



**Bureau of Land Management**

Anchorage Field Office  
6881 Abbott Loop Road  
Anchorage, AK 99507  
<http://www.anchorage.ak.blm.gov>

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**Environmental Assessment**

Middle Fork of Goodnews River Fish Monitoring Site Authorization  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
AA-085882  
AK-040-06EA-009

**Location:**

SE $\frac{1}{4}$  SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 3, Township 12 South, Range 72 West, Seward Meridian

**Prepared By:**

James F. Moore  
Realty Specialist  
August 29, 2006

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has been leasing an acre of land on the Middle Fork of the Goodnews River from Kuitsarak, Inc., a Native Village Corporation, since 1981. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game uses the land for a fish-weir and camp to conduct fishery management in the Goodnews River drainage. Although Kuitsarak, Inc. has been charging the State rent, the land is in Federal ownership.

Jeff Denton, Subsistence Program Specialist, BLM, Anchorage Field Office has visited the site of the weir and camp and provides the following assessment of the operation:

“The Site is well kept. There is a great deal of discipline in keeping the site clean and garbage under control due to the frequent bear use of the site. A trail in the summer months from technicians traveling from the Weatherport facility to the weir along the bank is the only real impact. The trail is above the active channel and has been use for 20+ years without what I can determine as causing degradation to the riparian zone or facilitating bank erosion. I have not been on the ground at the site for 4 years or so, but this describes what I saw the last time I was there. I have flown over the site many times since visiting on the ground and nothing appears amiss and the site is orderly and clean.”

March 31, 2006

### A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

The purpose and need of the proposed action is the authorization of the State’s use of an acre of land on the Middle Fork of the Goodnews River for a fish-weir and camp to conduct fishery management in the Goodnews River drainage.

### B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the Southwest Management Framework Plan dated November 1981. In the Southwest MFP, one of the Realty Objectives, L-2, “To meet the demand for private entry of public land”, addresses right-of-way uses and other legitimate uses of public land.

### C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental

Analyses:

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (43 USC § 1701, *et. seq.*), at Section 302(b) provides that: “In managing the public lands, the secretary shall ... regulate, through easements, permits, leases, licenses, published rules, or other instruments ... the use, occupancy, and development of the public lands ....”

The lands affected have been selected under ANCSA for conveyance to Kuitsarak, Inc., F-014862-A. Pursuant to 43 C.F.R. §2650.1 the “...views of the concerned regions or villages shall be obtained and considered....” and where the land has been selected under the provisions of ANCSA §19(b), “...the Secretary shall obtain the consent of the representatives of the Natives living on those lands.” On March 8, 2005, Mr. James K. Robert, President of Kuitsarak, Inc., consented to the State’s use of these lands in a telephonic conversation with Rodney Huffman, Group Manager, BLM, Anchorage Field Office, Realty Group.

The State’s use of the land will be permitted under Section 302(b) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, 43 USC §1732(b) and 43 C.F.R. §2920.0-1 *et. seq.*

D. Alternatives Considered But Not Analyzed in Detail:

None.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE

A. Proposed Action:

The proposed action is to issue the State of Alaska, Department of Fish and Game a three year renewable permit authorizing its use of approximately 1 acre of land on the left bank of the Middle Fork of the Goodnews River in the SE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>SW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, Section 3, Township 12 South, Range 72 West, Seward Meridian. The applicant will use the land to accommodate a seasonal camp (June 1 through September 30 each year) developed by the State to facilitate fishery management in the Goodnews River drainage.

The camp is comprised of one 12’ x 16’ wall tent, one 10’ x 12’ wall tent, one 14’ x 20’ Weatherport, a 4’ x 4’ outhouse and a 10’ x 10’ wooden steam bath. All tents are erected on wooden platforms that remain in place throughout the year. Various camp structures are installed, disassembled and stored onsite each season. The fish weir is removed from the Middle Fork of the Goodnews River and stored on shore during the off-season. The camp is occupied from June 1 through September 30 each year. The majority of camp supplies are purchased in the

village of Goodnews Bay. The first week of operations consists of camp set-up and weir installation. The last week of operations consists of dismantling and storage of the weir and camp materials. Semi-permanent camp structures and all weir materials are stored on site over the winter while the majority of camp materials and equipment are stored in a container van located in the village of Goodnews Bay. A 130' resistance board weir is installed in the Middle Fork of the Goodnews River in June of each year. The weir is assembled from panels constructed from PVC conduit and plastic and is anchored to the river bottom with a rail constructed from steel angle, steel anchoring pins, and steel cable. Fish counts are made daily while the weir is in operation. The weir apparatus is removed from the river in mid to late September each year.

