

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior


Gates of the Arctic
National Park and Preserve
Alaska

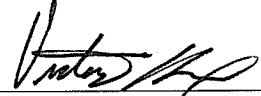


Finding of No Significant Impact

Anaktuvuk Pass Wind Power Generator EA

April 2008

Recommended:  April 9, 2008
Superintendent, Date
Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

Approved:  4/11/08
Acting Regional Director, Alaska Date

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Anaktuvuk Pass Wind Power Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve March 2008

The National Park Service (NPS) prepared an environmental assessment to evaluate a proposal to install a wind power generator at the Anaktuvuk Pass Ranger Station within Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve.

The NPS has selected Alternative 2 (NPS Preferred Alternative) which would install the wind power generator at the Anaktuvuk Pass Ranger Station. The alternative was not modified by public comment.

ALTERNATIVES

Two alternatives were evaluated in the EA.

Alternative 1: No Action

Under the no-action alternative, no modification would occur for the power system at the Anaktuvuk Pass ranger station. The building would continue to be dependant on expensive, electric power that is locally generated using diesel fuel transported to the remote community by air. No energy efficient, environmentally friendly, alternative fuel source would be installed.

Alternative 2: Install a wind power generator for the Anaktuvuk Pass ranger station (NPS Preferred Alternative, and Environmentally Preferred Alternative).

Under the preferred alternative, a wind power generator would be installed on the NPS lot in Anaktuvuk Pass. This generator would be installed on the site with minimal ground disturbance, would have a set of blades that do not exceed 12 feet in diameter, and would not be more than 50 feet tall.

Additional specifications for the proposed wind power generator include but may not be limited to:

- Minimum 1.8 kW, 220V/60HZ capacity
- 50-325 RPM capacity
- Gearless, brushless, magnet-based alternator for power generation in low wind
- Internal inverter for power conversion
- Capacity to connect to utility lines
- Sound isolator to decrease noise transmitted to tower
- Sound pressure level less than 60 decibels
- Hinged tower base for maintenance

The wind power generator would be installed on a small (less than 25 ft²) footprint on the NPS lot ("main street" side). This location would allow for the best access to prevailing winds,

maximum distance to existing overhead power lines, and ability to tip the tower down for maintenance if necessary.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The EA was issued for public review and comment from February 22, 2008 to March 24, 2008. The EA was sent by mail to 44 agencies, organizations, and individuals and was posted on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>)

The NPS received two comment letters on this EA: one from the State of Alaska, ANILCA Implementation Program, Office of Project Management and Permitting; and one from the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA).

DECISION

The NPS decision is to select Alternative 2: Install a wind power generator for the Anaktuvuk Pass ranger station. The purchase and installation of this wind power generator will follow the specifications outlined under Alternative 2 of the EA.

MITIGATING MEASURES

No additional mitigating measures were developed.

RATIONALE for the DECISION

Alternative 2 (NPS Preferred Alternative and Environmentally Preferred Alternative) was selected. The installation of a wind power generator at the Anaktuvuk Pass ranger station provides an environmentally-friendly source of renewable energy for NPS facilities, provides renewable energy leadership in the community, and decreases long term utility costs for NPS operations.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The preferred alternative will not have a significant effect on the human environment. This conclusion is based on the following examination of the significance criteria defined in 40 CFR Section 1508.27.”

(1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

As documented in the EA, the installation of a wind power generator at the Anaktuvuk Pass ranger station would have a minor effect on environmental resources within the community of Anaktuvuk Pass, while installing a source of renewable energy.

(2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The proposed action would not affect public health or safety.

(3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetland, wild and scenic rives, or ecologically critical areas.

The NPS lot within the community of Anaktuvuk Pass does not contain any unique characteristics.

(4) The degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The effects on the quality of the human environment would not be controversial.

(5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The effects of the selected alternative do not involve unique or unknown risks.

(6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent of future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The installation of a wind power generator would not set a precedent for future actions.

(7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.

