



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[A2407-014-004-065516, #O2509-014-004-125222.0; LLMT: PO#4820002691]

Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for Production Site Development in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), and the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976, as amended (NPRPA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alaska State Office intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate the environmental effects of a rulemaking that the BLM expects to initiate to streamline the authorization of the construction and operation of qualifying production sites and authorization of associated rights-of-way in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A). The rulemaking will establish pre-defined criteria for defined and repeatable common activities with similar environmental effects that, when met by an applicant, will result in streamlined permitting for qualifying production sites. By this notice, the BLM announces the beginning of the scoping process to solicit public comments and identify issues.

DATES: This notice initiates the public-scoping process for the EIS. The BLM requests that the public submit comments concerning the scope of the analysis, potential alternatives, and identification of relevant information and studies by **[INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*]**. To afford the BLM the opportunity to consider comments in the EIS, please ensure your comments are received prior to the close of the 45-day scoping period.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments related to the NPR-A Production Site EIS by any of the following methods:

- Website: <http://eplanning.blm.gov> (NEPA number: DOI-BLM-AK-0000-2026-0012-EIS)
- Email: NPR-A_ProductionSite_EIS@blm.gov
- Mail: BLM, Alaska State Office, Attention—NPR-A Production Site EIS, 222 West 7th Avenue, #13, Anchorage, AK 99513-7599.

Documents pertinent to this proposal may be examined online at <https://eplanning.blm.gov> (NEPA Number: DOI-BLM-AK-0000-2026-0012-EIS) and at the BLM Alaska State Office Public Information Center, 222 West 7th Avenue, #13, Anchorage, AK 99513-7599.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Serena Sweet at NPR-

A_ProductionSite_EIS@blm.gov, 907-271-5960. Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The NPR-A consists of approximately 23 million acres on the North Slope of Alaska, administered by the BLM. Congress established the primary statutory framework for the NPR-A through the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976, Pub. L. 94–258, 42 U.S.C. 6501 *et seq.* (NPRPA), which transferred administrative jurisdiction over the Petroleum Reserve from the Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of the Interior and redesignated it as the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. Motivated in part by the 1968 discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay and rising energy prices following the 1973 oil embargo, Congress enacted the NPRPA to accelerate exploration of an area that at the

time remained largely unexplored and almost completely undeveloped. Congress recognized that assessing the oil and gas potential of the NPR-A was vital to the national interest, while also directing the Secretary to consider wildlife and other surface values within the context that the area be managed primarily for oil and gas activities. In 1980, Congress amended the NPRPA through the Department of the Interior Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1981 to direct the Secretary to conduct an expeditious program of competitive leasing of oil and gas in the NPR-A, while providing for such conditions, restrictions, and prohibitions as the Secretary deems appropriate to mitigate reasonably foreseeable and significantly adverse effects on the surface resources of the Reserve. That legislation also exempted management of the NPR-A from FLPMA's land use planning and wilderness review requirements, reflecting Congress's intent to dedicate management of the area to the primary purpose of oil and gas leasing and development, with access as a necessary component of that purpose. The NPRPA is thus a dominant-use statute, and BLM is required to manage the NPR-A primarily for oil and gas leasing, exploration, development, and production, while retaining discretion to protect environmental, fish and wildlife, and historical or scenic values within the Reserve to the extent consistent with that overriding purpose.

While much of the Petroleum Reserve remains relatively undeveloped, interest has steadily increased in recent decades based on technical improvements and new discoveries. Greater Mooses Tooth 1 and 2, and the Willow project, which is currently under construction, have all been permitted in the past 15 years. It is expected that, over time, development will proliferate incrementally from the oil and gas infrastructure currently permitted within the Petroleum Reserve. Given the remoteness of the area, seasonal restrictions on development, and the high cost of development, development currently relies heavily on a hub-based approach, with (like Willow, Alpine, Pikka, and

other historical North Slope developments) anchor fields hosting central processing facilities and one or more connected sites hosting production infrastructure.

