



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Glennallen Field Office
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<http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/fo/gdo.html>

Administrative Determination (AD) Documentation of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) (Helicopter supported Recreation and commercial filming within the Thompson Pass Area)

**Applicant: 2011 Heli-Ski Operators
NEPA Number
DOI-BLM-AK-A020-2011-0005-DNA**



Location:

. The specific area of analysis includes all the BLM managed lands encompassed completely by or in portions of: BLM managed lands within Thompson Pass encompassed completely by or in portions of: T.6S., R.1E.; T.6S., R.1W.; T.7S., R.1W.; T.7S., R.1E.; T.8S., R.1W.; T.8S., R.4W.; T.8S., R.7W.; T.8S., R.8W.; T.8S., R.1E.; T.8S., R.2E.; T.9S., R.2W.; T.10S., R.4W.; T.10S., R.5W.; T.10S., R.6W.; Copper River Meridian

Prepared By:
Denton Hamby
Outdoor Recreation Planner
February 14, 2011

Administrative Determination (AD)
Documentation of Land Use Plan Conformance and NEPA Adequacy (DNA)
U.S. Department of the Interior - Bureau of Land Management
Glennallen Field Office

A). BLM Office: Glennallen Field Office

Serial Case Files No:

AA81350/AA083309

AA81716/AA082942

AA085645

Proposed Action Title/Type: Special Recreation Permit 1 year Renewal (2930)

Location of proposed Action: Helicopter Supported Recreation on BLM administered lands within Thompson Pass and surrounding BLM administered lands.

See attached maps (Heliski Operations Area Land Status)

Description of Proposed Action: The BLM Glennallen Field Office has received five renewal applications for commercial heli-ski operations on BLM administered lands north and south of Thompson Pass. Operations occur on snow covered slopes, ridge tops and valley bottoms. All five operations requesting renewal have held BLM permits through previous years and have operated on BLM lands since 2001. The subject proposals would help meet public demand for guided winter recreational activities. This renewal would be valid for the 2011 operating season, February 15th through May 15th 2011.

Applicants:

Theo Meiners/ Alaska Rendezvous Guides

Scott Raynor /Valdez Heli Guides

Dave Rintalla /Alaska Backcountry Adventures

Matt White/ Valdez Heli-Camps

Dean Cummings/ H2O Guides

B). Conformance with

This type of recreational activity is part of the BLM mission of achieving quality land management under sustainable multiple use management guidelines and meeting the diverse needs of the people.

The Glennallen Field Office operates under the East Alaska Resource Management Plan (EARMP) of 2007. The proposed action has been reviewed and determined to be in compliance with the EARMP for authorized allocations within the proposed action area.

The proposed action is in conformance with the plan and is consistent with the following planning decisions: (Page 34-38 of the EARMP)

M. RECREATION

Note: See the Travel Management section for discussion of motorized and non-motorized use for recreational and other purposes.

M-1: Goal

Manage recreation to maintain a diversity of recreational opportunities.

4. Tielkel Area

See Map 12, page 74. This area consists predominantly of State-selected lands, although there is some Native-selected land as well. This section describes two management scenarios: interim describes management of State- and Native-selected lands in the area until conveyance occurs, and long-term describes management of the lands if they are retained in long-term Federal ownership.

Interim Management (Tielkel Area)

Under interim management, only the unencumbered BLM lands in the Tielkel corridor would be designated as an SRMA. Objectives would be to manage for roaded natural, semi-primitive non-motorized, and semi-primitive motorized recreation experiences within the corridor. OHVs would be “limited” to designated trails on unencumbered BLM lands. Implementation-level considerations would include maintenance of specific trails as non-motorized (including snowmachines), construction of both non-motorized and motorized trail loops, and vehicle class restrictions (such as weight limitations) on specific trails. Where these designations affect trails on State-selected lands, the BLM would work with the State of Alaska on designations. Existing withdrawals against mineral leasing and locatable mineral entry within the transportation and utility corridor would remain in place. This area would be considered a priority area for forest management. This SRMA would not preclude timber management activities, but proposed timber sales would consider impacts to recreational facilities, experiences, and viewsheds. Temporary roads utilized for forestry access may be considered for retention if they are within areas managed for a roaded natural recreation experience. This SRMA is within the transportation and utility corridor; this would remain the area’s primary purpose.

