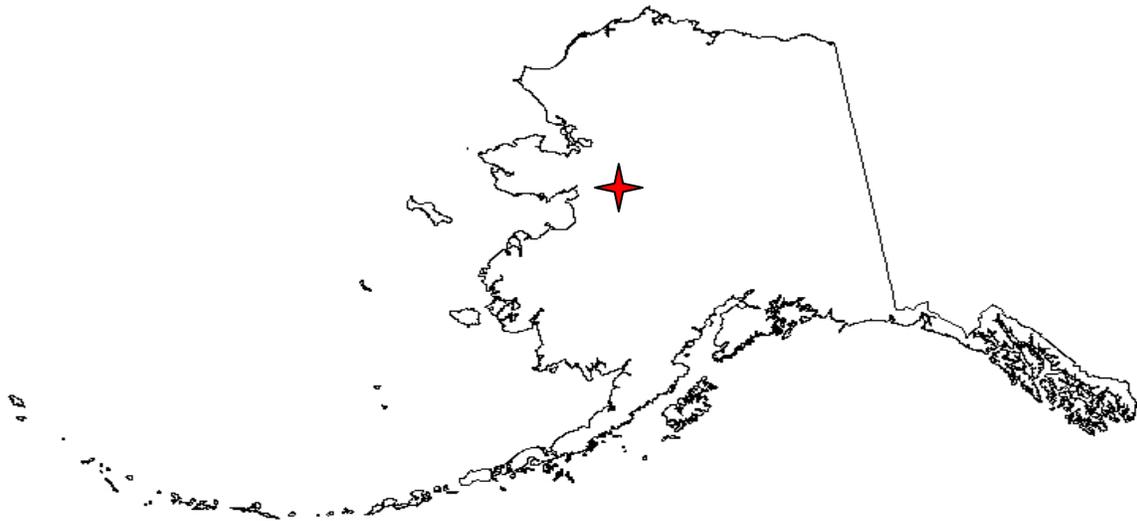


**Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Central Yukon Field Office
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
(907) 474-2200**

**Categorical Exclusion
Amend Two (2) Snow Depth Observation Sites authorized February 2012**

**Applicant: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) (Selawik National Wildlife Refuge) and
Case File Numbers: F-95864
DOI-BLM-AK-03000-2012-0028-CX**



Previous Snow Marker Locations:

Kateel River Meridian, Alaska
NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 22, T. 12 S., R. 11 W.,
S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 32, T. 5 S., R. 4 W.

Amended Snow Marker Location:

Kateel River Meridian
NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 24, T. 2 N., R. 2 W.,
SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 4, T. 7 S., R. 11 W.

Prepared By:

Central Yukon Field Office
June 1, 2012

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

A. Background

BLM Office: Central Yukon Field Office **Case File No:** F-95864

Environmental Document No.: DOI-BLM-AK-03000-2012-0028-CX

Proposed Action Title/Types: The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Selawik National Wildlife Refuge proposes to amend the location of two (2) snow depth observation sites. Additionally, they propose to extend the grant from two years to 30 years.

Location of Proposed Action:

The applicant proposes to amend two (2) snow markers locations previously permitted on February 28, 2012.

The first snow marker site to be amended was previously located within NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 22, T. 1 N., R. 2 W., Kateel River Meridian and would now be located within NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 24, T. 2 N., R. 2 W., Kateel River Meridian (approximately 6 miles northeast of permitted location) depicted on USGS Candle C-1 (Upper Tag). The second snow marker site was previously within S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 32, T. 6 S., R. 10 W., Kateel River Meridian and would be relocated to SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 4, T. 7 S., R. 11 W., Kateel River Meridian (approximately 4.5 miles southwest of permitted location) depicted on USGS Norton Bay D-4 (Akulik River).

The Akulik River proposed location is managed by the Anchorage Field Office and the Upper Tag proposed location is managed by the Central Yukon Field Office.

Description of Proposed Action:

The FWS, Selawik National Wildlife Refuge, proposes to amend two (2) previously permitted snow marker locations. The previously permitted sites which were installed last year are costly, difficult and not easily accessible for maintenance. These sites would fill a major information gap on snow conditions in western Alaska, within vital habitat for the western arctic caribou herd and other wildlife. Information is important for weather and climate change study.

Each site contains one (1) aerial snow depth marker and two (2) trail stakes. A snow depth marker is 4" wide and 10' tall, with arms perpendicular to the post every 1', flat, and with maximum width of 3'. Markers will be secured using 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ " steel cables affixed to 6" wide arrowhead anchors driven 30" into the ground. They will fly by each marker once a month December through May and take a snow depth reading.

Trail stakes are flat, 3" wide, 6' tall, white semi-flexible fiberglass markers, lined with round ½" temperature sensors. Sensors will be accessed by helicopter or float plane in summer to download data and reprogram. They would make two (2) ski plane landings in winter to measure snow conditions on the ground. A helicopter would be used to move this equipment to the new sites. Total area needed is 20' x 20' to space out stakes.



