



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
1011 E. Tudor Rd.  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

IN REPLY REFER TO:

AUG 15 2006

COPY FOR YOUR  
INFORMATION

AFES/MMM

Dr. Bill Streever  
Leader – Environmental Studies  
BP Exploration (Alaska) Inc.  
900 East Benson Boulevard  
P.O. Box 196612  
Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6612

Dear Dr. Streever:

This responds to your request dated March 9, 2005, for a Letter of Authorization (LOA) to incidentally take polar bears and Pacific walrus during oil and gas operations within the Greater Prudhoe Bay, Milne Point, Badami, Endicott, and Northstar Oilfield Units. On August 2, 2006, final regulations were issued that authorize the non-lethal, incidental, unintentional take of small numbers of polar bears and Pacific walrus during year-round oil and gas industry exploration, development, and production operations in the Beaufort Sea and adjacent northern coast of Alaska. The regulations were issued for a period of five years. In accordance with these regulations, enclosed is a LOA (06-02) that allows BP Exploration (Alaska), Inc. (BPXA), to take small numbers of polar bears and Pacific walrus incidental to year-round oil and gas exploration, production, operations, and restoration activities within the Greater Prudhoe Bay, Endicott, Milne Point, Northstar, and Badami units, provided annual monitoring reports are received by January 15 of each year. Activities are ongoing and expected continue through the life of the regulations.

Polar bear conservation has benefited from monitoring programs associated with the Incidental Take program since 1993, when BPXA originally petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the development of Incidental Take regulations. One important aspect of monitoring is obtaining an understanding of polar bear denning ecology in the Beaufort Sea. This knowledge includes a better understanding of the location of dens in the nearshore and coastal areas. Polar bear managers and researchers, in cooperation with BPXA and other companies, have recently conducted numerous studies investigating different aspects of polar bear denning in the Beaufort Sea in order to better manage and conserve polar bear populations. These studies have included the assessment of natural den habitat, characteristics, and locations; assessment of industrial sound and vibration received in polar bear dens; behavior of polar bears during den emergence, as well as methods to detect denning polar bears.

Historical polar bear denning activity reveals that polar bear denning habitat occurs along creek cutbanks and river bluffs. Approximately 1,782 miles (2,870 km) of potential polar bear denning

habitat is located between the Colville River and the Canning River; of that, approximately 300 miles (480 km) of potential polar bear habitat occurs within the boundaries of the above-mentioned Oilfield Units (see enclosed maps). Disturbance during denning could lead to abandonment of dens and possible mortality to cubs. Use caution when operating near these areas during the maternal denning period (late October to mid-April). The U.S. Geological Survey has posted information identifying polar bear denning habitat and GIS data available for downloading from the Alaska Science Center (ASC) website, plus associated documents. The den habitat map (ARC/INFO export file), the mapping manuscript (PDF file) and a picture of den habitat (JPG file) are now available on the ASC website (<http://www.absc.usgs.gov/dataproducts.htm>). Please use these resources when planning activities in potential denning areas and contact us immediately if any dens are found in the Oilfield Units during oil and gas activities. In addition, biologists with the USFWS are also available for consultation if questions or concerns about arise regarding polar bears and walrus during this authorization.

This authorization is issued in accordance with our regulations listed at 71 FR 43926, dated August 2, 2006. These regulations will expire on August 2, 2011. Should you have any further questions contact Mr. Craig Perham of our Marine Mammals Management Office at (907) 786-3800 or 786-3810.

Sincerely,

**Acting**



Rosa Meehan, Ph.D.  
Chief, Marine Mammals Management

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Richard Shideler, ADF&G  
FFWFO  
LE

MMM

ISSUED: August 10, 2006  
EXPIRES: August 2, 2011

LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION  
(06-02)

BP Exploration (Alaska), Inc. is hereby authorized to take small numbers of polar bears and Pacific walrus incidental to year-round development and production activities at the Greater Prudhoe Bay, Endicott, Milne Point, Northstar, and Badami units on the North Slope of Alaska identified within your LOA request (March 9, 2005). This also includes contractors of BPXA performing BPXA-approved work under the scope of operations to be conducted. The scope of operations is limited to the activities that will be conducted during the exploration, production, operations, and rehabilitation of oil and gas facilities within the boundaries of the Greater Prudhoe Bay Unit, Milne Point Unit, Badami Unit, Duck Island (Endicott) Unit, and Northstar Unit. In addition, it includes the travel corridors to access these sites. This authorization does not include new exploratory activities outside of these established oil field units. Activities within these fields are ongoing and are expected to continue through the end of the current incidental take regulations. Authorization is subject to the following conditions:

1. The polar bear plan is approved and all provisions, unless noted specifically, are incorporated into this Letter of Authorization by reference.
2. BPXA Operations Managers, or their designates, will be fully aware, understand, and capable of implementing the conditions of this authorization.
3. Intentional take is prohibited under this authorization.
4. This authorization is valid only for those activities identified in the request for a Letter of Authorization dated March 9, 2005.
5. Activities will not operate nor pass within 1 mile of known (detected) polar bear dens, and all observed dens will be reported to the Marine Mammals Management Office, Fish and Wildlife Service within 24 hours. The Fish and Wildlife Service will evaluate these instances on a case-by-case basis to determine the appropriate action. Potential responses may range from cessation or modification of work to conducting additional monitoring.

6. Polar bear monitoring, reporting, and survey activities will be conducted in accordance with 50 CFR 18, section 18.128. The basic monitoring and reporting requirements follow:

- cooperate with the Fish and Wildlife Service, and other designated Federal, State, or local agencies to monitor the impacts of oil and gas exploration activities on polar bears;
- designate a qualified individual or individuals to observe, record, and report the effects of the activity on polar bears;
- at the discretion of the Fish and Wildlife Service, allow the Fish and Wildlife Service to place an observer on the site to monitor the impacts of the activity on polar bears;
- submit an annual monitoring report to the Marine Mammals Management Office, which will be received by January 15 of each year.

7. This authorization expires August 2, 2011.



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Chief, Marine Mammals Management

8/15/06

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Date