



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Glennallen Field Office
P.O. Box 147
Glennallen, Alaska 99588
<http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/fo/gdo.html>

**Environmental Assessment
Coal Mine #5 Cabin
Applicant: State of Alaska, Dept. of Fish & Game
Case File Number: AA-092903
DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2011-0017-EA**



Location:
Section 9, T. 14 S., R.10 E., Fairbanks Meridian

Prepared By:
Brenda Becker
Realty Specialist
June 12, 2011

1.0 Introduction

In March 2008, the State of Alaska, Dept of Fish & Game (ADF&G) applied for a recreation & public purposes (R&PP) lease to construct an administrative/public use cabin on public lands located along a dirt and gravel road known as Coal Mine Road off of the Richardson Highway at mile 242. This was authorized in October 2009. During the time that this cabin has been in place, ADF&G has received comments requesting another cabin that is closer to the Richardson Highway.

On April 6, 2011, ADF&G submitted an application for an administrative/public use cabin to be located closer to the Richardson Highway, at Coal Mine #5 Lake (Figure 1). This cabin will be on public lands in the Jarvis Creek area. The cabin will be 16' X 16' on an elevated platform with a pit style latrine. The cabin will be constructed out of 6," 3-sided logs with a metal roof. The latrine will be 4' X 4' with plywood walls and a metal roof. Construction would likely be accomplished over an approximate 6 week period sometime during the July thru September building season. The cabin will be constructed, maintained and administered by ADF&F.

The proposed project is located approximately 126 miles northeast of Glennallen, Alaska, and approximately 23 miles south of Delta Junction, Alaska. The area is mostly used for recreational purposes and hunting.

Access to this cabin is along an existing/established trail, that is utilized by both the public and ADF&G to access the lake for fishing purposes and to access public lands for hunting and recreational purposes (Figure 2). This area gets year round use for recreational purposes.

1.1 BLM's Purpose and Need

The purpose of the action is to provide an administrative/public use cabin in an area where the weather changes rapidly and the public has requested additional cabins. The need for the action is established by the BLM's responsibility under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) to respond to a request for a minimum impact permit for an administrative/public use cabin on public lands.

1.2 Decisions to be Made

The decision to be made is whether to authorize ADFG to construct a public use cabin in this area. The authorization would consist of a lease for a term of five years with the option for renewal, for a 100' X 100', .25 acre site encompassing the cabin and an outhouse.

1.3 Decision Framework and Policy

The East Alaska Resource Management Plan (EARMP) of september 2007 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) provide the overall long term management direction for the BLM Glennallen Field Office. The EARMP and FLPMA are the decision documents and legal basis for the integrated long term resource planning on BLM Glennallen Field Office managed lands. They establish the direction and goals for the BLM to follow for the management of these lands and resources. The proposed action and alternatives are consistent with the EARMP and FLPMA. Specifically, the proposed action is consistent with the following sections of the EARMP:

I. LANDS AND REALTY

I-1: Goals

- Provide a balance between land use (rights-of-way, land use permits, leases and sales) and resource protection that best serves the public at large.

The proposed action is consistent with the following laws and Executive Orders:

- Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) Section 810
- National Historic Preservation Act as Amended 1992
- Paleontological Resources Preservation Act of 2009
- The Bald Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (as amended 1959, 1962, 1972, and 1978)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (as amended 1936, 1960, 1969, 1974, 1978, 1986, and 1989)
- North America Wetlands Conservation Act of 1989 (as amended 1990 and 1994)
- Executive Order 11987 of May 1977 (Exotic Organisms)
- Executive Order 11990 of May 1977 (Protection of Wetlands)
- Clean Water Act (1972)
- Public Land Order 5150

1.4 Land Status

This cabin is located on public lands, within the Public Land Order (PLO) 5150 corridor. The proposed action is consistent with PLO 5150. Sec. 3 of this PLO states: “the lands withdrawn by this order shall be subject to administration by the Secretary of the Interior under applicable laws and regulations and shall continue to be subject to his authority to make contracts and to grant licenses, permits, rights-of-way, easements and leases other than mineral leases.”

