

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The National Park Service has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) addressing the potential impacts of promulgating regulations to permit Federal agencies to conduct mineral resource assessment activities on public lands in units of the National Park System in Alaska. The regulations are required by Section 1010(b) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA), 16 U.S.C. 3142(e)(2)(c), which directs the Secretary of Interior to "*...assess the oil, gas, and other mineral potential on all public lands in the State of Alaska in order to expand the data base with respect to the mineral potential of such lands.*" Subsection (b) of Section 1010 mandates that mineral resource assessment activities carried out in conservation system units in Alaska "*...shall be subject to regulations promulgated by the Secretary.*" In December 1989, the National Park Service decided that no additional mineral resource assessment requests would be approved prior to the promulgation of regulations pursuant to Section 1010(b).

The purposes of these regulations are to comply with the requirements of Section 1010(b) and to provide a mechanism for ensuring the use of consistent permit applications and review standards regionwide. This EA evaluates the proposed rulemaking and other alternatives which could control mineral resource assessment activities on public lands in units of the National Park System. The regulations provide a vehicle for the NPS to ensure coordination of multiple agency activities in all the Alaska park units, provide for proper environmental review, identify program restrictions and exclusions provided for in Section 1010(a), and codify the approval standards for those activities as provided for in ANILCA, Section 1010(b).

The EA evaluates the impacts resulting from the implementation of proposed regulations, including: access to remote areas of park units primarily via helicopter, establishment of temporary field camps to support prolonged research in remote areas and the actual collection of soil, rock, water and vegetative samples for analysis. The EA evaluates the proposed action, the no action alternative and a third option of implementing the program under existing NPS collection permit regulations. The impact analysis supports a conclusion that the proposed regulations and the associated activities that would be permitted by them would not have any significant adverse impacts on any resource component of the natural, cultural or socioeconomic environment. Implementation of the proposal would actually provide the NPS with a stronger coordination and permitting role than has been present in the status quo.

Pursuant to Section 810 of ANILCA the proposed action evaluated in the EA is not expected to result in a significant restriction of subsistence uses because no significant adverse impacts to fisheries, wildlife populations or habitat, access, water quality, or other resource values related to subsistence usage of the area is expected.

Compliance with other federal requirements, such as the Endangered Species Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act would occur at the permitting stage when actual locations and activities are known.

After careful and thorough review and consideration of the available facts contained in this EA and the lack of public controversy following the published availability of the EA, I find that approval of the proposed federal action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment under section 102 (2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act, as amended, and therefore an environmental impact statement is not required.

Noting


Approved: Director, National Park Service

2/21/91
Date