

# United States Department of the Interior

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

In reply refer to:  
FF095718  
2984.01 (AK012)

## PLAN CONFORMANCE / NEPA COMPLIANCE RECORD

DOI-BLM-LLAKF010-2011-0011-CX

### Arctic Field Office, Bureau of Land Management

**Applicant:** Dirk V. Derksen  
USGS Alaska Science Center  
4210 University Drive  
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

**Proposed Action Title/Type:** Avian Research in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) (2984.01).

**Description of Proposed Action:** The applicant Dirk Derksen, with the USGS Alaska Science Center has requested authorization for field activity access and landing by a floatplane and helicopter, on lands within the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska (NPR-A) in support of avian research.

From mid-May until mid-August 2011 the USGS Alaska Science Center will conduct research examining the potential effects of long term ecological change on avian and fish resources. The overall goal of the research is to assess the relationships between changes in physical processes (i.e., temperature and precipitation) and subsequent effects on animal populations including fish and birds.

A total of four camps will be established in support of the research. The first camp will be established as a research camp near the Chipp River, about 18 km from the coast, to investigate aquatic invertebrates, least cisco, white-fronted geese, and loons for which a container van (Conex) and wooden weatherport floor will be left on site year-round for duration of study. Day use of areas within an 8 km radius of camp will occur from May 20 to September 1. Access to the camp will be by helicopter or floatplanes to get in and out of camp. At camp, transportation will primarily be foot travel, with some outboard motor use on a large lake by the camp.

The second research camp will be established near the Chipp River, about 48 km from the coast, to investigate aquatic invertebrates, least cisco, white-fronted geese, and loons for which a container van (Conex) and wooden weatherport floor will be left on site year-round for duration of study. Day use of areas within an 8 km radius of camp will occur from May 20 to September 1. Access to the camp will be by helicopter or floatplanes to get in and out of camp. At camp, transportation will primarily be foot travel, with some outboard motor use on a large lake by the camp.

Camp structures at each site of the above sites will consist of an 8×20 ft Conex storage container, one temporary weatherport and up to eight small tents. No more than eight people will occupy the camps at any one time. The camps will be accessed by fixed-wing aircraft (skis or floats) and helicopter. Fuel storage at camps will consist of <60 gallons of diesel fuel and gasoline housed within secondary containment.

A third camp will be established at the Lonely (Defense Early Warning) DEW-Line site to investigate the effects of climate change on goose forage plant nutrient composition along the Smith River. This camp will be in use from May 15 until August 15, and access will be by fixed wing aircraft and helicopter operating off the Lonely airstrip.

A fourth camp will be established at East Long Lake to replicate the plant study on different species of forage plants along Garry Creek. This camp will be in use from July 1 until August 15, and access will be by boat.

In addition to the above camps, black brant banding will occur at six additional sites: Smith River, Garry Creek, Island Lake, Un-named Lake, Piasik River and Cape Simpson (see map). Molting birds will be captured for banding. Each location will only be sampled one time within the date window of July 15 until August 2 and all activity completed in less than one day per banding location. Access to these sites will be by helicopter, floatplane or boat.

The applicant previously submitted an application for a Right of Way (ROW) grant for the purpose of the storage of 4 Conex containers and associated wooden platforms. This was analyzed by BLM in DOI-BLM=LLAK010-2011-0009-EA and BLM granted the ROW on April 8, 2011.



**Legal Description:**

Field Camp Locations

Township	Range	Section	Latitude	Longitude	Site as named by USGS
15 North	13 West	5	N70.685900	W155.304417	Chipp North
12 North	14 West	15	N70.395033	W155.408217	Chipp South
18 North	5 West	17	N70.909600	W153.242233	Lonely
15 North	3 West	2	N70.679000	W152.562417	Garry Creek

**Research Locations**

Township	Range	Section	Latitude	Longitude	Site as named by USGS
15 North	3 West	2	N 70.67900	W152.56242	East Long Lake
18 North	5 West	28	N.70.889666	W153.188140	Smith River
17 North	5 West	35	N70.782206	W153.128065	Island Lake
17 North	4 West	33	N70.779863	W152.929010	Un-named Lake