There are no Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) selections on any lands affected by the proposed action.

1.5 Scoping and Issues

Public notice for this Environmental Assessment (EA) was posted on April 21, 2011, on the BLM Glennallen Field Office Website NEPA log:

[HTTP://WWW.BLM.GOV/AK/ST/EN/INFO/NEPA/GFO_NEPA_REGISTER.HTML](http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/info/NEPA/GFO_NEPA_REGISTER.HTML). No comments have been received to date.

An interdisciplinary team was assembled and met on April 7, 2011. Internal scoping revealed several issues:

- Vegetation. What impacts would the cabin construction have on vegetative resources in the area, including the spread of noxious weeds?
- Travel Management. What impacts would the cabin construction have on ATV use in the area, both on trails and off of existing trails?
- Soils. Will the cabin construction have any direct or indirect effects on erosion?

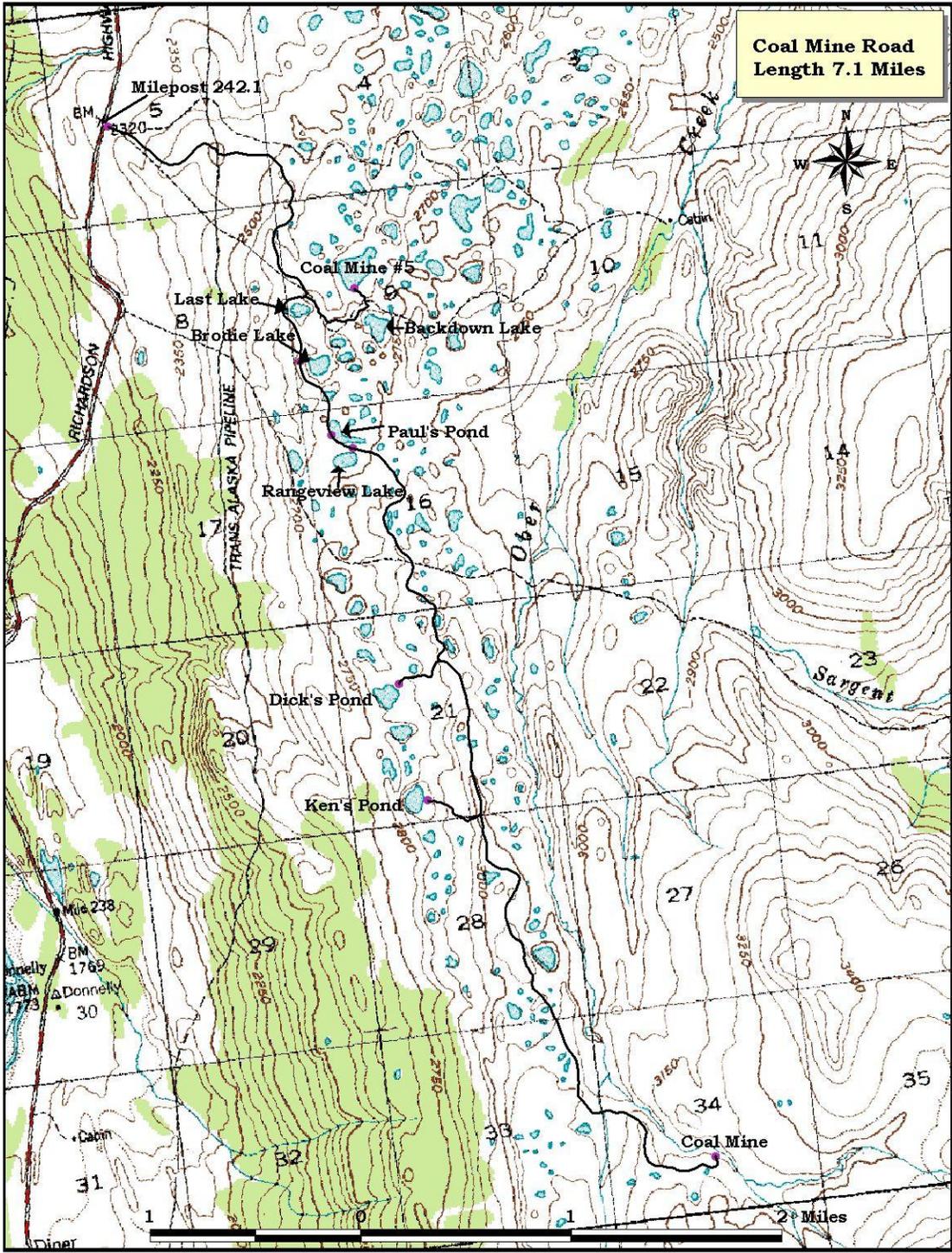


Figure 1: Map of area where the cabin will be located.

2.0 Proposed Action and Alternatives

ADF&G is requesting a permit to construct a 16' X 16' public use cabin on an elevated platform and the construction of a pit style latrine. The cabin will be constructed out of 6," 3-sided logs with a metal roof, the latrine will be 4' X 4' with plywood walls and a metal roof.



Figure 2. Closer look of area where cabin will be located.

2.1 Alternatives being considered by the BLM

The NEPA requires that a reasonable range of alternatives to address the issues be developed for analysis. Based on the issues, there are two alternatives for consideration.

Alternative 1: Is the No Action alternative as required by NEPA.

Alternative 2: This alternative is the action as proposed by the applicant.

2.1.1 Alternative 1- No Action: Do not approve the minimum impact permit

The No Action Alternative would deny the applicant's request for a short term/minimum impact permit and subsequent lease for the construction of an administrative and public use cabin and latrine. This would leave this area with just a place for tent camping.

2.1.2 Alternative 2- The action as proposed by the applicant

The BLM Glennallen Field Office is considering authorization of a short term minimum impact permit while a long-term lease is being developed. This will allow the applicant to construct the cabin and latrine during the 2011 July to September construction season.

3.0 Affected Environment