A program is being developed with the Native Village of Goodnews Bay and the Rocky Mountain School (Village School) that will allow local high school students to visit the weir project and take part in a science camp program related to local fisheries.

The State also hires nonpermanent technicians from the villages of Goodnews Bay and Platinum to work at the Middle Fork Goodnews River Weir.

B. No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is denial of the State's request to legitimize its use of the land.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Critical Elements

The following critical elements of the human environment were not present or will not be affected by the Proposed Action and will receive no further discussion:

Air Quality  
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern  
Environmental Justice  
Farmlands, Prime/Unique  
Floodplains  
Invasive, Nonnative Species  
Native American Religious Concerns  
Wetlands/Riparian Zones  
Wild and Scenic Rivers  
Wilderness

Cultural Resources:

No cultural resources are known for this existing seasonal camp and weir site.

Subsistence:

The lands are selected by Kuitsarak, Inc, and do not meet the ANILCA Sec. 102(3) definition of Federal Public Lands. Therefore, the subject lands are outside the jurisdiction of the Federal Subsistence board and the scope of ANILCA Sec. 810.

Threatened or Endangered Species:

The impact of the proposed action and alternatives on threatened and endangered plants and animals and their habitats has been evaluated in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. Based on currently available information, the proposed action would not affect any threatened or endangered species or their habitat. Therefore, no consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considered necessary pursuant to Section of the Act and none will be undertaken.

Water Quality, Surface/Ground:

Water quality data is lacking throughout this region of Alaska. It is presumed that water quality is good due to no known sources of municipal or industrial contamination.

A pit privy (outhouse) is currently located on the land requested for use under this Permit.

According to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) Regulation for pit privy:

18 AAC 72.020. Separation distances. (a) A person who builds or installs a sewer, private sewer line, onsite system, or domestic wastewater treatment works shall comply with the applicable minimum separation distances set out (1) in 18AAC 80.020 for a public water system, unless the department has approved a lesser separation distance under that section; or (2) in (c) of this section for a private water system.

(b) The minimum separation distance between the mean annual high water level of a lake, river, stream, spring, or slough, or the mean higher high water level of coastal waters, and a lift station, holding tank, septic tank, soil absorption system, seepage pit, pit privy, or other wastewater collection, treatment, or disposal system is 100 feet, measured horizontally.

18 AAC 72.030. A person may install a pit privy if the pit privy meets the separation distance requirements in 18 AAC 72.020(b), (c), and (i). A person may not dispose of graywater in a pit privy. (Eff.4/1/99, Register 149) Authority: AS 44.46.020 AS 46.03.070 AS 46.03.100  
AS 46.03.020 AS 46.03.080 AS 46.03.720  
AS 46.03.050

Solid Waste. Non-hazardous solid waste, in the form of human waste, garbage and trash associated with occupation and utilization of the camp by numerous individuals will be generated while the camp and weir are in use.

B. Land Status:

The land affected by the proposed action is in Federal ownership. However, the Native Village of Kuitsarak, Inc. has an ANCSA priority selection on the land and the selection is within its ANCSA entitlement, F-014862-A. There is a native allotment one mile upstream from the weir and camp and another a quarter of a mile downstream from the weir and camp.

Visual Resources: The visual impacts of the Proposed Action change with the seasonal use of the site. During the active use of the site from June through September, a cluster of tents and support facilities, an access trail, and river-based equipment stand out from the surrounding riparian area. The camp is located on a bench above the river in an open area surrounded by tall shrubs, willows, and brush. The storage season reduces the visual impact to the access trail, tent platforms, and a minimum of stored equipment that may be obscured by snow for six or more months of the year. The site has been utilized for twenty-five years and the visual impacts of the site are low impact and well known.

