



# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Joint Pipeline Office  
411 West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
<http://www.blm.gov/ak>

## **Decision Memorandum on Action and for Application of:**

### **Categorical Exclusion 1.12**

### **Wildfire Protection of Trans-Alaska Pipeline System Assets**

**CX-AK-993-07-007**

US Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Joint Pipeline Office  
Alaska

### **Description of the Proposed Action and the Purpose and Need for the Action**

BLM-JPO proposes to authorize Alyeska Pipeline Service Company (APSC) to perform brushing along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS). The need for the action is to protect the pipeline, pump stations, and ancillary pipeline facilities, such as check valves and gate valves, from wildfires. The brushing would take place along the pipeline where local concentrations of vegetation present fuel hazards to the pipeline and related facilities.

### **Plan Conformance**

The project activity will occur on Federal lands managed by BLM Alaska, which were withdrawn as a utility corridor under Public Land Order 5150, December 31, 1971. The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable land use plans as required by 43 CFR 1610.5, although this project is not specifically addressed, because it is clearly consistent with the objectives, terms and conditions with the following Land Use Plan decisions:

- 1) BLM Southcentral Planning Area Management Framework Plan (MFP), dated March 1980.
- 2) BLM Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved January 11, 1991.

### **Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act**

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, 1.12. The proposed action will reduce hazardous fuels by use of mechanical methods for thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, and mulching, not to exceed 1,000 acres. These activities will be limited to areas outside the wildland-urban interface that meet the definition of Condition Class 2, Fire

Regimes I and II. The proposed action has been identified through collaboration with State of Alaska and Federal fire service officials, and will be consistent with agency and Departmental procedures and applicable land use plans. The activities will not be conducted in wilderness areas and will not include the use of herbicides or pesticides or the construction of new permanent roads or other new permanent infrastructure.

Application of this categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed and none of the exceptions described in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

### **Persons and Agencies Consulted**

Alyeska Engineering consulted with State of Alaska and Federal fire service officials in the fall of 2005 to verify what facilities might be at risk from wildfire and to get input on preventive actions. The following people were consulted or participated in the preparation of this document:

- 1) Patricia Perry, BLM Realty Specialist, JPO
- 2) Dennis Gnath, Habitat Biologist, OHMP, Alaska DNR
- 3) John Jangala, BLM, Archaeologist, Glennallen Field Office
- 4) Bill Hedman, BLM, Archaeologist, Fairbanks District Office
- 5) Mary Lynch, BLM, Alaska Fire Service
- 6) Ben Seifert, BLM, Natural Resources Specialist, Glennallen Field Office

### **Decision and Rationale on Action**

I have decided to authorize wildfire mitigation brushing along the TAPS. This Decision does not supersede the Revised JPO Brushing Policy, dated July 2005. The Brushing Policy already lists Specific Requirements, including mechanized brushing from the drivelane up to a distance of ten feet beyond the pipe centerline, mechanized brushing six feet beyond the edge of the non-pipeline side of the drivelane, and the removal of danger trees, as well as details about brushing in riparian buffer zones. Alyeska's plan to protect the pipeline assets, as outlined in the document Wildfire Protection of Pipeline Assets, is approved, with the following stipulations:

- 1) All brushing work must be done in accordance with the Revised JPO Brushing Policy, July 2005.
- 2) Brushing off the ROW will only be done with hand tools.
- 3) No mechanized equipment will be allowed off the drivelane in riparian buffer zones, as stated in the Revised JPO Brushing Policy, July 2005.
- 4) Larger diameter woody material will be salvaged for use as firewood by the public. Materials 4" and greater in diameter will be cut into 4' lengths and hauled to public locations, such as the Billy Mitchell highway turnout, Tazlina village council site, or the nearest access road outside the gate.
- 5) Remaining slash will be chipped and blown back into the wooded area or spread on the ROW drivelane to a depth of not more than two inches. Slash may also be

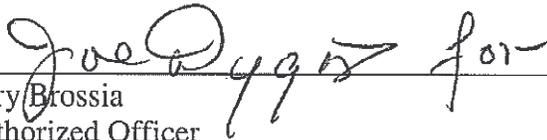
transferred to an acceptable site for burning, such as a mineral material site with a current burning permit, or the burn pit in the ROW just outside the north gate at PS12. Slash may be piled along the ROW, but only as a short-term, intermediate measure until brushing of that portion of the ROW is completed.

- 6) There shall be no disturbance of any archaeological or historical sites, including graves and remains of cabins, and no collection of any artifacts whatsoever. Also, collection of vertebrate fossils, including mammoths and mastodon bones, tusks, etc., is strictly prohibited. If historic resources are encountered, then all artifacts will be respectfully left in place and the nearest BLM Field Office's cultural resources staff will be notified immediately.

These actions meet the need for action. In addition, I have reviewed the plan conformance statement and have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the approved land use plans and that no further environmental analysis is required.

### Implementation Date

This project will be implemented on or after the date this document is signed.

  
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Jerry Brossia  
Authorized Officer

6-15-2007  
Date

### Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4, 43 CFR §5003.1(c), and the enclosed Form 1842-1. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in this office (at the above address) within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21, for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR, Part 4.413), at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

## Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- A. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- B. The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
- C. The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- D. Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

### **Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Pat Perry, Realty Specialist, Joint Pipeline Office, 411 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Ave., Anchorage, Alaska 99501, (907) 257-1341.