This section describes the existing environment and the current conditions of important resources in the area of the cabin that would be affected by any of the alternatives under consideration. Topics examined include:

- Subsistence and Wildlife
- Vegetation and Invasive Weeds
- Travel Management and Recreation
- Visual Resources
- Archaeology
- Riparian, Fisheries and Hydrology
- Soils

For more information on the affected environment, please refer to the East Alaska Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement.

3.1 Subsistence and Wildlife

Mammals common within the general vicinity of the Project Area include moose, caribou, bear, snowshoe hare, beaver, fox, coyote, wolf, wolverine, weasel, mink, muskrat and other small mammals.

The proposed cabin site is in the Delta Controlled Use Area of Game Management Unit (GMU) 20D. In GMU 20D, there is no federal open season for hunting caribou or moose. However, the state has an open season for moose in the DCUA.

According to Alaska Department of Fish & Game's Annual Management and Harvest report, two separate caribou herds utilize the Coal Mine Road/Coal Mine area at least seasonally during each year; these herds are the Delta caribou herd and the Macomb caribou herd.

The southwestern Unit 20D moose population supports the highest harvest level in the unit (Dubois 2004); in part, this amount of harvest is due to easy access (including along the Coal Mine Road), the productive habitat created through a combination of agricultural land clearing, prescribed fire and wild fires, and trapping and predator control efforts. Moose are most abundant in recently burned areas that contain willow and birch shrubs, timberline plateaus, and along the major rivers of South-central and Interior Alaska.

Bison found in interior Alaska are an introduced species that originated in 1928 from transplants in Montana to the Delta Junction area. Bison subsist on forage and browse species found along Interior Alaska river corridors and in recent burns. Their year-round diet consists of various grasses, forbs, and shrubs where available (ADF&G 1994). Bison may be seen in the vicinity of the proposed cabin site especially along the Delta River. They generally travel south on the Delta River system in search of forage in the summer then travel north east to winter near farmlands in the vicinity of Delta Junction. Bison may occasionally be found on the Coal Mine

road but they would likely prefer to a route farther north on the Delta River before turning east towards Delta Junction.