Recreation:

Recreation activity in the area of the Proposed Action is river-based and is quite low and well dispersed along the Middle Fork of the Goodnews River. Limited sport fishing activity occurs in the area of the Proposed Action, generally during silver salmon runs, and is often based out of a commercial sport fishing lodge

located downstream. Boat access subsistence activities also occur along the Middle Fork including hunting, fishing, and gathering activities. Winter access in the area is by snow machine on the frozen river, providing local access to caribou hunting areas, trapping sites, and other snow machine-based recreation opportunities. The camp may be visited by individuals during operating periods and provides a fishery educational venue for area students and residents.

#### IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

##### A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

Since the weir and camp have been in place for twenty-five years, impacts to the environment are well established. There are no perceived new impacts that will occur from the proposed action.

##### Visual Resources:

The area of the Proposed Action is in a VRM III Inventory Management Class, the objective of which is to partially retain the existing visual landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be moderate and management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. The visual impacts of the Proposed Action fall well within the objectives of a VRM Inventory Class III and established site-use patterns over the past 25 years suggest no significant change in VRM resources by continuing this use.

##### Recreation:

This use has existed since 1981 and has no history of impacts to recreation opportunities. The fish weir does not impede boat traffic on the Middle Fork during the summer activity period, and the weir is dismantled and removed from the river for the balance of the year. The Proposed Action does not pose significant impacts on recreation opportunities or existing recreation activities.

##### Water Quality, Surface/Ground:

Continued use of a pit privy in compliance with ADEC regulations will prevent the contamination of ground, surface, and drinking water resources.

Continued use of a pit privy in violation of ADEC regulations may contaminate ground, surface, and drinking water resources. Possible contamination may include increased fecal coliform bacteria that may result in sickness to humans. Increased nitrogen constituents may indirectly reduce dissolved oxygen supplies resulting in reduced habitat quality for fisheries.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

The no-action alternative would have a temporary impact on the land in that all facilities would have to be removed; the ground, however, would eventually return to its natural state. The no-action alternative may also have a socio-economic impact in the area as the State may no longer be able to employ seasonal help for the Goodnews River weir site and the academic opportunity to students of Rocky Mountain High School may no longer be available.

D. Cumulative Impacts:

The land affected by the proposed action has been subjected to twenty-five years of use. Other than the natural surface disturbance that one would associate with twenty-five years of this low impact use, there are no perceivable cumulative impacts. Nor, is it anticipated that the land will be subjected to any further use in the future other than for fishery management through use of the weir and camp.

The cumulative impacts of the no action alternative would include dismantling of the weir and camp as well as the loss of local hire opportunities and the loss of the academic opportunities afforded the students at Rocky Mountain High School.

