

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
Case File: AA-84186, AA-84204
AK-040-02-EA-033

Applicant: Tony Dingess (AA-84204)
Revelation Mountain Outfitters

Tom Krueger (AA-84186)

Type of Action: Special Recreation Permits (commercial hunting)

Location: The Proposed Action affects the BLM-administered lands within Guide Use Area (GUA) 16-01 and 16-02 near Chakachamna Lake and Redoubt Bay and more specifically:

Seward Meridian, T. 12 N., R. 16 W., All; T. 10 N., R. 17 W., All; T. 11 N., R. 17 W., All; T. 12 N., R.17 W., All; T. 5 N., R. 18 W., Secs. 4 to 9, inclusive, Secs. 16 to 21 inclusive, and Secs. 28-33, inclusive. T. 10 N., R. 18 W., All; T. 11 N., R. 18 W., All; T. 12 N., R. 18 W., All; T. 10 N., R. 19 W., All; T. 11 N., R. 19 W., All; T. 12 N., R. 19 W., All; T. 14 N., R. 19 W., All; T. 15 N., R. 19 W., All; T. 16 N., R. 19 W., All; T. 10 N., R. 20 W., All; T. 11 N., R. 20 W., All; T. 12 N., R. 20 W., All; T. 14 N., R. 20 W., All; T. 15 N., R. 20 W., All; T. 16 N., R. 20 W., All.

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Date: October 1, 2002

I. INTRODUCTION

This Proposed Action involves commercial guiding use of public lands in Game Management Unit (GMU) 16. The State of Alaska is divided into 26 Game Management Units (GMU). The Big Game Guide and Transporter Licensing Section has divided each GMU into "Guide Use Areas" (GUA). The Registered Guide or Master Guide is limited to three GUAs a year.

Much of the land described in the Proposed Action is public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). A small portion of the land described in the Proposed Action has been selected by the State of Alaska as part of its entitlement at statehood. Along navigable streams, BLM maintains management authority only for those lands which are above the ordinary high water mark, and the State of Alaska manages land and waters below that mark. For commercial big game hunting guides, authorization will be only for those lands that the operator is authorized to hunt on by the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

The Anchorage Field Office has received applications from Tony Dingess and Tom Krueger to conduct guided big game hunts on public land within GMU 16 near Chakachamna Lake and Redoubt Bay. The public land associated with this GMU is located in large portions north and south of Chakachamna Lake as well as a small portion farther south near Redoubt Bay.

This type of service is needed to meet the anticipated public demand for quality guided services which provide safe recreation opportunities in remote or relatively inaccessible locations in this area of Alaska. Currently there are no other known commercial outfitters that operate in the portions of BLM administered land around Chakachamna Lake.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

This action is in conformance with the Southwest Management Framework Plan (MFP) dated November 1981, activity objectives Wildlife (WL-4), Recreation (R-3), and Minerals (M-2). These decisions do not directly address special use permitting, but recognize that hunting, fishing, and trapping are legitimate uses of public land.

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

A Special Recreation Permit (SRP) is required for commercial recreation use including big game guiding on public land and water pursuant to 43 CFR 8372 and Handbook H-8372-1. With this regulation, an applicant may be authorized to conduct commercial recreation activities on BLM-administered land. The

Authorized Officer may issue SRPs for up to five years subject to annual re-authorization. The permittee must satisfactorily meet the requirements associated with the SRP as well as conform with applicable laws and regulations on all other Federal or State administered lands and waters.

Permits from the State of Alaska are required for all services that derive revenue on State lands starting from the first day of occupancy. The applicants have a State of Alaska Guide-Outfitter license to guide in GUA 16-01, 16-02, and 16-03.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action:

The applicants propose to conduct commercial big game guiding on public lands. The land associated with GMU 16 and the proposed guiding locations will be in the vicinity of Max Lake, Chakachamna Lake, and Redoubt Bay. A typical guided hunt would last 10 days and include a 1:1 or 1:2 guide to client ratio totaling 20 to 30 user days per trip.

Tony Dingess, Revelation Mountain Outfitters

Mr. Dingess has applied to conduct guided brown/black bear, sheep, caribou, wolf, and wolverine hunting on BLM administered land in GMU 16. Mr. Dingess plans on guiding from August 8th to September 15th primarily in the Max Lake area (GUA 16-02). The season to hunt each species may vary depending on the hunting regulations established by Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). He is licensed in GMU 9, 14, 16, 19, and 21 but has only applied for use of public lands in GUA 16-01 and 16-02.

Mr. Dingess has requested permission to set up a base camp which will be located on public land on the east shore of Max Lake, T. 15 N., R. 20 W., Sec. 21 (see map in case file). Camp will consist of free standing mountaineering type tents that will be taken down at the completion of the hunt. Cooking will typically be done using coleman fuel or unleaded fuel stoves. The number of expected clients will be between two to four with one to two guides. A privy will be located approximately 200 ft. from the waters edge. Water from nearby streams will be used for cooking and drinking. Access to camp will be by small plane. Hunting in the field will be done on foot. No other spike camps have been identified.