Visitor use limits would be determined for helicopter-supported commercial uses, consistent with existing ROS classes. Recreational facilities would include updating and development of selected trailheads, construction of one wayside, and consideration of a bike trail utilizing the old Richardson Highway. The Egan cabin would be considered for public use.

C). Identify applicable NEPA documents and other related documents that cover the Proposed Action.

(EA #AK-050-EA-05-02)Environmental Assessment for Commercially Guided Helicopter Skiing and Associated Commercial Filming/Photography in the Thompson Pass and Surrounding Public Lands

(EA #AK-050-EA-01-22)Environmental Assessment for Commercially Guided Helicopter Skiing, and the World Extreme Skiing Competition in the Thompson Pass and Surrounding Public Lands

(AK-012-08-EA-016)Environmental Assessment for winter recreational activities associated with Guided backcountry ski touring on BLM administered lands in the Thompson Pass area.

D). NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the current Proposed Action substantially the same action (or is a part of that action) as previously analyzed? Is the current Proposed Action located at a site specifically analyzed in an existing document?

The proposed action is similar as previously analyzed in the NEPA documents referenced above. Up to Five operators have traditionally been permitted through the Glennallen Field Office since 2001. The action is located in the region analyzed in the existing NEPA documents. The majority of this activity takes place on lands administered by the State of Alaska.

2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA Document(s) appropriate with respect to the current proposed action, given the current environmental concerns, interest, and resource values?

Yes, the range of alternatives presented is appropriate and sufficient in respect to the proposed action.

3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances?

No new information or circumstances has become available that would change the existing analysis.

4. Does the methodology and analytical approach used in the existing NEPA document(s) continue to be appropriate for the current Proposed Action? Yes, the existing NEPA documentation stipulations and mitigation measures identified have covered the Proposed Action appropriately for the safety of visitors and the protection of federally administered resources.

5. Are the direct and indirect impacts of the current proposed action substantially unchanged from those identified in the existing NEPA document(s)? Does the existing NEPA document analyze site-specific impacts related to the current proposed actions? The Impacts of the Proposed Action identified remain unchanged to those that were identified in the existing NEPA. Site specific impacts are addressed in the existing NEPA document.

6. Are the cumulative impacts that would result from the implementation of the current Proposed Action substantially unchanged from those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Yes, cumulative impacts that would result from the implementation of the current Proposed Action substantially unchanged from those analyzed in the existing NEPA documents.

7. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current Proposed Action?

The existing NEPA adequately addresses public involvement and interagency review.

E). Interdisciplinary Analysis: See attached interdisciplinary review documentation.

F). Mitigation Measures: In addition to the standard recreation permit stipulations for commercial operations, the following special stipulations are adopted and shall apply to this permit. (See attachment)

G). Conclusion: The proposed action does not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation and is in conformance with the East Alaska Resource Management Plan 2007.

s/s Denton Hamby
Denton Hamby, Outdoor Recreation Planner

2/14/2011
Date

s/s Beth Maclean
Glennallen Field Manager

2/22/11
Date



United States Department of the Interior



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SPECIAL STIPULATIONS ADOPTED FROM MITIGATION

In addition to the standard recreation permit stipulations for commercial operations, the following special stipulations are adopted and shall apply to this permit.

- 1) This permit is not valid in those areas shaded in orange and outline in red on the attached map. No activities, i.e., helicopter landings, skiing, snowboarding, or any other activities associated with this permit, are allowed within these areas. These areas are considered no-fly zones for goats and other wildlife from potential harassment due to human activities. These areas may be modified to reflect current use by the affected wildlife. Operators will be notified of any changes on this map. Current research data indicates that a minimum distance of ½ mile (0.8 kilometers) does not cause significant adverse disturbances to mountain goats; continuing research efforts may increase or decrease this minimal distance. Wolverine and bear may use the proposed heli-ski areas during the winter months. Raptors may use the lower slopes for nesting in early spring. Early spring is a time when wildlife is generally the most vulnerable either because of stress due to food availability and predators or because of nesting or calving activity at this time.
- 2) The special use permit will include an advisement from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Statute 16.05.940 which defines “taking” to include pursuing or deliberately disturbing of fish and game. Operators and guides shall comply with this statute at all times. Hovering, circling or harassing wildlife, raptors, or any other wildlife species with the use of a helicopter is a violation of this statute.
- 3) Helicopter operations associated with this permit shall maintain a horizontal distance of at least ½ mile and a vertical altitude of at least 1500 feet outside any area designated as wildlife refugia. Pilots will use flight paths that avoid overflights of designated wildlife refugia, if at all possible.
- 4) Helicopters, operators, guides, clients and custodial pets shall maintain a minimum of ½ mile (0.8 kilometers) from all observed wildlife at all times including under the following special circumstances:
 - a. From any active eagle and osprey nest (April 15 to the end of the heli-ski season)