Across Federal oil and gas provinces in the United States, the NPR-A is unique in terms of statutory framework, stakeholders and inhabitants, geography, geology, remoteness, climate, and types of feasible development. This has generally contributed to a relatively expansive project-by-project approach to NEPA compliance, with numerous EISs and Environmental Assessments having been completed for individual permitting actions. This piecemeal approach to permitting is not just inefficient, it fails to provide private industry with a stable and predictable regulatory framework for the BLM's permitting decisions in the NPR-A. Predictability is especially important in the NPR-A, where seasonal restrictions and severe weather can constrain when oil and gas companies can pursue authorized construction and operations.

On May 12, 2026, the Alaska Oil and Gas Association (AOGA), on behalf of its member companies, submitted to the Secretary of the Interior, a "Petition for Rulemaking to Create a Development Permit Program in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska." ("Petition"). The Petition (available at the ePlanning web address noted above) requests that the BLM amend its regulations at 43 CFR part 3160 to create a new program governing the authorization and construction of production sites and the authorization of associated rights-of-way in the NPR-A with regulatory modifications provided at Appendix A (the "Requested Rule"). Per the Petition:

The intent of the Requested Rule is to create a uniform and efficient permit approval process that sets and maintains appropriate environmental protections and mitigation measures for production sites, as well as the associated right-of-way for pipelines and access roads. Projects under the proposed regulations would be limited to projects that meet certain specifications common to existing production sites in the NPR-A and adjacent lands. The project components of

common NPR-A production sites include gravel pads, gravel access roads, pipelines, supporting facilities and ancillary infrastructure.

The BLM is giving this Petition prompt consideration. To achieve greater efficiency and predictability in its permitting process, the BLM expects to initiate a rulemaking proposing a rule that may reflect the Requested Rule in the Petition, in whole or in part, to streamline its review and approval process and avoid unnecessary, duplicative, and burdensome project-by-project permitting procedures. The type of production site development contemplated by the rulemaking and that will be analyzed in this EIS has already been repeatedly and extensively analyzed by the BLM in multiple plan or project-specific EISs and decisions, including for Alpine Satellite Development Plan (2004), Greater Mooses Tooth 1 development (2014), Greater Moose's Tooth 2 development (2018), multiple iterations of the area-governing Integrated Activity Plan, or IAP (latest 2020 EIS), and the Willow Master Development Plan (2023). With this record to stand on and historically high interest in development within the NPR-A, there is an opportunity to reduce duplication in permitting analysis, enhance regulatory certainty for future permitting actions in the area, and streamline agency processes and timelines through a NEPA analysis, and a rulemaking providing streamlined permitting procedures.

Taking an areawide approach to permitting certain defined and repeatable types of infrastructure is not new. It is envisioned and encouraged by the NEPA, supported by the Department of the Interior NEPA Handbook, and has long been relied upon as a means of reducing and eliminating unnecessary and duplicative NEPA analyses.

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to streamline permitting procedures for the authorization of the construction and operation of qualifying production sites in the NPR-A, which include infrastructure necessary to allow the production and transportation to market of Federal oil and gas resources in the NPR-A. Additionally, the BLM is

preparing the EIS in response to AOGA's May 12, 2026, petition for rulemaking described above. The need for Federal action (i.e., issuance of authorizations) is established by BLM's responsibilities under various Federal statutes, including the NPRPA (as amended) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act as well as various Federal responsibilities of cooperating agencies under other statutes, including the Clean Water Act (CWA). Under the NPRPA, BLM is required to conduct an expeditious program of competitive oil and gas leasing and development in the NPR-A (42 USC 6506a). BLM is required to respond to future leaseholder requests for authorizations for production sites and related authorizations in order to develop and produce petroleum in the NPR-A. The analysis in the EIS will inform and support the establishment of a streamlined framework, codified in regulation via a companion rulemaking process, for permitting this infrastructure when it is similar to existing infrastructure in the area, and is demonstrated by the applicant to meet a certain set of pre-defined criteria.