Thomas Krueger

Mr. Krueger has applied to conduct guided black/brown bear hunting on BLM administered land in GUA 16-01 and 16-02. Mr. Krueger plans on guiding from May 16th to September 10th primarily in the Chiligan and McArthur River areas. He is licensed in GUA 16-01, 16-02 and 16-03, but has only applied for use of public lands in GUA 16-01 and 16-02.

Mr. Krueger does not request permission to set up camp or store items in the field. Most of his trips would be day trips, however he is requesting permission to set up a tent in the event that he does require spending an extra day due to bad weather or other unexpected situations.

B. No Action Alternative:

The No Action Alternative would be to deny issuing the necessary recreation permit to conduct commercial big game guiding.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Much of the land described in the Proposed Action is public land administered by the BLM. A small portion of the land described in the Proposed Action has been selected by the State of Alaska as part of its entitlement at statehood. BLM is responsible for management of the land until it is conveyed to the State or the selection is relinquished. The adjacent landowner (State of Alaska) has been made aware of the applications and no comments were received.

A. Critical Elements:

It has been determined that the following Critical Elements of the human environment are either not present or would not be affected by the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative:

- Air Quality
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)
- Environmental Justice
- Farm Lands (Prime or Unique)
- Flood Plains
- Invasive, Non-native Species
- Native American Religious Concerns
- Subsistence
- Water Quality (Surface/Ground)
- Wetlands/Riparian
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness

1. Cultural/Paleontological Resources:

Relatively recent glaciation in much of this area precludes the existence of sites older than 8000 years. This area would have served as a seasonal hunting or fishing locale for late prehistoric or early historic Native peoples. It probably was a transportation corridor to and from the Cook inlet area--especially to the Russian trading post at Tyonek. These last types of sites would leave a more ephemeral footprint on the land and would only be discovered in an intensive on-the-ground survey.

2. Wastes (Hazardous/Solid):

All operations utilize small amounts of fuel for cooking, heating and sometimes generators.

3. T&E Species:

There are no rare or sensitive plant species known to occur in the area. However, without an actual survey, there is no way to determine if rare plants do occur on site.

The peregrine falcon has been delisted under the Endangered Species Act. There are no known threatened or endangered wildlife species in the area.

B. Wildlife:

Moderate to low densities of moose occur in the areas associated with willow shrubs and mixed forest. Predators such as wolves, wolverine, black and brown bear, lynx and marten may frequent the area, but are highly mobile and would be encountered infrequently. Caribou from the Mulchatna herd may be widely dispersed and infrequent the Redoubt Bay area in summer months. Resident and migrant land birds nest and feed in shrub (alder and willow) and forest habitats. Cliffs and bluffs in the region may provide nesting habitat for raptors including rough-legged hawk, bald eagle, golden eagle and peregrine falcon and gyrfalcon. There have been no wildlife surveys completed in this area.

C. Land Status:

The majority of the land in the permit area is unencumbered public land, managed by the BLM. However, the following areas are selected by the State of Alaska, and at some time in the future could be conveyed to the State:

Seward Meridian, T. 12 N., R. 16 W., All.

T. 11 N., R. 17 W., Secs 1 to 17, inclusive, and Secs. 21, 22 and 23.

T. 12 N., R. 17 W., All.

T. 12 N., R. 18 W., Secs. 25, 35, and 36.

T. 12 N., R. 20 W., Secs. 4 to 8, inclusive.

Normally, the BLM is required by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act §906(k), to seek concurrence from the State of Alaska prior to issuing authorizations on State selected land. However, generally allowed uses on State land include: hunting in accordance with regulations of the board of game, and entry for commercial recreation purposes on a day-use basis with no overnight camps or unoccupied facilities that remain overnight. Therefore, since these uses qualify as generally allowed uses on State land, the BLM is not required to obtain State concurrence.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

1. Critical Elements:

a. Cultural/Paleontological Resources:

Cultural resources are known to occur within the Game Management Area, but the activities performed under this permit should have no impact upon them.

b. Wastes (Hazardous/Solid):

There is a possibility that small amounts of fuel could be spilled. Amounts are small and impacts limited as fuel rapidly evaporates.

2. Wildlife:

There is some potential for encounters with brown bears drawn into hunting camps by the presence of animal carcasses. This may increase the chance of the taking of bears for the defense of life property, when bears may not otherwise be taken.

Hunting camps should be kept clean of food and curing meat. Carcasses should be removed from the camp as soon as possible to avoid attracting bears to the site.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

There is a potential loss of recreation opportunities for people desiring access to areas that are otherwise inaccessible to them. There would be no impacts to cultural or wildlife resources if commercial guiding use is not authorized.

C. Cumulative Impacts:

Because the applicants' actions on public lands are limited, localized, and expected to operate under special stipulations and conditions, it is not expected that there will be any long term cumulative environmental impacts.

D. Mitigation Measures:

No mitigation measures are required. Any authorization will be subject to the standard SRP stipulations.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A. Persons and Agencies Consulted:

David Kelley - Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources

B. List of Preparers:

Donna Redding - Cultural, Historic, Paleontological

Jeff Denton - Subsistence, Wildlife

Bruce Seppi - Wildlife, T&E, Riparian

Debbie Blank - Vegetation

Jake Schlapfer - Recreation

Dave Doucet - Recreation

Rodney Huffman - Lands/Realty