- b. From any bear or wolverine dens that may have been observed or located through radio telemetry.
- 5) Heli-ski operators and guides shall report all wildlife sightings (number of individual wildlife, precise location, and date/s observed) to the Glennallen Field Office with their post use report.
- 6) The use of explosives is prohibited for avalanche control on permitted lands.
- 7) Heli-ski operators and/or guides shall use GPS equipment and maps to ensure that their permitted activities are occurring within designated areas (heli-ski regions) on Bureau of Land Management lands.
- 8) All fuel storage sites will be temporary and comply with state and federal laws and regulations. Any spill of petroleum products shall be reported and cleaned up in accordance with the rules and regulations established by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the Environmental Protection Agency. All costs incurred in reporting the spill and clean up shall be the responsibility of the party responsible for the spill.
- 9) Because of standing historic structures as well as standing sections of telegraph wire, all permitted operators will avoid helicopter landings and snowcat operations in selected areas within BLM managed lands: the upper Mill Creek and Boulder Creek drainages with T6S, R1W Sections 32 and 28; the unnamed drainage south of Hurtle Creek in T6S, R1W, Section 5; as well as the area south of the Little Tonsina River and north of Mosquito Creek, within T5S, R2E, Section 8, and the southern half of Section 5.
- 10) There shall be no disturbance of any archaeological or historical sites, including graves, telegraph lines and poles as well as remains of cabins or other structures. There shall be no collection of artifacts whatsoever. Also, the collection of vertebrate fossils, including mammoth and mastodon bones, tusks etc., is strictly prohibited.
- 11) If heritage or paleontological resources are encountered during the permitted activities, then these items will be respectfully left in their locations and the Glennallen Field Office's Cultural Resource staff will be notified.
- 12) All helicopters will maintain a 2500-foot vertical and horizontal distance from all observed users as weather and ceilings allow. If weather or other conditions do not allow compliance with the above distances, the helicopter will maintain the greatest vertical distance that is safe for users and helicopter pilots and passengers.
- 13) No motorized activities or events will be authorized for any lands north of 61 degrees, 23 minutes, 4.37 seconds latitude.

- 14) Flights will be conducted in a manner to limit encounters between parties (including unguided parties).
- 15) Helicopters will avoid flying over mountain tops accessible by cross country and backcountry skiers.
- 16) All helicopter skiing operations will occur between sunrise and sunset.
- 17) All Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) rules shall be adhered to.
- 18) Filming activities will be limited to support by helicopters already in use for heli-ski operations.
- 19) No snowcat trail construction or brushing is authorized.
- 20) As part of their special recreation permit requirement, permittees will be required to prepare an Operation and Safety Plan for BLM approval. This plan will include:
 - i. Avalanche safety addressing client safety and the safety of other backcountry users in the area.
 - ii. Helicopter safety.
 - iii. Emergency rescue, and
 - iv. Guide requirements
- 21) Permittees will be required to participate in a communication plan, revised annually, that will have as a goal the continuation of close communication and cooperation between operators. The emphasis will be on safety and reasonable sharing of available operating areas for all operators.
- 22) A complete post season use report must be filed within 30 days of completion of operations. Late reports will be subject to late fees of \$50.00 per month and will reflect negatively on the permittee's performance record.
- 23) The Bureau of Land Management reserves the right to schedule mandatory pre or post season meetings to discuss any issues or items associated with this permit. Each permittee (or a representative of the organization) shall be expected to attend and participate in these meetings.
- 24) Annual permit renewal shall be based upon permit performance which is associated with stipulation compliance. Maps distributed annually to the helicopter skiing operators are not to be reproduced without expressed written permission from the Glennallen Field Office Field Manager.
- 25) You are authorized to perform commercial filming in conjunction with this permit only when this activity takes place at the same time, location, and in association with your activities permitted under this SRP. In this instance, both the SRP fee and commercial filming fee will be charged and submitted to the BLM.

