

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Case File No.: AA-082419

AK-040-EA00-025

Type of

Action: Minimum Impact Permit  
43 CFR 2920.2-2

Location: Seward Meridian, T. 11 S., R. 29 W., Section 22

Applicant: Robert Wilson-Smith  
Primesco Bears, Inc.  
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Preparing

Office: Bureau of Land Management  
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6881 Abbott Loop Road  
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Date: July 13, 2000

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

Robert Wilson-Smith of Primesco Bears, Inc. (Primesco) filed for a Minimum Impact Permit (43 CFR 2920.2-2). The purpose of the Proposed Action is to film bears on public lands in Alaska. Primesco has filmed on National Park Service lands and State Game Sanctuaries. The final product would be a documentary in IMAX format. There are educational benefits, as well as the opportunity to showcase BLM lands to a national audience.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

The Proposed Action has been reviewed and determined to be in compliance with the Southcentral Management Framework Plan (MFP), October 1980. Activity Objective R-4 of the MFP states the BLM will “Provide for the needs of visitors seeking an experience though sightseeing, photography, observation and/or interpretation.” Activity Objective L-1 of the MFP states that the BLM will “satisfy state and local government needs as well as public and/or private demonstrated needs for lands as they arise.”

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

The lands are selected by the State of Alaska. The State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Lands and Water, does not require a 906(k) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) concurrence for minimum impact permits under comparable conditions.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action:

Primesco, Inc. (Primesco) proposes to film bears in their natural setting at Chenik Head, approximately 80 miles southwest of Homer. The location of the filming and base camp would be Seward Meridian, T. 11 S., R. 29 W., Section 22, containing approximately 600 acres. The filming would take place between two unnamed rivers (see attached map). In support of the filming process, a base camp is a necessity for the applicants, due to the high cost of travel into the Chenik area. The Base Camp will be set up adjacent to the trail, west of the Chenik Institute. Primesco does not propose to use property owned by Chenik Institute. Primesco will be on location between July 11 - 20, 2000.

Base Camp would be set up during the first two days. On the first day, a barge, with five members of the total crew, will haul in all needed gear to include fuel, camping equipment, and filming equipment. On the second day, the film crew will arrive by float plane, bringing the total number of people to approximately

twenty. The float plane will land at Chenik Lake; the crew will then hike into the base camp. The barge and float planes are for transportation of the crew and the equipment listed above. The planes will not be used for herding or scouting wildlife.

The base camp will encompass approximately .65 acres. It will contain two large tents and eight smaller tents. To deter curious wildlife, a portable electric fence will be set up around the perimeter of the camp. The fence stakes are fiberglass and will be driven into the ground approximately six inches, and be spaced approximately three feet apart. The wire is encased in vinyl and emits an intermittent pulse. The fence will be powered by battery. A small generator will be used to recharge the battery. Fuel for the generator will be stored in a fifty-five gallon drum or in jerry cans. Propane stoves will be used for cooking. Propane fuel will be stored in standard propane containers. All food and garbage will be stored in bear resistant containers. Trenches will be dug and utilized for disposal of human waste. The sod will be removed and then the trenches will be dug to the deepest depth possible. The trenches will be backfilled and the sod put back into place. A minimum of three members will remain in camp at all times. At the conclusion of filming Primesco will remove all equipment and trash by barge or float plane.

Filming will begin on July 13, 2000. The film crew may contain approximately twelve people at any given time. The specific location sites for filming will be scouted by two professional bear guides. The guides will suggest options for potential filming sites. The film crew will travel between base camp and the different filming location sites by foot. No mechanized vehicles will be used. No structures will be built and no new trails will be cut, but some short-term disturbance of vegetation is expected to occur. Portable tripods will be used during filming. The film crew would maintain a distance of 50 yards from a boar (male bear) and 100 yards from a sow (female bear) with cubs. All filming of resident wildlife will occur only when such wildlife will not be molested, harmed, or disturbed thereby.