The Proposed Action also advances U.S. energy policy and U.S. policy for resource development in Alaska. As set forth in E.O. 14154, *Unleashing American Energy* (Jan. 20, 2025), the Department of the Interior and other agencies must "undertake all available efforts to eliminate delays within their respective permitting processes, including through, but not limited to, the use of general permitting and permit by rule." As explained in E.O. 14153, *Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential* (Jan. 20, 2025), it is the policy of the United States to "efficiently and effectively maximize the development and production of the natural resources located on both Federal and State lands within Alaska" and "expedite the permitting and leasing of energy and natural resources projects in Alaska."

Preliminary Proposed Action and Alternatives

The Proposed Action is a rulemaking to amend the regulations at 43 CFR part 3160 to establish a criteria-based framework for streamlined permitting of the construction and operation of qualifying production sites and associated infrastructure in the NPR-A, authorized under the NPRPA. The rulemaking will establish pre-defined criteria that, when met by an applicant, will result in streamlined permitting for qualifying production sites. The expected production, associated infrastructure and required resources to construct and operate these production sites would be consistent with the development scenarios of the hypothetical reasonably foreseeable development scenarios analyzed in the 2020 IAP EIS.

The EIS may also consider additional alternatives to ensure compliance with FLPMA, the NPRPA, and other applicable Federal law, which could include such criteria as varying numbers of production sites, evaluating production sites clustered in various areas of the NPR-A, and additional monitoring and enforcement provisions.

The BLM welcomes comments on all preliminary alternatives as well as suggestions for additional alternatives.

Summary of Expected Impacts

The EIS will evaluate potential environmental effects of the proposed rulemaking and alternatives, including the construction and operation of qualifying production sites and associated infrastructure, and the reasonably foreseeable effects on resources and issues such as: subsistence resources and uses; wildlife and habitat, including caribou, polar bear, migratory birds, and fish; surface water, wetlands, and permafrost; air quality; noise; cultural and historic resources; visual resources, and socioeconomic conditions.

Schedule for the Decision-Making Process

The BLM may provide an additional opportunity for public participation during the NEPA process in conjunction with the rulemaking. The Final EIS and Record of Decision are anticipated to accompany the final rule late in 2026 or early in 2027.

Public Scoping Process

This notice of intent initiates the scoping period. The specific date(s) and location(s) of any scoping meetings will be announced in advance through the project website page at <https://eplanning.blm.gov> (NEPA Number: DOI-BLM-AK-0000-2026-0012-EIS).

Nature of Decision To Be Made

The objective of this analysis is to support a rulemaking process to amend the BLM regulations at 43 CFR part 3160, which, if adopted, will promote the orderly and efficient use of Federal lands in the NPR-A for oil and gas production, subject to conditions and restrictions that mitigate adverse effects on surface resources and subsistence activities.

Additional Information

The BLM will utilize and coordinate the NEPA process to help support compliance with applicable requirements under the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1536), Section 810 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 3120), and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. 306108) as provided in 36 CFR 800.2(d)(3), including public involvement requirements of Section 106. The information about historic and cultural resources and threatened and endangered species within the area potentially affected by the proposed project will assist the BLM in identifying and evaluating impacts to such resources.

The BLM will consult with Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations in accordance with Executive Order 13175, BLM Manual Section 1780, and other Departmental policies. Tribal concerns, including impacts on Indian trust assets and potential impacts to cultural resources, will be given due consideration. Federal, State, and local agencies, along with Alaska Native Tribes and other stakeholders that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action that the BLM is evaluating, are invited to

participate in the scoping process and, if eligible, may request or be requested by the BLM to participate in the development of the environmental analysis as a cooperating agency.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

(Authority: Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 6501 et seq.; Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, 43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.; National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.)

Kevin J. Pendergast,

State Director, Alaska.

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