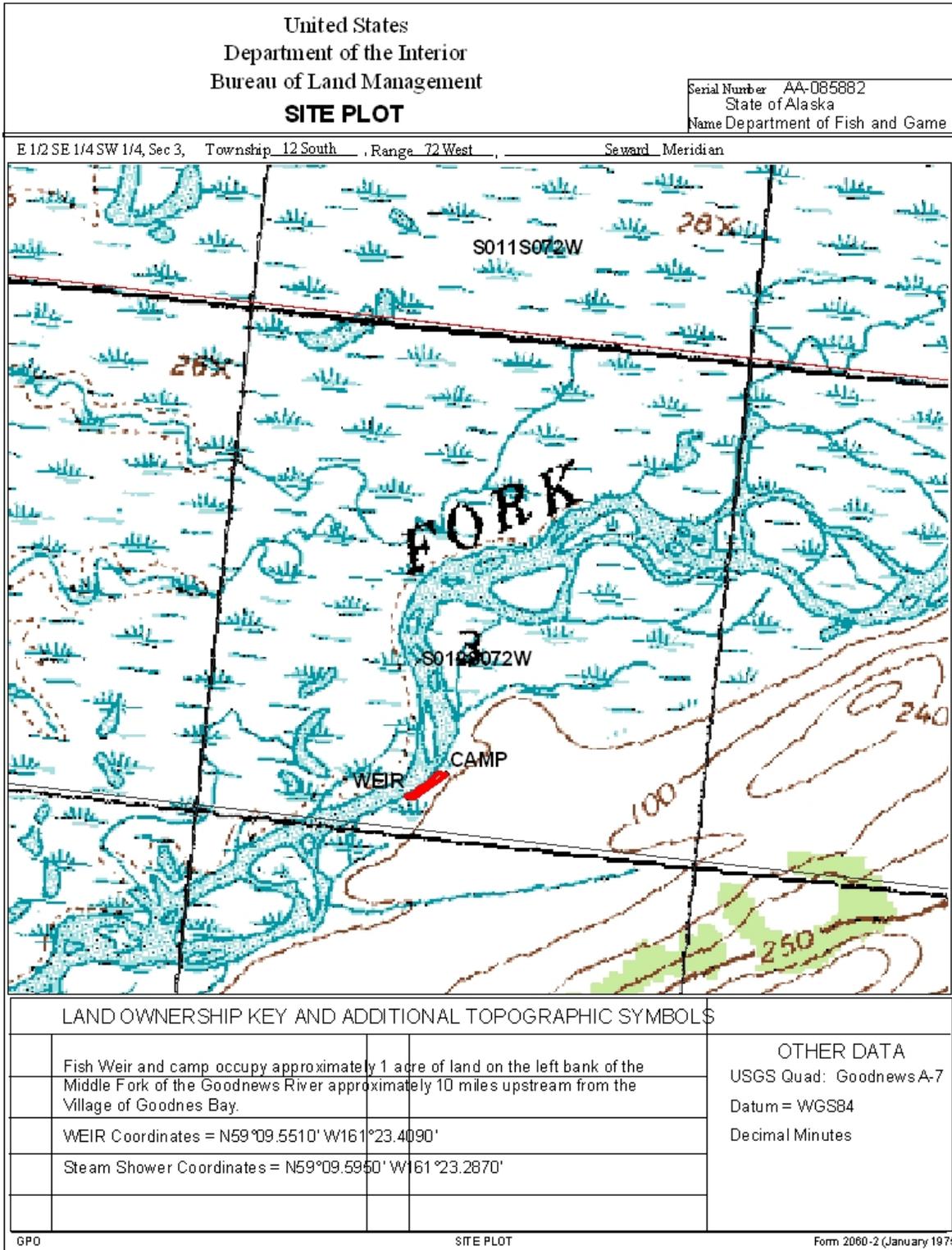
E. Mitigation Measures:  
None.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

List of Preparers:

James F. Moore - Realty Specialist  
Donna Redding - Archaeologist  
Jeff Denton - Subsistence Coordinator  
Bruce Seppi - Wildlife Biologist  
Doug Ballou – Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Dave Kelly – Natural Resource Specialist

Site visit May 2006 – *see* Figures 1 through 8 attached.





Aerial of Goodnews Bay and Goodnews River Drainage.



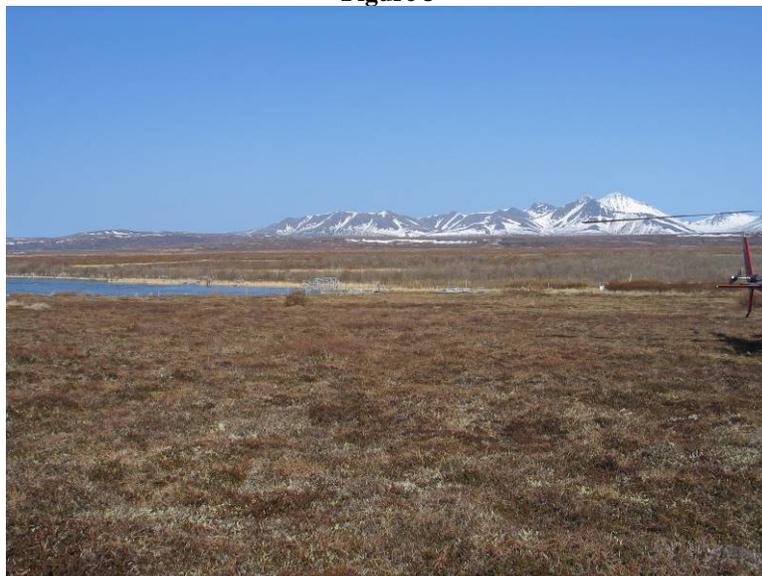
**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**



**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**



**Figure 7**



**Figure 8**



**Figure 9**



**Figure 10**