B. Land Use Plan Conformance 43 CFR 1610.5-3(a)

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

Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Resource Management Plan approved September 2008.

In Section g) Lands and Realty states: “meet public needs for use authorizations such as ROW, leases, and permits while minimizing adverse impacts to other resource values. Provide for, authorize, or restrict the use of public lands in compliance with existing laws, regulations, withdrawals, BLM policy, and consistent with the goals and objectives of this RMP.”

Section 1, Resource Management Plan Summaries: Summary of Management Actions; Realty Actions; Access; states in pertinent part “Access to or across public lands will be considered on a case-by-case basis . . . with a permit (43 CFR 2800 or 43 CFR 2920), or by other appropriate means. Approval would be subject to conditions which minimize the impact to other land uses and/or prevent unnecessary damage to the environment.”

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

C. NEPA Compliance

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with United States Department of the Interior 43 CFR §46.210 or United States Department of Interior Manual, Part 516, Appendix 1 which provides:

1.6

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

The proposed action must be screened against the extraordinary circumstances found in 43 CFR 46.215 as listed below. Any “yes” finding requires that an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement be prepared for the Proposed Action.

D. Extraordinary Circumstances

The following Departmental List of Extraordinary Circumstances applies to individual actions. Departmental instructions mandate that environmental documents must be prepared for actions which may:

	YES	NO
1. Have significant adverse impacts on public health or safety.	_____	_____ X
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
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].	_____	_____ X
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	_____	_____ X
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	_____	_____ X

6.	Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	_____	X
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
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
9.	Violate Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	_____	X
10.	Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).	_____	X
11.	Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affects the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).	_____	X
12.	Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of 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

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 in 43 CFR §46.215 are pertinent.

F. Signature

The proposed action is in conformance with a management framework plan or a resource management plan, 43 CFR § 1610.8(a)(3). 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 CFR §1508.4.

It is therefore my decision to implement the action, as described, with appropriate mitigation measures or stipulations.

Mitigation Measures/Stipulations: (See Attached Appendices)

Authorized Official: /s/ Nichelle W. Jacobson Date: August 17, 2012

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

**Central Yukon Field Office
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
Phone: (907) 474-2304
Fax: (907) 474-2282**

DECISION RECORD

**Amended Locations for Three (3) Remote Automated Weather Stations and
Four (4) Snow Marker Sites**

F-95864

DOI-BLM-AK-03000-2012-0028-CX

Decision:

It is my decision to authorize an amended Right-of-Way (ROW) Grant, case file number F-95864 for the installation of three (3) remote automated weather stations and four (4) snow markers to measure the snow depth for the winter migration of caribou to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Selawik National Wildlife Refuge and the Bureau of Land Management, Central Yukon Field Office.

Mitigation measures, stipulations and conditions are attached.

Rationale for the Decision:

1. The proposed action is consistent with the use of public lands under the authority of Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the regulations found in 43 CFR 2800.
2. All concerns are appropriately addressed in the EA DOI-BLM-AK-03000-2012-0028. This includes cultural resources and subsistence concerns (see attached NHPA Section 106, ANILCA 810 findings, boundary risk and wilderness characteristic assessments and essential fish habitat.

The proposed action is in conformance with the approved Bureau of Land Management Kobuk-Seward Resource Management approved September 2008 and Central Yukon Resource Management Plans approved November 1981. The project has been considered in the context of public health and safety and consistency with regards to Federal, State, and local laws.

Appeal Procedures

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, in accordance with 43 CFR Part 4 and DOI Form 1842-1. The notice of appeal must be filed in the Bureau of Land Management Central Yukon Field Office (at the above address) within 30 days from receipt of this decision.

If you decide to file an appeal, you must carefully follow the procedure described on the enclosed form 1842-1. If you don't file your appeal at the locations specified on the form within 30 days, the Board may dismiss your appeal as untimely without considering its merits. Be sure to send a copy of your notice of appeal to each party named in this decision and to all of the addresses on the enclosed form 1842-1.

You may also ask the Board to stay or suspend the effect of this decision while your appeal is pending. If you desire a stay, you must enclose your request for a stay with your notice of appeal. You have the burden of showing a stay is justified.

The Board will grant a stay only if you provide sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- a. The relative harm to the parties if the Board grants or denies the stay,
- b. The likelihood of the success of your appeal on its merits,
- c. The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the Board does not grant the stay, and;
- d. Whether the public interest favors granting a stay.

/s/ Nichelle W. Jacobson
 Nichelle W. Jacobson
 Manager, Central Yukon Field Office

August 17, 2012
 Date

Contact Person:

For additional information concerning this CX review and decision, contact Robin Walthour, Realty Specialist, Central Yukon Field Office at (907) 474-2304.