- 26) Filming is limited to the use of handheld and tripod mounted cameras. Use of dollies, tracks, cranes, high lines, aircraft and other camera support devices are not allowed, unless the camera support device is part of the recreation activity authorized under this SRP. Construction or removal of vegetation for the creation of a camera platform or to clear a shot is not allowed. No more than two, battery-powered, auxiliary lighting sources may be used.
- 27) The permittee shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws; ordinances; regulations; orders; postings; or written requirements applicable to the area or operations covered by the SRP. The permittee shall ensure that all persons operating under the authorization have obtained all required Federal, State, and local licenses or registrations. The permittee shall make every reasonable effort to ensure compliance with these requirements by all agents of the permittee and by all clients, customers, participants, or spectators under the permittee's supervision.
- 28) An SRP authorizes special uses of BLM-managed public lands and related waters and, should circumstances warrant, the permit may be modified by the BLM at any time, including the amount of use. The AO may suspend an SRP, if necessary to protect public resources, health, safety, or the environment, or as a result of noncompliance with permits stipulations.
- 29) No value shall be assigned to or claimed for the permit, or for the occupancy or use of Federal lands or related waters granted thereupon. The permit privileges are not to be considered property on which the permittee shall be entitled to earn or receive any return, income, price or compensation. The use of a permit as collateral is not recognized by the BLM.
- 30) Unless expressly stated, the SRP does not create an exclusive right of use of an area by the permittee. The permittee shall not interfere with other valid uses of the federal land by other users. The United States reserves the right to use any part of the area for any purpose.
- 31) The permittee or permittee's representative may not assign, contract, or sublease any portion of the permit authorization or interest therein, directly or indirectly, voluntarily or involuntarily. However, the AO may approve contracting of equipment or services in advance, if necessary to supplement a permittee's operations. Such contracting should not constitute more than half the required equipment or services for any one trip and the permittee must retain operational control of the permitted activity. If equipment or services are contracted, the permittee shall continue to be responsible for compliance with all stipulations and conditions of the permit. This permit may not be reassigned or transferred by the permittee.
- 32) All advertising and representations made to the public and the AO must be accurate. Although the addresses and telephone numbers of the BLM may be included in advertising materials, official agency symbols may not be used without written

permission by the BLM. The permittee shall not use advertising that attempts to portray or represent the activities as being conducted by the BLM. The permittee may not portray or represent the permit fee as a special Federal user's tax.

- 33) The permittee must assume responsibility for inspecting the permitted area for any existing or new hazardous conditions, (e.g., trail and route conditions, landslides, avalanches, rocks, changing water or weather conditions, falling limbs or trees, submerged objects, hazardous wildlife, or other hazards) that present risks for which the permittee assumes responsibility.
- 34) The permittee shall notify the authorized officer of any accident which occurs while involved in activities authorized by this permit which results in: death, personal injury requiring hospitalization or emergency evacuation, or in property damage greater than \$2,500 (lesser amounts if established by State law). Reports should be submitted within 48 hours in the case of death or injury, or 10 days in accidents involving property damage.
- 35) In the event of default on any mortgage or other indebtedness, such as bankruptcy, creditors shall not succeed to the operating rights or privileges of the permittee's SRP.
- 36) The permittee cannot, unless specifically authorized, erect, construct, or place any building, structure, or other fixture on public lands. Upon leaving, the lands must be restored as nearly as possible to pre-existing conditions.
- 37) The permit, or copies thereof, shall be kept with the authorized individual(s) and presented to any BLM representative upon request as proof of authorization.
- 38) The AO, or a duly authorized representative of the BLM, may examine any of the records or other documents related to the permit, the permittee or permittee's operator, employee, or agent for up to 3 years after expiration of the permit.

I declare I have read and understand all of the stipulations associated with this Special Recreation Permit. I acknowledge that as signee of the permit and these stipulations that I am fully responsible for all of the mitigation measures and compliance with stated permit stipulations and that non-compliance with any permit stipulations will be grounds for denial of future permits, and/or cancellation, and/or prosecution of applicable Federal, State and/or Local laws.

Applicant's Name (Print)

Signature

Date