional mitigation may be required, or there is a need to evaluate potentially significant issues.

Minimally Impacted: Resources or issues would not be affected to a degree requiring further analysis because either the expected impacts from the proposed action and alternative would be minimal, or standard protections (e.g., ROPs and Stipulations from overriding BLM plans or other legal protections) would reduce impacts. Minimally impacted resources or issues will not be analyzed further in this EA.

Not Present: Resources or issues are not expected to be affected by the proposed action or alternatives because activities would occur at a different time or place. Resource or issues not present will not be analyzed further in the EA.

In summary, BLM resource specialists have reviewed the proposed action and found no issues for further evaluation in this EA. Existing protective measures would ensure that any resources would be at most minimally impacted from the proposed action. The effects of activities by Arctic Wild, and its clients, on the Utukok and Kokolik Rivers were also analyzed in a previous EA, *National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska/Utility Corridor Film Permit/Special Recreation Permit 2009* (DOI-BLM-LLAK01000-2009-0017-EA). The activities proposed for the current proposed action on these rivers and the Utukok river are sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the 2009 EA (DOI-

BLM-LLAK01000-2009-0017-EA). This EA will be tiered to the 2009 EA. Therefore, this EA will only introduce the alternatives, but no additional analysis will be carried forth.

1.5 Public Involvement

Public notification of the Environmental analysis was announced in the NEPA register on file at the Arctic Field Office Environmental Assessment web site beginning March 18, 2010. No public comments or inquiries were received through 28 May 2010.

Chapter 2 Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

2.1 Introduction

This section describes the alternatives considered, including the no action, proposed action, and alternatives considered and eliminated.

2.2 Description of Alternatives

2.2.1 Alternative A: No Action

Under no action, the BLM would not grant a special recreation permit to Arctic Wild for activity along the Nuka River. Current land management situation and activities would continue but access and activities related to those requested by the proponents would not occur. Such activities include research and monitoring, recreation, subsistence, and travel.

2.2.2 Alternative B: Proposed Action

The proposed project is to view wildlife resources on the Nuka, Utukok, and Kokolik Rivers. The proponent and guides would embark on 4 trips in NPR-A with up to 8 people per trip:

- Trip A: Nuka River 12 days rafting
- Trip B: Utukok 7 days backpacking
- Trip C: Kokolik River 7 days rafting
- Trip D: Kokolik River 10 days rafting

Similar to 2009, Arctic Wild is proposing to access remote areas of NPR-A. Environmental impacts of Trips B,C, and D activities were analyzed in the 2009 EA for Arctic Wild and a film crew (*National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska/Utility Corridor Film Permit/Special Recreation Permit 2009 (DOI-BLM-LLAK01000-2009-0017-EA)*), and analyses, decision, and stipulations from that EA will continue to apply for Trips B, C, and D in 2010. This EA will not analyze the direct and indirect impacts of the Trips B, C, and D because these would be similar in timing and scope to those analyzed in 2009. Cumulative effects will be considered for issues that could be affected within the region of influence for Trip A.

This EA will focus on the proposed activities on the Nuka River. The Nuka River would be accessed via air on June 6, 2010 and the trip would continue through June 17. The crews and

customers would be dropped off, float the river and be picked up at a designated point. The proponent will remove all gear and equipment when they leave the campsites. Arctic Wild has held a BLM Special Recreation Permit with the BLM for many years and would guide the crew along the Nuka River. Arctic Wild practices Leave No Trace guidelines.

The crew and customers would camp in portable tents each night and the camp will include a kitchen tent and separate sleeping tents. Proponents and guides would use a group latrine. Use of camp fires is not expected, unless necessary. Crews will float along the Nuka River by day view and photograph wildlife and scenery as opportunities arise.

Chapter 3 Affected Environment

The affected environment for the area of the Proposed Action is discussed in the following documents: (1) The Western Arctic Resource Management Plan Situation Analysis Chapter 3, evaluated 1/19/1990, and (2) Chapter 2 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement on Oil and Gas Leasing in the NPR-A. The Northwest National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (November 2003), while outside the proposed area, analyzed an area similar in nature. In addition, the CRSAMP developed protections for avian species which also inhabit the proposed area of use.

Chapter 4 Environmental Impacts

The following analysis will focus on impacts due to the proposed action and no action alternatives. Additional details on related impacts are discussed in the respective plans for NPR-A (Final Environmental Impact Statement on Oil and Gas Leasing in the NPR-A, CSRAMP). This EA will focus on project specific and site specific impacts of the proposed action and no action alternatives.

