

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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In reply refer to:
FF092474
2890.07 (AK012)

PLAN CONFORMANCE / NEPA COMPLIANCE RECORD

DOI-BLM- LLAKEF010-2010-0008-CX

Arctic Field Office, Bureau of Land Management

Applicant: Dr. Matthew Sturm
U.S. Department of the Army
Engineer Research & Development Center, Corps of Engineers
Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory
Alaska Projects Office, PO Box 35170
Fort Wainwright, AK 99703-0170

Proposed Action Title/Type: 5-Year Winter Research Project for a FLPMA Title V Right-of-Way Reservation Renewal (2890.07)

Description of Proposed Action: The proposed action would be for Dr. Matthew Sturm and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to continue scientific research at Ivotuk, and to travel via snowmachine between Ivotuk, Atqasuk, Barrow and Nuiqsut on BLM managed lands. The applicant also proposes to collect data on established travel routes in NPR-A. Staging and storage of limited personal equipment and limited use would be allowed of the BLM Administrative Site at Ivotuk. This ROW is for use of BLM managed lands; other permits may be required for lands managed by other agencies, organizations, or individuals.

The applicant would conduct the following winter activities during the period from 2010 to 2015:

- Traverse the region using snowmachines and sleds to gain safe access to snow sampling and measurement locations. These traverses typically take between one (1) and four (4) weeks, and require tent camping en route. Travel parties are usually between 2 and 6 people. Travel usually occurs in March or April when the snow is at maximum depth, always in excess of 6 inches.
- Collect snow samples for chemical analysis along the traverse route. These typically consist of filling one gallon ziplock plastic bags with snow. Typically 2 to 4 of samples would be collected at each site. On a traverse across the region samples may be collected at 20 to 40 locations.

- Measure snow depth along transects at 20 to 40 locations between the Brooks Range and the Arctic Coast. This is a completely non-destructive activity where a graduated steel probe is pushed through the snow in several hundred places per location to collect snow depths.
- Dig snow pits to the ground at selected locations to measure the snow stratigraphy; the substrate is not disturbed.
- Take snow core samples to determine the snow water equivalent (SWE). The 2-inch diameter corer occasionally cuts the small sections of underlying tundra but leaves little damage.

The exact route of snowmobile traverses will likely follow two routes. The first route, which was used for the 2001 to 2010 ROW, would travel from Ivotuk to Oumalik to Atqasuk to Barrow. The second route is the traditional route from Barrow to the North Slope Borough Wildlife Department hut on the north side of Teshepuk Lake. The rationale for the second route would be to have sustainable locations to collect snow depth and water equivalent measurements. Such a record would be invaluable to management of the NPR-A.

During 2010 to 2015, the applicant intends to use a different traverse route than in the past (2000, 2002 and 2004, i.e., from Ivotuk from Nome). The new traverse would be from Ivotuk to Anaktuvuk Pass.

Part I: Plan Conformance Review

The proposed action is subject to the following planning documents: the Northeast National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Supplemental Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS) dated July 2008, the Northwest National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS) 2004, the Biological Opinion for Bureau of Land Management for the Northern Planning Areas of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, July 2008, and the Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan and EIS of 1989. The proposed action is not inconsistent with the purposes of the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976.

/s/ Shane Walker
Natural Resource Specialist
Arctic Field Office

June 30, 2010
Date

Part II: NEPA Review

Categorical Exclusion Reference

The action described above generally does not require the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS), as it has been found to not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. The applicable Categorical Exclusion reference is 516 DM 11.9 E(9). This reference states, “[r]enewals and assignments of leases, permits, or rights-of-way where no additional rights are conveyed beyond those granted by the original authorizations.” This right-of-way renewal conveys no additional rights granted by the original authorization.

Exceptions to Categorical Exclusion Documentation

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

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		X

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).		
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/s/ Shane Walker
Natural Resource Specialist
Arctic Field Office

June 30, 2010
Date