Major predators here are the brown and black bear and the gray wolf. A wolf pack is known to annually den in a nearby drainage within 10 miles of the Project Area. Trapping is a common winter activity for local residents seeking a variety of furbearers including wolves, coyote, fox, lynx, muskrat, and wolverine.

Special Status Species: BLM-Alaska Sensitive Status Species mammals that may occur within the Project Area is the Canada lynx.

3.2 Vegetation and Invasive Weeds

Vegetation occurring in the Project Area is representative of the high alpine and include open forest, low shrub, mesic shrub tundra, tussock tundra and open taiga vegetation classification types. Sparse scattered patches of trees exist at this elevation and include black spruce, and alder. The abundant low shrubs in the area are dominated by dwarf birch, willow, alder, Labrador tea, and spirea. A number of herbs, grasses, mosses, and sedges are also found in the meadows throughout project area including blueberry, cranberry, rose, and dryus. The presence of BLM Sensitive Status plant species or other rare plants at this site is currently unknown. Public concern about the harmful effects of uncontrolled non-native weeds continues to increase. Although a survey for the presence and extent of non-native plants at the project site has not been conducted, a site visit in late June 2011 revealed no non-native plants at the site. It is assumed that a minimal number of low ranking non-native plants do exist in the area from current recreational uses.

3.3 Travel Management and Recreation

Recreational uses include year round recreational use. All Terrain Vehicles (ATV) are used to access hunting, fishing, and camping opportunities. This area is accessible off the Richardson Highway and has existing trails to get to the “Kettle” lakes that ADF&G stock with fish. There are approximately 10 miles of Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) trails within this area. Use numbers were estimated at 2,598 users in federal fiscal year 2010. The Coal Mine Road provides access to several small lakes stocked by ADF&G. Numerous dispersed campsites have been established in this area and several trails can be accessed from the road. The Delta Range Special Recreation Management Area is a popular hunting and winter use area for residents of Delta Junction and Fairbanks. The area is currently classified as a Backcountry Routed Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class. This is an area that is characterized by a generally natural environment with moderate evidence of the sights and sounds of humans. Resource modification and utilization practices are evident, but harmonize with the natural environment.

3.4 Visual Resource Management (VRM)

The proposed project is located approximately 4 miles from the Richardson Highway and is accessed from the same highway via Coal Mine Road. The proposed cabin site would not be visible from the highway or Coal Mine Road. In the immediate area of the Proposed Action the terrain is dominated by low rolling hills characteristic of recently-glaciated terrain in the lower reaches of large valley glaciers. Views from the Richardson Highway include the mountains of the east-central Alaska Range, and Donnelly Dome, a low hill that appears dominant because it is close to the highway. There are existing developments that are currently visible from within the Project Area, including the Trans-Alaska pipeline, the Richardson Highway, and a communication tower. Because of the high scenic value in the area, it has been identified to be managed under a Class II Visual Resources management class, with an objective to maintain the existing character of the landscape.

3.5 Archaeology

A cultural resource survey of the proposed project area was conducted by the Glennallen Field Office Archaeologist on June 3rd, 2011. No archaeological or paleontological resources were located.

3.6 Riparian, and Fisheries

Riparian vegetation surrounding the lake consists of alder, willow and sedges. The majority of riparian area surrounding the lake is in pristine condition. The lake is surrounded by a 30' wetland buffer of sedges. This wetland buffer will not allow fishing from the shoreline without getting wet or wearing waders. The majority of fishing will occur from a canoe or through the ice in the winter. The current fishery management for the lake is a put-grow-and-take fishery of stocked hatchery-reared trout. The lake is landlocked and will be stocked with one or a mix of the following species: rainbow trout, Arctic grayling, Arctic char, coho and Chinook salmon. The proposed action is not anticipated to result in significant environmental effects to the riparian area or fisheries.