4.1 Direct and Indirect Effects

Analysis of impacts from the proposed action and no action alternative is based on observations and scientific information gained from decades of similar operations on the North Slope and other arctic regions. The proposed activities are not substantially different from those previously evaluated in the Final Environmental Impact Statement on Oil and Gas Leasing in The National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (Section IV), the CRSAMP (Chapter 4) and these documents are incorporated by reference.

4.2 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative impacts result from the incremental addition of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. Each action may be individually minor by itself, but when added to others could become significant over a period of time.

The time frame for the proposed action for the NPR-A portion of the project area is 1977 (designation of NPR-A) to 10 years into the future, assuming that the relatively low level of activity and management would remain at about the same level as present. Due to the limited scope and intensity of the proposed action the geographic area would be limited within 10 miles of the proposed river travel corridor, camps, and staging areas.

Due to the remoteness of the areas, the activity levels are limited by available transportation. There is minimal recreation, research and subsistence use in the area. The proposed action is anticipated to have very little if any impact as all the applicants will be using leave no trace principles.

The proposed action is not anticipated to result in cumulative impacts due to the remoteness of the portion of the NPR-A where the activity would occur, the low impact levels associated with the activity, and the short-term time frame of the proposed action.

4.4 MITIGATION AND MONITORING

The stipulations for the proposed action are a subset of The Colville River Special Area Management Plan, and the Final Environmental Impact Statement on Oil and Gas Leasing in The National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska and Record of Decision, approved 5/1983. Special Recreation Permit holders meet most requirements by following the guidelines in Leave No Trace, Alaskan Tundra.

4.5 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No issues were identified in the evaluation of the proposed action for this EA.

Chapter 5 Consultation and Coordination

5.1 Agencies, Organization, Persons Consulted

Public notification of the Environmental analysis will be on file at the Arctic Field Office and available on the Arctic Field Office Environmental Assessment web site.

5.3 List of Preparers

BLM

Arctic Field Office:

Dave Yokel, Wildlife Biologist

Michael Kunz, Archaeologist

Susan Flora, Environmental Scientist

Richard Kemnitz, Hydrologist

Donna Wixon, Natural Resource Specialist

Debbie Nigro, Wildlife Biologist

Matthew Whitman, Fisheries Biologist

Stacie McIntosh, Anthropologist/Subsistence Specialist

Roger Sayre, NEPA Specialist

FF094257
2930.00

Finding of No Significant Impact

Type of Action: Special Recreation Permit Renewal

Serial Number: FF094257

Environmental Assessment Number: DOI-BLM-LLAKF010-2010-0011-EA

Applicant: Arctic Wild

Address: P.O. Box 80562
Fairbanks, Alaska 99708

District: Arctic Field Office

Planning Unit: Western Arctic Resource Management Plan (RMP) Management Situation
Analysis evaluated 2/5/1990
Final Environmental Impact Statement on Oil and Gas Leasing in The
National
Petroleum Reserve in Alaska and Record of Decision approved 5/1983
The National Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976

Lands Involved: See Case File for Specific Description, lands are in the vicinity of the Nuka River, Utukok River, and Kokolik River.

Context and Intensity of Environmental Impacts

Based upon a review of the EA prepared by the Arctic Field Office and the supporting documents, I have determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. The effects of activities from Arctic Wild, and its clients, on the Utukok and Kokolik Rivers were also analyzed in a previous EA, *National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska/Utility Corridor Film Permit/Special Recreation Permit 2009* (DOI-BLM-

LLAK01000-2009-0017-EA). The activities proposed for the current proposed action on these rivers and the Utukok river are sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the 2009 EA (*DOI-BLM-LLAK01000-2009-0017-EA*). This EA is tiered to the 2009 EA. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. We reviewed the context of the proposed action and found that it would not result in any significant effects to resources and values. The mitigation measures and environmental protections would ensure that the Proposed Action would not add significantly to incremental impacts.

The need for this project is to allow Arctic Wild to provide the public with access to arctic resources and experience the ecology of the Western Arctic Caribou and other resources herd in their natural habitat.

The following factors were considered in the EA to evaluate the significance of this proposal (40 CFR 1508.27): Beneficial and adverse impacts; effects on public health and safety; unique cultural or ecological areas within or near the project area: potentially controversial or uncertain effects; whether the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effect; cumulative effects; adverse impacts to important scientific, cultural or historical resources; effects to endangered or threatened species or habitat; or whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, local or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements:

Monitoring and Mitigation

BLM will monitor on the ground activities periodically. Mitigation measures will be implemented as described in the attached authorization stipulations.

APPROVED:

/s/Lon Kelly
Arctic Field Office Manager

May 28, 2010

Date