

United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Northeastern States Field Office  
LLES003420

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**Categorical Exclusion/Decision Documentation**  
**Thunder Bay Island Withdrawal Revocation**

NEPA #: DOI-BLM-ES-0030-2012-0020-CX

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**Date:** May 6, 2014

**Type of Action:** Withdrawal Revocation  
Section 204, Federal Land Policy and Management Act

**Serial Number:** MIES 012677

**Location:** Michigan Meridian  
Township 30 North, Range 10 East,  
Section 3,  
Township 31 North, Range 10 East,  
Section 33, lot 5,  
Section 34, lots 1, 2, and 3.  
Alpena County, Michigan

**Project Acreage:** 168.05 acres

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

**It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.**

## CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION/DECISION DOCUMENTATION

- 1. Proponent:** United States Coast Guard  
**NEPA #:** DOI-BLM-ES-0030-2012-0020-CX  
**Project Name:** Thunder Bay Island, Withdrawal Revocation  
**Case File Number:** MIES 012677  
**Date of Application:** September 12, 1973  
**Location:** Michigan Meridian  
Township 30 North, Range 10 East,  
Section 3,  
Township 31 North, Range 10 East,  
Section 33, lot 5,  
Section 34, lots 1, 2, and 3.  
Alpena County, Michigan

Containing 168.05 acres in Alpena County, Lake Huron, Michigan

- 2. BLM Field Office:** Eastern States, Northeastern States Field Office, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- 3. Project Description:** The proposed action would revoke a withdrawal established by Executive Order (EO) dated August 24, 1842 that reserved 168.05 acres of public land for lighthouse purposes on Thunder Bay Island in Lake Huron. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) submitted a Notice of Intent to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to relinquish custody, accountability and control of the island because the land is no longer needed for lighthouse purposes. The proposed withdrawal revocation responds to the USCG request to relinquish administrative jurisdiction of Thunder Bay Island. The proposed revocation is a record-clearing action of an unneeded withdrawal that would return the land to public domain status under the jurisdiction of the BLM.

Upon revocation of the withdrawal, the BLM would be responsible for determining how Thunder Bay Island is managed in the future. All future planning proposals or applications for the land would be subject to land use planning regulations and site specific environmental assessment (EA). As part of a site specific EA process, the BLM would conduct consultations under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531), and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470).

- 4. Authority:**  
In accordance with Section 204 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Secretary of the Interior may make, modify, extend or revoke withdrawals established by an EO. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for processing withdrawal revocations (43 CFR 2370) and for making recommendations concerning them to the Assistant Secretary – Land and Minerals Management.

5. **Plan Conformance Review:** The proposed action is in conformance with the *Michigan Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment and Environmental Assessment: Disposal of U.S. Coast Guard Lighthouse Properties* dated July 1997 which states that the BLM will process public land orders to revoke lighthouse withdrawals for seven lighthouse properties in Michigan. Thunder Bay Island is identified as one of the USCG properties that require the publication of a public land order to revoke the lighthouse withdrawal.

The land on Thunder Bay Island has been remediated in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency requirements and in conformance with the requirements of the *Michigan RMP Amendment*. A suitability determination found the land environmentally suitable for return to public domain status and subject to disposition under the general land laws and the land use plan and amendment for the State of Michigan.

6. **Compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the NEPA in accordance with Department of Interior, Departmental Manual, 516 DM 11.9 E(3):

Withdrawal revocations, terminations, extensions, or modifications; classification terminations or modifications; or opening actions where the land would be opened only to discretionary land laws and where subsequent discretionary actions (prior to implementation) are in conformance with and are covered by a Resource Management Plan/EIS (or plan amendment and EA or EIS).

7. **Departmental Exceptions And Critical Resource Values Checklist:**

The proposed action generally does not require the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA), or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as the proposal has been found to not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. The 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 is a record clearing action to remove an unneeded withdrawal for lighthouse purposes.

The proposed action has been reviewed to determine if any exceptions apply in accordance with 516 Department of Interior Manual and 43 CFR 46.15, and no exceptions were identified:

***Have significant adverse impacts on public health or safety.***

The revocation is an administrative action. There will be no impact on public health or safety by a change from withdrawn status to public domain status. There will be no increase or decrease in use of the island by the public. The lands are safe for recreation and have been remediated in accordance with applicable regulations; however, current docking conditions on the island make the land inaccessible for general public use.