3.7 Soils

The general area within the Alaska Range consists of glaciated intermountain basins dominated by porous, gravelly, glacial outwash deposits. Landforms include hills, pitted outwash plains, kettle lakes, and sinuous eskers. Surface drainage patterns are not well established, and only a few of the lakes within the area are connected by streams. Soils immediately adjacent to the project site generally consist of a thin mantle of loess over glacial outwash or till and organic materials. Because of the undulating topography, soils likely differ from one micro-site to another.

4.0 Environmental Impacts

4.1 Effects of Alternative 1: No Action

4.1.1 Vegetation and Invasive Weeds

Direct Effects: There would be no further disturbance to the existing vegetation within the cabin area. Vegetation has already been impacted by past and continued use. The existing vegetation not impacted from the cabin site would continue to grow in the natural setting providing the benefits of the ecosystem. Any rare or sensitive status species present would not be impacted further and there would be less potential for introduction and/or spread of non native plant species into the area, as there would not be an increase in use.

4.1.2 Travel Management and Recreation

No direct effects to travel management and recreation are anticipated from the no action alternative.

4.1.3 Soils

No direct or indirect effects to soils or erosion are anticipated from the no action alternative.

4.2 Effects of Alternative 2 (The Proposed Alternative):

4.2.1 Vegetation and Invasive Weeds

Direct Effects: Surface disturbance and loss of vegetation will result from construction activities and expected increased recreational use including OHV use. Construction activities include material and personnel access/egress and construction of cabin structure. Unacceptable levels of non-native plants could adversely affect the quality of recreational experience of this proposal. Increased use will result from additional structures

and expand the potential for the introduction and spread of weeds in to the project site and general area. Highway vehicles and ORVs are the primary vectors for the movement of seeds.

Indirect Effects: The goal is to keep noxious weed populations low enough to prevent unacceptable spread, damage, and to encourage desirable native vegetation to permanently replace non-native weeds. If the alterations in the quality or quantity of the original habitat are severe enough, plant populations may be substantially altered, resulting in displacement or even elimination of species.

4.2.2 Travel Management and Recreation

Direct Effects: The establishment of a second cabin in the Coal Mine road area is expected to lead to increased user numbers. However, the travel network system within the area is developed and able to support additional OHV travel as well as street vehicles.

Indirect Effects: There may be increased use and creation of branch trails due to overall increased user numbers in the general area. However, branch trails tend to be created by hunters, and it is expected that few users of the cabin in the summer time would venture off of the established trails to the point that they would create branch trails.

4.1.3 Soils

Direct Effects: An additional cabin structure will increase recreational opportunities in the area and a majority of that use will be by ORVs. The most serious and permanent impact from OHVs is soil erosion, with water being the primary displacement mechanism. Unauthorized OHV trails have a high potential to adversely impact soil resources as a result of erosion, sedimentation, and compaction. While soil compaction may recover to some degree during periods of non-use, erosion usually continues once started. Most OHVs have powerful motors and deeply treaded tires. When the tires spin they displace large amounts of soil quickly, removing vegetation and soils that can create or accelerating rutting. This is especially evident on steep slopes and wetland crossings. The displaced soil often finds its way into waterways, resulting in increased turbidity and sedimentation. This can negatively impact water quality and numerous aquatic organisms. This alternative does not formally identify and rehabilitate unauthorized OHV trails, and consequently, would adversely impact soil resources.

Indirect Effects: The primary concern related to soil properties and OHV use is the development of unauthorized OHV trails. Unauthorized OHV trails are not maintained by BLM, and can result in additional trail proliferation potentially impacting soil resources through vegetation loss, soil compaction, and soil erosion. Continued use of unauthorized trails will lead to further braiding and erosion, and may contribute to increased sedimentation into the hydrological system. Designated OHV trails receive trail maintenance to prevent negative impacts to soil properties.

Concentrated visitor use will increase the potential for vegetation trampling, soil compaction, and soil erosion, especially immediately adjacent to access trails and structures. So far, trampling impacts are limited to vegetation loss and soil compaction within the proposed site. Moderate erosion is occurring, although the potential for increased erosion is possible, especially with increased visitor use.

