



Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: Backcountry Use Monitoring with Trail Counters and Cameras (Programmatic Approval 2017-2021)
PEPC Project Number: 72536

Description of Action (Project Description):

Denali's 2006 Backcountry Management Plan (BCMP) outlines indicators and standards to assess important Resource and Social Conditions related to wilderness character and the visitor experience. Monitoring in the 2017-2021 seasons will include ongoing field observations of informal trails and campsites, backcountry impacts (litter, encounters with modern equipment, aircraft noise dose, and water quality), as well as encounters with other groups while hiking and camping. These observations are made by backcountry rangers and other NPS staff using human powered non-intrusive techniques.

Two proposed monitoring efforts have a potentially greater impact on wilderness character and the visitor experience as they involve placing temporary installations each year in areas of high visitor use in the frontcountry and backcountry, including a few in designated Wilderness.

1) Monitoring trail use by installing infrared trail counters at 10-20 formalized and informal trails each season that will mostly rotate every few years. This data will help inform the Denali Trails Strategy as well as understand trends in use levels for the management and resources program. Trail counter installation and maintenance would be accomplished by NPS staff from various work groups but mainly the Resources staff. See attached sheet for proposed installation schedule for 2017-2021.

Trafx IR counters will be used and hidden from view as much as possible. These counters are in camouflaged cases 4.3 inches by 2.8 inches and have a 4.3 inch scope that is attached by a 3 ft black cable (see attached document from Trafx). In areas where the counters cannot be well hidden, small white tags will be attached to inform visitors what they are and that they should be left in place.

Year round installations for the next 5 years would be kept at :Horseshoe Lake (the busiest trail monitored by the program) and the East side of the Savage Alpine Trail, near Mountain Vista (to monitor year round use at this relatively new trailhead). Both of these locations are outside of Wilderness and well hidden in the spruce forest.

Proposed Summer IR counters for 2017 are attached as "2017 Trail Counter Plan"

2) The program would like to monitoring use of the Grassy Pass/Otter Slide informal trail with a motion sensor camera for the month of July 2017. The area is difficult to monitor with a IR counter and park staff installed a camera here in the summer of 2015 to get an accurate count of humans vs animal traffic. Now that the Gorge Creek Trail is finished, staff would like to see if that changes the visitor use on this well known informal trail. To minimize the impact to wilderness character, BC Monitoring staff would only like to install the camera for 1 month (July) to compare to the 2015 statistics.

Project Locations:

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Location

County: Denali Borough **State:** AK

Mitigation(s):

- Hide counters whenever possible. Provide sign when counters are evident to public. Coordinate winter monitoring efforts with other staff needs (e.g. Mountain Vista). Place sign with motion sensor camera on Gorge Creek Trail. Erase all images once done with traffic counts.

CE Citation: E.5 Nondestructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research, and monitoring activities.

CE Justification:

Decision: I find that the action fits within the categorical exclusion above. Therefore, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No extraordinary circumstances apply.

Signature

Superintendent: Don Striker **Date:** 22 May 2017

Extraordinary Circumstances:

If implemented, would the proposal...	Yes/No	Notes
A. Have significant impacts on public health or safety?	No	
B. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics 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 (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas?	No	
C. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA section 102(2)(E))?	No	
D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?	No	
E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?	No	
F. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?	No	
G. 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?	No	
H. 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?	No	
I. Violate a federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?	No	
J. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898)?	No	
K. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 130007)?	No	
L. 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 (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?	No	