- B. No Action Alternative:  
The No Action Alternative would be to deny the permit.

### III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

- A. Critical Elements:  
The following critical elements of the human environment have been analyzed and are either not present or will not be affected by the Proposed Action or

alternatives:

Air Quality  
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern  
Environmental Justice  
Farmlands (Prime or Unique)  
Floodplains  
Native American Religious Concerns  
Threatened and Endangered Species  
Invasive, Non-Native Species  
Subsistence  
Wastes (Hazardous/Solid)  
Water Quality (Drinking/Ground)  
Wetlands/Riparian Zones  
Wild and Scenic Rivers  
Wilderness

1. ANILCA Section 810 Clearance:  
The Proposed Action and alternatives were analyzed. It was determined that no ANILCA, Section 810 compliance or clearance evaluation is required. The lands are validly State selected and are not public lands as defined under ANILCA.
2. Cultural Section 106 Clearance:  
The Proposed Action and alternatives were analyzed under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. It was determined that the area is clear of any cultural resources.
3. Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species Clearance:  
The Proposed Action and alternatives were evaluated in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The Proposed Action and alternatives were determined to have no significant effect on threatened and endangered plants and animals and their habitats. No consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is necessary pursuant to Section 7 of the Act.

#### IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

##### A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

Fuel used to power the generator could be spilled resulting in the potential for contamination of water, soil and killing of vegetation. Oil leakage from the generator could contaminate soil and water.

Some disturbance of wildlife, particularly bears, will result from human presence and the activity related to the camp and landing of boats and aircraft.

Bears and other wildlife could be attracted to the site by trash or food at the site. Due to the base camp's close proximity to a large number of brown bears attracted to spawning salmon, the potential for the taking of a bear for defense of life and property at the base camp exists.

Use at the site for tents and travel around the camp will result in trampled vegetation and the slight compacting of soils. The amount of area to be impacted is less than one acre.

Human waste is planned to be disposed of in trenches dug near the camp. This will disturb vegetation at the trench site and could impact cultural sites by disturbing cultural artifacts.

The site is near the Chenik Institute facilities. Damage to the facilities could occur if persons try to investigate the facilities. Injury could result from unknown or unsafe conditions on the developed site.

Trash from the camp could be left on the site creating an unattractive view for future recreation users.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

If no filming or camping takes place, no impacts to the human environment are expected. Natural processes will occur without outside influence.

C. Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Action:

Fuel should be stored on a fuel contaminant structure on which the barrel or cans sit. This would prevent fuel contamination of soil and water if a spill occurred.

The generator should be placed on a containment structure to prevent oil from contaminating the soil or water.

To limit impact to any unknown buried cultural resources, all subsurface disturbance should be avoided. No holes should be dug for fire pits or human waste disposal. Camp sites should be away from bluff areas.

Hunting for cultural artifacts is prohibited by law and the film crew leader should be responsible for enforcing this requirement.

Human waste should be collected in above ground toilet facilities and removed from the site.

Members of the filming crew should stay away from the developed Chenik Institute site. The film crew leader should enforce the requirement that no investigation of the facilities or developed site occurs by the crew members.

Food should be stored in bear proof containers to reduce the chance of bears being attracted to and obtaining food from a human source.

All trash should be removed from the site. No burying of waste food, cans, glass or plastic containers should be allowed. If it is necessary to dispose of waste food and paper, it should be burned below the high tide line to eliminate odors that may attract bears. Trash should be hauled out on any aircraft or boats that make trips to the site during the time the site is utilized and when the filming is completed.

D. Mitigation Measures for the No Action Alternative:  
Mitigation would not be required.

E. Residual or Cumulative Impacts:  
There are no residual or cumulative impacts.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION:

A. Persons and Agencies Consulted:  
State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources  
National Park Service, Katmai National Park and Preserve

B. List of Preparers:  
Debbie Blank, Botanist  
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