18 North	11 West	36	N70.864263	W154.660750	Piasik River
20 North	12 West	26	N71.054406	W154.975534	Cape Simpson

### Lands to be used per site

Township	Range	Sections	
<b>Chipp North</b>			
15 North	13 West	1-11, 14-23,27-30	Excluding Private Lands
16 North	14 West	1-24,26-34	Excluding Private Lands
16 North	13 West	15-36	
15 North	14 West	1-3,10-15,23-25	Excluding Private Lands
<b>Chipp South</b>			
12 North	14 West	1-36	
13 North	14 West	25-36	
12 North	13 West	5-8, 17-20, 29-32	
13 North	13 West	29-32	
<b>East Long Lake &amp; Garry Creek</b>			
15 North	3 West	1-24, 26-29	Excluding Private Lands
15 North	2 West	5-8,17-20	
16 North	2 West	19-21,28-33	
16 North	3 West	20-23,25-29,32-36	
<b>Lonely &amp; Smith River</b>			
18 North	5 West	15-22,27-30	
18 North	6 West	24,25	Excluding Private Lands
<b>Island Lake</b>			
17 North	5 West	7-36	
17 North	4 West	7-9, 16-21, 28-33	
16 North	4 West	4-9, 16-21	
16 North	5 West	1-24	
<b>Un-named Lake</b>			
17 North	4 West	7-36	
16 North	5 West	1-2,11-14, 23-24	
16 North	4 West	1-24	
16 North	3 West	6,7,18,19	
17 North	3 West	7,18,19,30,31	
17 North	5 West	11-14, 23-26, 35, 36	
<b>Piasik River</b>			
18 North	11 West	8-17, 20-29, 32-36	
17 North	11 West	2-5	

17 North	10 West	6,7	
18 North	10 West	7,18	
<b>Cape Simpson</b>			
20 North	12 West	1-36	
20 North	13 West	12-15, 22-27, 35-36	
20 North	11 West	7,18-20,30-31	Excluding Private Lands
19 North	13 West	1,12,13,24	
19 North	11 West	6,7, 17, 18, 20	
19 North	12 West	1-24	

### Part I: Plan Conformance Review

The proposed action is subject to the following planning documents: Northwest National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (IAP/EIS) 2004 and Northeast National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Supplemental Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS) 2008. The proposed action is not inconsistent with the purposes of the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976. The applicant will be provided with stipulations entitled "FF095718 USGS Avian Research NPR-A Permit Stipulations Summer 2011."

Date May 9, 2011

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/s/Donna L. Wixon  
Natural Resource Specialist, Arctic Field Office

### Part II: NEPA Review and Decision

#### Categorical Exclusion Review

This proposed action meets the criteria for a Categorical Exclusion in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1

This proposed action qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion 1.6 under 43 CFR 46.210 and 46.215

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

The proposed action will not meet any of the extraordinary circumstances listed below.

<b>Extraordinary Circumstances</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		
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.		<b>X</b>
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2) (E)].		<b>X</b>
2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		<b>X</b>
2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		<b>X</b>
2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		<b>X</b>
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.		<b>X</b>
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.		<b>X</b>
2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		<b>X</b>
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		<b>X</b>
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).		<b>X</b>
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).		<b>X</b>

<b>Wilderness Characteristics &amp; Wild Lands further evaluation required</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<p>The NPR-A was evaluated for wilderness characteristics in Section 105(c) studies during 1977 and 1978. Although activities such oil and gas leasing, subsistence practices, overland moves, excavation, recreation, aircraft use, site clean-ups, and scientific research or monitoring continue in NPR-A, most of the area remains in a natural state as it was during that study. Residents of the area do occupy seasonal dwellings or fish camps and people travel extensively by motorized vehicle over parts of NPR-A, but there are no roads outside the established communities. The overall character of NPR-A (excluding private lands) remains natural, and there are relatively few obvious signs of modern human influence or presence. A visitor to the area or an inhabitant from the settlements in or near the NPR-A can easily find opportunities for solitude (USDO, BLM, 1978). Some areas within NPR-A contain excellent ecological, geological, scientific, educational, scenic, and historical values.</p>		<b>X</b>

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/s/Donna L. Wixon  
Natural Resource Specialist, Arctic Field Office

Date May 9, 2011