5.0 Coordination and Consultation

5.1 Interdisciplinary Team Members Participating on ID Team, March 8, 2011

John Jangala, Archaeologist, Bureau of Land Management
Denton Hamby, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Bureau of Land Management
Cory Larson, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Bureau of Land Management
Merben Cebrian, Wildlife Biologist, Bureau of Land Management
Ben Seifert, Forester/Vegetation Specialist, Bureau of Land Management
Elijah Waters, Branch Chief, Bureau of Land Management
Joseph Hart, Realty Specialist, Bureau of Land Management
Tim Sundlov, Fisheries Biologist, Bureau of Land Management

5.2 Non Governmental Organizations, Native Entities, Private Parties

BLM NEPA guidance requires public involvement in the preparation of all Environmental Assessments. Public notice for this EA was posted on April 11, 2011, on the BLM Glennallen Field Office Website NEPA log: [HTTP://WWW.BLM.GOV/AK/ST/EN/INFO/NEPA/GFO_NEPA_REGISTER.HTML](http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/info/NEPA/GFO_NEPA_REGISTER.HTML). No comments have been received.

The lands affected by the proposed action are not encumbered by ANCSA selections. There are no Native Villages in the vicinity, therefore no Native Entities were consulted.

Compliance with ANILCA Section 810

E.A No.: DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2011-0017-EA

Applicant(s): State of Alaska, Department of Fish & Game

Evaluation by: Merben R. Cebrian

1. Evaluation and Finding of Alternative 1: The No Action Alternative

1. A. Effect of Alternative I on subsistence uses and needs:

Fisheries: There is no federally regulated subsistence fishery in the vicinity of the proposed action. Therefore Alternative 1 has no significant effect on subsistence fishery uses and needs.

Wildlife: This alternative proposes to continue current management practices in the area where the proposed action is to occur. Current practices are considered adequate to meet subsistence needs. There is a state general hunt for moose in the area. However, there is no regulated federal subsistence hunting for moose and caribou in the area. Therefore, this alternative will have no significant effect on subsistence uses and needs.

Other resources: The No Action Alternative will not significantly affect other harvestable resources such as berries, willows, firewood, and spruce roots. Current practices are considered adequate to meet subsistence needs. Therefore, this alternative will have no significant effect on subsistence uses and needs.

1. B. Availability of other lands, if any, for the purposes sought to be achieved:

There are other lands available for the purposes sought after by the applicant. However, the Alaskan Department of Fish & Game (AD&G) stocks the pond located next to the proposed cabin site with fish for recreational fishing. Therefore it is convenient for them to request for a public use cabin to be at the proposed site.

1. C. Other alternatives, if any, which would reduce or eliminate the use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands needed for subsistence purposes:

The only alternative that would reduce or eliminate the use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands needed for subsistence purposes is to not allow or permit any activities that conflict with subsistence uses. However, such an alternative is not viable because the BLM manages public lands for multiple uses.

2. D. Finding:

Under Alternative 2 (Proposed Action), access to subsistence resources will not be hampered by the proposed activity. The proposed action will not significantly restrict subsistence uses and needs in or near the proposed activity area. There is no reasonably foreseeable significant

decrease in the abundance of harvestable resources and in the distribution of harvestable resources due to the proposed action.

s/s Merben R. Cebrian
Wildlife Biologist
BLM, Glennallen Field Office

13 May 2011
Date

Case File Number: AA-92903
DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2011-0017-EA

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Glennallen Field Office
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DECISION RECORD

State of Alaska, Dept of Fish and Game, Public Use Cabin
Case File Number: AA-92903
DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2011-0017-EA

I. Decision:

It is my decision to authorize a short term authorization for State of Alaska, Dept of Fish and Game for a public use cabin at Coal Mine #5 located on BLM lands within Section 9, T. 14 S., R. 10 E., Fairbanks Meridian until the longer term R&PP lease is authorized. Stipulations and conditions are attached.

