

Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: Seismic Assistants, Ltd. Temporary Access Permit Request to Conduct Vegetation Sampling and Mapping

PIN: 19759

Date: 05/18/2006

Describe project, including location (reference the attached Environmental Screening Form, if appropriate), and list any mitigations:

Project Description: As per 36 CFR 9.38, on May 16, 2006, Seismic Assistants, Ltd. (SAL) requested temporary access to Big Thicket National Preserve in order to sample and map vegetation within a proposed three-dimensional seismic survey project area. SAL has submitted a sampling plan to the NPS entitled "Seismic Assistants, Ltd's Knight Phase IV 3D: Big Thicket National Preserve Turkey Creek Unit Vegetation Mapping and Sampling Plan." The NPS has reviewed the plan, and finds that the data generated would provide a baseline with which to compare the results of a similar post-project survey, meets NPS Inventory and Monitoring Program standards and could be utilized in the design of the SAL Knight Phase IV 3-D Seismic Survey.

Project Locations:

Location

County: Hardin

State: TX

District:

Section:

Geo. Marker:

Other:

(See Attached Environmental Screening Form)

Mitigation(s):

- No mitigations identified

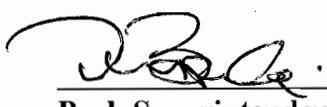
Describe the category used to exclude action from further NEPA analysis and indicate the number of the category (see Section 3-4 of DO-12):

E.6. Non-destructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research, and monitoring activities (this is also a Departmental CE).

Describe any public or agency involvement effort conducted (reference the attached ESF):

(See Attached Environmental Screening Form)

On the basis of the environmental impact information in the statutory compliance file, with which I am familiar, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No exceptional circumstances (e.g. all boxes in the ESF are marked "no") or conditions in Section 3-6 apply, and the action is fully described in Section 3-4 of DO-12.


Park Superintendent

5/18/06
Date

Haigler "Dusty" Pate
NPS Contact Person

Biologist, Oil + Gas Program Manager
Title

6044 FM 420, Kountze, TX
Address 77625

409-951-6822
Phone number

DO-12 APPENDIX 1
ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING FORM
(REVISED November 2003)

This form should be attached to all documents sent to the regional director's office for signature. Sections A and B should be filled out by the project initiator (may be coupled with other park project initiation forms). Sections C, D, E, and G are to be completed by the interdisciplinary team members. While you may modify this form to fit your needs, you must ensure that the form includes information detailed below and must have your modifications reviewed and approved by the regional environmental coordinator.

A. PROJECT INFORMATION

Park Name

Big Thicket NPres

Project Number

19759

Project Type

Permit - Other (OP)

Project Location

County, State: Hardin, Texas

Project Originator/Coordinator

Haigler Pate

Project Title

Seismic Assistants, Ltd. Temporary Access Permit Request to Conduct Vegetation Sampling and Mapping

Contract #/Contractor Name

Administrative Record Contact

Haigler Pate

Administrative Record Location

BITH HQ, Kountze, TX

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION/LOCATION *[To begin the statutory compliance file, attach to this form, maps, site visit notes, agency consultation, data, reports, categorical exclusion form (if relevant), or other relevant materials.]*

As per 36 CFR 9.38, on May 16, 2006, Seismic Assistants, Ltd. (SAL) requested temporary access to Big Thicket National Preserve in order to sample and map vegetation within a proposed three-dimensional seismic survey project area. SAL has submitted a sampling plan to the NPS entitled "Seismic Assistants, Ltd's Knight Phase IV 3D: Big Thicket National Preserve Turkey Creek Unit Vegetation Mapping and Sampling Plan." The NPS has reviewed the plan, and finds that the data generated would provide a baseline with which to compare the results of a similar post-project survey, meets NPS Inventory and Monitoring Program standards and could be utilized in the design of the SAL Knight Phase IV 3-D Seismic Survey.

Preliminary drawings attached? **No**

Background info attached? **No**

Date form initiated

05/17/2006

Anticipated compliance completion date

Projected advertisement/Day labor start

Construction start

C. RESOURCE EFFECTS TO CONSIDER (*Tailor the following to meet individual park/unit project needs.*)

Please see section F (Instructions for Determining Appropriate NEPA Pathway) prior to completing this section. Also, use the process described in DO-12, 2.9 and 2.10; 3.5; 4.5(G) to (G)(5) and 5.4(F) to help determine the context, duration and intensity of effects on resources.

Are any impacts possible on the following physical, natural or cultural resources?	Yes	No	N/A	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
1. Geological resources – soils, bedrock, streambeds, etc.	X			Negligible effects from foot traffic.
2. From geohazards		X		
3. Air quality	X			Negligible effects from internal combustion engines used to transport personnel.
4. Soundscapes	X			Negligible effects from passenger vehicle use on existing roads.
5. Water quality or quantity		X		
6. Streamflow characteristics		X		
7. Marine or estuarine resources		X		
8. Floodplains or wetlands		X		
9. Land use, including occupancy, income, values, ownership, type of use		X		
10. Rare or unusual vegetation – old growth timber, riparian, alpine		X		
11. Species of special concern (plant or animal; state or federal listed or proposed for listing) or their habitat		X		
12. Unique ecosystems, biosphere reserves, World Heritage Sites	X			BITH is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, no change to that designation is expected from the implementation of the proposed sampling effort
13. Unique or important wildlife or wildlife habitat		X		
14. Unique or important fish or fish habitat		X		
15. Introduce or promote non-native		X		

species (plant or animal)				
16. Recreation resources, including supply, demand, visitation, activities, etc.		X		
17. Visitor experience, aesthetic resources	X			Negligible, visitors may encounter researchers.
18. Cultural resources including cultural landscapes, ethnographic resources		X		
19. Socioeconomics, including employment, occupation, income changes, tax base, infrastructure		X		
20. Minority and low income populations, ethnography, size, migration patterns, etc.		X		
21. Energy resources		X		
22. Other agency or tribal land use plans or policies		X		
23. Resource, including energy, conservation potential		X		
24. Urban quality, gateway communities, etc.		X		
25. Long-term management of resources or land/resource productivity		X		
26. Other important environment resources (e.g. geothermal, paleontological resources)?		X		

