



Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) in NPS Operations- Programmatic Approval 2019-2023

PEPC Project Number: 84620

Description of Action (Project Description):

This programmatic approval for NPS UAS (Unmanned Aircraft Systems) operations in Denali Park and Preserve permits training flights, use in emergencies (e.g. Search and Rescue), and administrative flights as defined under both 1(b) of the Conditions and Exceptions clause of the NPS Director's Policy Memorandum 14-05, Unmanned Aircraft - Interim Policy and NPS Reference Manual 60 - Aviation Management, Chapter 17 and Appendix 7. Permissions for UAS flights under NPS operational control for administrative purposes, such as: • Scientific study • Search and rescue operations • Fire operations, law enforcement • Natural and cultural resource stewardship • Education/interpretation • Training flights

This compliance approval applies to UAS flights specifically operated by the NPS.

Project flights (flights other than training or emergency flights) will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by park managers with this CE serving as NEPA compliance. Specific project flights are to be noted in the "Notes" field of this PEPC entry.

An MRA must be completed for any projects taking place in Wilderness.

The use of UAS applies to the launching, landing, or operating of a UAS within a park and must comply with the Department of Interior Operational Procedures Memorandum (OPM) 11 and RM-60, Appendix 7 NPS Approval Template and Guidance for Use of UAS. UAS flights will be conducted in compliance with all applicable FAA regulations, Code of Federal Regulations, and in accordance with any applicable Special Flight Rules Area considerations. UAS operations have been approved at the park, regional, and Associate Director's level in accordance with NPS Reference Manual 60 - Aviation Management, the Alaska Region UAS Enhancement Package, the Alaska Region Aviation Plan and the Denali Aviation Management Plan.

Appendix 7 of RM-60 outlines the required information and documentation for UAS operations. Park aviation and/or UAS coordinator should be contacted in advance of all UAS flights to ensure adherence to NPS policies and guidelines.

For external requests:

UASs operated, launched, or landed within NPS land and under operational control by agency partners, outside researchers, commercial parties, or other interested groups will only be conducted with appropriate approvals from the park, national aviation manager, regional aviation manager, and regional director, per Policy Memorandum Addendum 14-05; and will be approved on a case-by-case basis following DOI and FAA policy outlined in OPM-11 and RM-60, Appendix 7. Approvals of UAS use by such entities will require compliance specific to the request in addition to a Scientific Research and Collecting Permit or Special Use Permit, as relevant.

Regarding general use:

Compendium 13.50, "Closures and Restrictions" and restrictions states: "Unmanned Aircraft Launching, landing, or operating an unmanned aircraft from or on lands and waters administered by the National Park Service within the boundaries of Denali National Park and Preserve is prohibited except as approved in writing by the superintendent."

Please see attachments for current DOI and NPS policies.

Project Locations:

Location

County: Denali Borough **State:** AK

Mitigation(s):

- Any components of the project that are proposed to occur in wilderness (whether designated or potential) or have the potential to affect wilderness will be evaluated through the minimum requirement analysis process, and a wilderness minimum requirement worksheet will be prepared to develop alternatives.

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

CE Justification:

This CE covers Denali flights under NPS operational control and can be approved by the park superintendent. Project flights to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

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:

 **Date:** 17 Dec 2018
for Don Striker

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 13007)?	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	