***Have significant impact on such natural resources, and unique geographic characteristics such 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, floodplains, national monuments, migratory birds, and other ecologically significant or critical areas.***

The revocation is an administrative action. The land has not been actively managed by the USCG and custodial management for wildlife habitat would not change as a result of a withdrawal revocation that relinquishes custody and control for the USCG. The revocation would not interfere with the ongoing preservation and maintenance of the lighthouse structures by the non-profit group, the Thunder Bay Island Lighthouse Preservation Society (TBILPS).

***Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.***

Resources values and management would not change with a revocation of the lighthouse withdrawal, and there have been no unresolved conflicts regarding the preservation and maintenance of the lighthouse structures and custodial management for wildlife habitat.

***Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.***

The administrative action to revoke the withdrawal would not result in uncertain or potentially significant environmental effects or involve unknown risks because custodial management of the land and resources will not change.

***Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.***

An administrative action to revoke the withdrawal and return the land to public domain status subject to the general land laws does not establish any precedent for future action with potentially significant environmental effects because all future actions will be subject to the requirements and protections of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), NEPA, NHPA, ESA, and all applicable regulations that govern public lands.

***Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.***

The administrative action of revoking the withdrawal would not have a direct relationship to other actions or result in significant environmental cumulative effects. Any future land use proposals would be analyzed in site specific EA processes.

***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.***

The lighthouse structures on Thunder Bay Island are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but an administrative action to revoke the withdrawal would not change or have a significant impact on seasonal improvements and maintenance of these historic structures by the TBILPS. The revocation of the lighthouse withdrawal is part of the process that will allow the BLM to consider the transfer of the lighthouse structures under

the Recreation and Public Purposes Act to the TBILPS who has been maintaining the structures since 1997.

***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.***

The revocation of the withdrawal will not impact any of the federally-listed threatened or endangered species on the island because it is only an administrative action and there will be no change in the custodial management of the land. Future proposals for the use of the land will be evaluated in a site specific EA process that will include consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531), for the Piping Plover, Hine's Emerald Dragonfly, Dwarf Lake Iris, and Pitcher's Thistle listed as an endangered or threated species for Alpena County, Michigan.

***Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.***

Revoking the withdrawal will not violate any Federal, State, tribal or local law or laws imposed for the protection of the environment because the administrative action only changes jurisdiction of the land and not protections under applicable laws and regulations.

***Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.***

Thunder Bay Island is uninhabited and an administrative action would not impact low income or minority populations. Thunder Bay Island is approximately 10 miles off shore of Alpena, Michigan

***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.***

There are no known Indian sacred sites on the island based on cultural surveys conducted in 1998 and 2011, but the administrative action to revoke the withdrawal would not limit or change access to the island for any purpose. Access to the island has always been and remains difficult due to the waves, shoals, and geography around the island.

***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***

The administrative record clearing action would not contribute to the introduction or spread of invasive species because management of the land will continue to be custodial with limited seasonal access for only preservation of historic structures purposes.

**8. I CERTIFY THAT NONE OF THE DEPARTMENTAL EXCEPTIONS LISTED  
IN PART 7 ABOVE APPLIES TO THIS ACTION.**

Prepared by: Carol Grundman  
Carol Grundman  
Realty Specialist

Date: May 6, 2014

Reviewed by: Kurt Wadzinski  
Kurt Wadzinski  
Planning and Environmental Coordinator

Date: MAY 6, 2014

**Decision:**

This action is covered by one of the Bureau of Land Management's categorical exclusions developed pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. The proposed action has been screened against Department of the Interior exceptions to the use of categorical exclusions and none of the exceptions apply. Therefore, neither an environmental impact statement nor an environmental assessment is necessary. The proposed action is in conformance with the approved land use plan, and will not involve any significant adverse environmental effects. The proposed action will have no effect on the President's Energy Policy and a Statement of Adverse Energy Impact is not required.

Approved by: Den S. Kelly  
Field Manager  
Northeastern States Field Office

Date: 5/06/2014