D. MANDATORY CRITERIA

Mandatory Criteria: If implemented, would the proposal:	Yes	No	N/A	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
A. Have material adverse effects on public health or safety?		X		
B. Have adverse effects on such unique 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; floodplains; or ecologically significant or critical areas, including those listed on the National Register of Natural Landmarks?		X		
C. Have highly controversial		X		

environmental effects?				
D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?		X		
E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?		X		
F. Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?		X		
G. Have adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?		X		
H. Have adverse effects on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species or have adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species?		X		
I. Require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act?		X		
J. Threaten to violate a federal, state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?		X		
K. Involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA sec. 102(2)(E))?		X		
L. Have a disproportionate, significant adverse effect on low-income or minority populations (EO 12898)?		X		
M. Restrict access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 130007)?		X		
N. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of federally listed noxious weeds (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act)?		X		
O. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of non-native invasive species or actions that		X		

may promote the introduction, growth or expansion of the range of non-native invasive species (EO 13112)?				
P. Require a permit from a federal, state, or local agency to proceed, unless the agency from which the permit is required agrees that a CE is appropriate?		X		
Q. Have the potential for significant impact as indicated by a federal, state, or local agency or Indian tribe?		X		
R. Have the potential to be controversial because of disagreement over possible environmental effects?		X		
S. Have the potential to violate the NPS Organic Act by impairing park resources or values?		X		

E. OTHER INFORMATION *(Please answer the following questions/provide requested information.)*

Are personnel preparing this form familiar with the site? **Yes**

Did personnel conduct a site visit? **No** *(If yes, attach meeting notes or additional pages noting when site visit took place, who attended, etc.)*

Is the project in an approved plan such as a General Management Plan or an Implementation Plan with an accompanying environmental document? **Yes**

If so, plan name

BITH GMP and BITH OGMP

Is the project still consistent with the approved plan? **Yes** *(If no, prepare plan/EA or EIS.)*

Is the environmental document accurate and up-to-date? **Yes** *(If no, prepare plan/EA or EIS.)* FONSI ROD *(Check)* Date approved _____

Are there any interested or affected agencies or parties? **No**

Did you make a diligent effort to contact them? **N/A**

Has consultation with all affected agencies or tribes been completed? **Yes**

(If so, attach additional pages detailing the consultation, including the name, the dates, and a summary of comments from other agencies or tribal contacts.)

Are there any connected, cumulative, or similar actions as part of the proposed action? **No**
(If so, attach additional pages detailing the other actions.)

F. INSTRUCTIONS FOR DETERMINING APPROPRIATE NEPA PATHWAY

First, always check DO-12, section 3.2, "Process to Follow" in determining whether the action is categorically excluded from additional NEPA analyses. Other sections within DO-12, including sections 2.9 and 2.10; 3.5; 4.5(G)(4) and (G)(5), and 5.4(F), should also be consulted in determining the appropriate NEPA pathway. Complete the following tasks: conduct a site visit or ensure that staff is familiar with the site's specifics; consult with affected agencies, and/or tribes; and interested public and complete this environmental screening form.

If your action is described in DO-12 section 3.3, "CE's for Which No Formal Documentation is Necessary," follow the instructions indicated in that section.

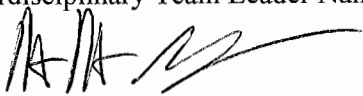
If your action is not described in DO-12, section 3.3, and IS described in section 3.4, AND you checked yes or identified "data needed to determine" impacts in any block in section D (Mandatory Criteria), this is an indication that there is potential for significant impacts to the human environment, therefore, you must prepare an EA or EIS or supply missing information to determine context, duration and intensity of impacts.

If your action is described in section 3.4 and NO is checked for all boxes in section D (Mandatory Criteria), BUT you have initially checked "yes" in section C (Resource Effects to Consider) during internal scoping, this means that the team should do additional analyses to determine the context, duration and intensity of effects. If the magnitude of effects is then determined to be at the negligible or minor level, then usually there is no potential for significant impacts, then an EA or EIS is not required. If, however, during internal scoping and further investigation, resource effects still remain unknown, or are at the minor to moderate level of intensity, and the potential for significant impacts may be likely, an EA or EIS is required.

In all cases, data collected to determine the appropriate NEPA pathway must be included in the administrative record.

G. INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM SIGNATORY *(All interdisciplinary team members must sign.)*


By signing this form, you affirm the following: you have either completed a site visit or are familiar with the specifics of the site; you have consulted with affected agencies and tribes; and you, to the best of your knowledge, have answered the questions posed in the checklist correctly.

Interdisciplinary Team Leader Name 	Field of Expertise Biologist and	Date Signed 05/18/06
Technical Specialists Names	Field of Expertise	Date Signed


H. SUPERVISORY SIGNATORY

Based on the environmental impact information contained in the statutory compliance file and in this environmental screening form, environmental documentation for this stage of the subject project is complete.

Recommended:

Compliance Specialist	Telephone Number	Date
	404-951-6822	05/18/06

Approved:

Superintendent	Telephone Number	Date
		05/18/2006