The action is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant impacts.

(8) Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The selected alternative would not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

(9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The selected alternative would not adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat.

(10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The selected alternative would not violate any Federal, State, or local law imposed for the protection of the environment.

FINDINGS

The levels of adverse impacts to environmental resources anticipated from the selected alternative will not result in an impairment of park resources that fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation, or that are key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park.

The selected alternative complies with the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and Executive Orders 11988 and 11990. There will be no restriction of subsistence activities as documented by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, Title VIII, Section 810(a) Summary Evaluation and Findings.

The National Park Service has determined that the selected alternative does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9), an environmental impact statement is not needed and will not be prepared for this project.

ATTACHMENT A

NPS RESPONSES TO PUBLIC COMMENTS for the Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve EA Anaktuvuk Pass Wind Power Generator

This attachment amends the subject environmental assessment (EA) and provides NPS responses to public comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The NPS received two public comments: one from the State of Alaska, ANILCA Implementation Program, Office of Project Management and Permitting; and one from the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA).

The NPS has considered all comments received. Responses to substantive comments are provided below. A substantive comment is defined as one which leads the NPS to: (1) modify an alternative, including the proposed action; (2) develop and evaluate an alternative not previously given serious consideration; (3) supplement, improve, or modify the environmental analysis; or (4) make factual corrections (CEQ NEPA Regulations 1503.4).

Comments are paraphrased and NPS responses follow as labeled.

State of Alaska (SOA) Comments #1-#2: Section 810 Analysis (Appendix A, page A-2, last paragraph):

The State of Alaska made two comments pertaining to the standard language in the Section 810 evaluation regarding harvest of fish and wildlife and the federal priority for subsistence uses.

NPS Response #1-#2:

The NPS will take these comments under advisement for future EA's, and may adjust the sentences referenced to make them more complete.

State of Alaska (SOA) Comment #3: Section 810 Analysis (Appendix A, page A-4, "restriction of access" first sentence).

"While general access for subsistence harvest is guaranteed by Section 811, it is subject to reasonable regulations, and other entities have authorities to impose some limits; e.g., the Alaska Board of Game might seasonally restrict motorized use for hunting big game. We suggest the sentence is more accurate if "all" is removed."

NPS Response #3:

The EA is corrected to delete the word "All" as noted above (see Errata section below).

National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) Comment #1: Project cost.

The NPCA would like to know if the cost of wind power is expected to be similar, lower, or greater than the current utility. They appreciate the goal of switching to a sustainable energy source and acknowledge it may still be a worthy project even if there aren't significant cost savings. They see potential long-term benefits by NPS providing a model that others in the community may be able to duplicate.

NPS Response #1:

Costs for locally generated electrical power at the Anaktuvuk Pass ranger station for October 2006 through September 2007 ranged from approximately \$60-100 per month (average \$55), with an average of approximately 400 KWH used per month. The funds requested for the purchase and installation of a small, state-of-the-art wind power generator could be recouped in 5-10 years, depending on several variables including transportation/installation costs, average wind speed, and the increasing cost of locally generated electrical power based on fossil fuel costs.

National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) Comment #2: Impacts to birds

Although the EA presented several reasons why the impacts to bird populations from this project would be unlikely, the NPCA recommended that a monitoring and re-evaluation component be added to the final decision.

NPS Response #2:

Based on the analysis presented in the EA, a formal monitoring program for bird mortality is not warranted. However, NPS staff at the ranger station will incidentally record any instances of bird mortality associated with the wind power generator. If any bird mortality is observed, park resource managers will be notified and apprised of the situation.

ERRATA

Appendix A, Page A-4, Restriction of Access, paragraph 1, first sentence. The sentence has been modified to delete the word "All" at the beginning of the sentence. The sentence should read as follows:

Rights of general access for subsistence harvest on NPS lands are granted by Section 811 of ANILCA and the 1996 Anaktuvuk Pass Land Exchange Agreement for specific areas surrounding the community.