II. Proposed Action:

The proposed action is to authorize a short term authorization to the State of Alaska, Dept of Fish and Game for a public use cabin at Coal Mine #5 until the longer term R&PP Lease is processed. The short term authorization would be authorized under the authority of the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1761). The proposed action is in conformance with the East Alaska Resource Management Plan, Approved: September, 2007.

III. Rationale for the Decision:

The rationale for the decision is based on the need to authorize this cabin for public use in this area.

The proposed action is in conformance with the East Alaska Resource Management Plan, Approved: September, 2007. The area of the proposed activity is not within a critical subsistence use area and no serious wildlife problems are anticipated.

IV. ANILCA Section 810 Compliance:

The proposed action will not significantly restrict subsistence uses. No reasonably foreseeable and significant decrease in the abundance of harvestable resources or in the distribution of harvestable resources, and nor reasonably foreseeable limitations on harvester access will result from the proposed action.

V. Adverse Energy Impact Compliance:

This action has been analyzed as required by Washington Office Instruction

**Case File Number: AA-12479, AA-12918,
AA-12919, AA-41791, and AA-92888
DOI-BLM-AK-A010-2011-0014-CX**

Memorandum 2002-053 to determine if it will cause an adverse impact on energy development. The action will not have an adverse direct or indirect impact on energy development, production or distribution. The preparation of a Statement of Adverse Energy Impact is not required.

VI. Consultation and Coordination:

Public participation was accomplished through the development of the East Alaska Resource Management Plan which anticipated routine land authorizations in accordance with FLPMA. Adequate measures to protect public lands through stipulations and required operating procedures are in place. Internal scoping was conducted by GFO staff and included threatened and endangered species, cultural clearances and ANILCA 810 analysis.

VII. Compliance and Monitoring Plan:

Compliance and monitoring of this authorization will be conducted by the BLM Glennallen Field Office. Inspections will be made on a regular basis and after the applicant reclaims the land upon termination of the authorization.

s/s Elizabeth Maclean
Elizabeth Maclean
Glennallen Field Manager

7/14/11
Date

Attachments: Terms and Stipulations

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Glennallen Field Office

NEPA Interdisciplinary Review

Project Name: ADF&G, Coal Mine #5 Cabin Lease

Casefile Number: AA-92903

NEPA Document Number: DOI-BLM-AKA-020-2011-0017-EA

NEPA Preparer: Brenda Becker

Please return to preparer by: May 12, 2011

Staff Specialist	Resource Area	Comments Provided Yes / No	Date Reviewed
Brenda Becker	Lands and Realty		
Marcia Butorac	Recreation and Facilities	Yes	4/25/2011
Merben Cebrian	ANILCA, Section 810	Yes	5/13/2011
Merben Cebrian	T&E Animals	No	5/13/2011
Merben Cebrian	T&E Plants	No	5/13/2011
Merben Cebrian	Wildlife	Yes	5/13/2011
Heath Emmons	Wild and Scenic Rivers	No	5/1/2011
Marnie Graham	Public Affairs	Yes	5/5/2011
Denton Hamby	Special Recreation Use	No	4/25/2011
Denton Hamby	Visual Resources	Yes	4/25/2011
Brad Honerlaw	Law Enforcement	No	6/2/2011
Alysia White	Law Enforcement		
John Jangala	Cultural Heritage	Yes	6/9/2011
John Jangala	Paleontology	Yes	6/9/2011
Cory Larson	Travel Management	Yes	4/25/2011
James Whitlock	Minerals		
Ben Seifert	Fire Management	No	5/24/2011
Ben Seifert	Forestry	No	5/24/2011
Ben Seifert	Invasive Weeds	Yes	6/28/2011
Ben Seifert	Soils	Yes	
Tim Sundlov	Air Quality		
Tim Sundlov	Riparian & Wetlands	No	6/2/2011
Mike Sondergaard	Water Quality	No	6/2/2011
Tim Sundlov	Fish Biology	No	6/2/2011
Joseph Hart	Hazardous Materials	No	5/17/2011
Elijah Waters	Branch Chief - Resources		

Authorized Officer Review: s/s Elizabeth Maclean

Date: 7/14/11