

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**University NAVSTAR Consortium, Inc.**  
**Right-of-Way Permit**

University NAVSTAR Consortium, Inc. (UNAVCO) has requested a right-of-way permit to install high-precision geodetic monitoring stations on four islands within the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The proposed installations would be part of larger monitoring network known as the Plate Boundary Observatory (PBO), which consists of about 1,000 continuously-operating global positioning system (GPS) stations in the continental western United States and Alaska. These GPS stations monitor shifts in the earth's surface caused by the physical processes that trigger earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. In Alaska, increased observation is needed across the active boundary zone between the Pacific and North American plates, and in particular the Aleutian Arc, which has a history of strong earthquakes.

An Environmental Assessment was prepared to analyze the consequences of the proposed action and no action. It is my decision to select Alternative 1: Proposed Action (Issue Right-of-Way Permit to Install Four GPS Stations) subject to general and site specific stipulations. The proposed action will have minimal impacts on the human environment while enhancing human safety in the region.

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION**

UNAVCO would install one GPS station on each of the following islands in the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge: Ushagat, Sutwik, Chernabura, and Chirikof. At Chirikof Island, a seismometer vault would be co-located with the GPS station. The GPS stations would be composed of a tri-pod type monument assembly, equipment enclosure hut, and solar panel support structure. Construction of the GPS stations would take less than a week at each site and then a short maintenance visit would be needed about once every three years for battery replacement and routine equipment maintenance. Access to these sites would be by helicopter and/or boat.

**PERMIT STIPULATIONS**

To protect the environment, stipulations relative to the timing and methods of access for construction and maintenance activities, handling of solid waste and hazardous materials, prevention of introduction of invasive species during project implementation, reduction of visual impacts, and site restoration responsibilities, will be included in the right-of-way permit. A complete list of stipulations is listed in the Refuge Compatibility Determination (Reference 2).

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The Environmental Assessment was prepared and released for a 30-day public comment period from February 21, 2008, through March 21, 2008 to the following: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 7 Planning web site and stakeholder email list, Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge web site, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 7 External Affairs statewide and local news media (radio, television, print) outlets.

During the public comment period, we received only one response, which was from the State of Alaska. The State is highly supportive of the PBO project and the proposal to add four GPS stations and one seismometer to the Alaska network. The State expressed concern about limiting the SPS stations to non-wilderness areas; however, only non-wilderness locations were requested in the right-of-way permit application.

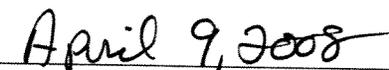
### FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICAN IMPACT

Based on a review and evaluation of the information contained in the supporting references listed below, I have determined the issuance of a right-of-way permit under 50 CFR 29, for the installation, operation and maintenance of high-precision geodetic monitoring stations on Chernabura, Chirikof, Sutwik, and Ushagat islands is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment as defined in Section 102 (2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. This determination is made after full consideration of the context and intensity of the project. There are no known irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources. The Environmental Assessment conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Reference 1) supports the conclusion that, with the aforementioned permit stipulations included in the right-of-way permit, there will not be a significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment. The proposed action will not jeopardize any federally-listed threatened or endangered species or their habitats, nor will it result in a significant restriction of subsistence resources (Reference 3). Accordingly, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed action is not required.

### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

1. Environmental Assessment, Plate Boundary Observatory Global Positioning System Network Installation and Maintenance on the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, USFWS 2008.
2. Refuge Compatibility Determination, USFWS 2008
3. ANILCA Section 810 Subsistence Evaluation, USFWS 2008

  
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Peter Edwards  
Regional Director

  
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