
**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

**PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT SUBMISSION
SUPPORTING STATEMENT A**

**MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION OF THE NATIONAL PETROLEUM RESERVE IN ALASKA –
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIAL AREAS
(43 CFR 2361)**

OMB CONTROL NUMBER 1004-0221

Abstract: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is rescinding the current regulations for Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska in 43 CFR Part 2360 and returning to the status quo under the rule promulgated in 1977 in 43 CFR Part 2360. The rule revises information collection requirements pertaining to Special Areas (SAs) in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (Reserve). The rule involves one (1) information collection at 43 CFR 2361.1(c) regarding recommendations for the designation of land as a SA in the Reserve. This information collection requirement slightly revises the existing requirement for SA recommendations. The RIN for this rule is 1004-AF02.

Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection.

The rule rescinds the “Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska” final rule, issued on May 7, 2024, via 89 FR 38712, with an effective date of June 6, 2024, and codified in 43 CFR Part 2360. The rule returns the regulatory framework to match the 1977 version of the rule at 43 CFR 2361. One provisions under the 1977 version of the regulation require information collection which must comply with the PRA. The information collection requirements contained in this rule are discussed below, along with a description of the changes.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection. Be specific.

Recommendations for Special Areas (43 CFR 2361.1(d))

Previous Information Collection Requirement

The previous regulations at §2361.30(b)(3) contained one non-form information collection requirement that was subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA). §2361.30(b)(3) provided that the following information be provided to the BLM when a member of the public recommends lands for a SA designation:

- The size and location of the recommended lands;
- The significant subsistence, recreational, fish and wildlife, historical, or scenic resource values that are present within or supported by the recommended lands;
- Measures that may be necessary to assure maximum protection of those values; and
- Any other pertinent information.

New Information Collection Requirement

The final rule also contains one (1) non-form information collection that is subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. This information collection is located in §2361.1(c). To help ensure that the BLM receives the information needed to inform its decision to include lands in an SA, § 2361.1(c) includes a list of criteria that should be addressed when a member of the public recommends lands for such a designation. Recommendations for additional special areas may be submitted at any time to the authorized officer within the BLM Alaska State Office. Each recommendation shall contain the following information:

- A description of the values which make the area special;
- The significant subsistence, recreational, fish and wildlife, historical, or scenic resource values that are present within or supported by the recommended lands (See §2361.0-5(f))¹
- The size and location of the area on appropriate USGS quadrangle maps; and
- Any other pertinent information.

The authorized officer shall seek comments on the recommendation(s) from interested public agencies, groups, and persons. These comments shall be submitted along with his recommendation to the Secretary. Pursuant to section 104(b) of the Act, the Secretary may designate that area(s) which he determines to have special values requiring maximum protection. Any such designated area shall be identified in accordance with the provision of § 2361.1(c) of this subpart.

The only significant changes from the previous to new information collection requirement for SA recommendations is the simplification of the administrative process and the specific request for USGS quadrangle maps. The BLM believes that providing applicable maps is both more efficient and effective than under the current rules when recommending lands as a SA.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden and specifically how this collection meets GPEA requirements.

There are no forms associated with this information collection that would require automation. The information that is collected may be received in an electronic format to the BLM Alaska State office.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.

The information collected is unique to each respondent. There is no similar information already available and no duplication. The SA evaluation process is specific to Alaska and there are no other processes that currently exist to evaluate and designate special areas in Alaska pursuant to the final rule.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.

There are four communities within the Reserve that are likely considered small government jurisdictions:

¹ §2361.0-5(f) defines SAs as areas within the reserve identified by the Secretary of the Interior as having significant subsistence, recreational, fish and wildlife, or historical or scenic value and, therefore, warranting maximum protection of such values to the extent consistent with the requirements of the Act for the exploration of the Reserve. Recommendations for designating lands as a SA would, by definition, need to provide information regarding the topics contained in §2361.0-5(f).

Wainwright, Utqiagvik, Atkasuk, and Nuiqsut.”The BLM believes that the Aklaq Company Alaska, Borealis Alaska Oil Inc, Armstrong and North Slope Exploration, and Emerald House LLC meet the SBA’s criteria of a small business. Additionally, the North Slope Borough, and Point Lay, Point Hope, and Anaktuvuk Pass are in close to the border and directly affected by decisions and actions within the Reserve. These entities meet the SBA’s criteria of a small business. In order to ensure that all SA evaluations are considered consistently, there are no special modifications to the information collections associated with them. The previous analysis concluded that the 2024 regulatory action was most likely to affect businesses currently operating in the oil and gas sector in the Reserve and the four small communities within the Reserve, however any effect was not expected to be significant since the impact on future leasing was expected to be nominal or minimal. Similarly, repeal of the 2024 regulatory change will not directly affect current leases or oil and gas operations in the NPR-A and the impact on future leasing is expected to be nominal or minimally positive.

6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

The information is collected at any time on an “open submission basis, there is no regular frequency required for collecting the information. Without this information, the BLM may be lack contemporary information to appropriately execute its obligation under National Petroleum Reserve Production Act (NPRPA) to balance exploration and production of oil and gas resources with the protection of surface resources in the Reserve, as appropriate under law.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:

- * requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;
- * requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;
- * requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;
- * requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records, for more than three years;
- * in connection with a statistical survey that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;
- * requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;
- * that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or
- * requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets, or other confidential information, unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information’s confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.

The information is collection is consistent with the requirements of 5 CFR 1320.5(d)(2). None of the above exceptions would apply.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency’s notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and in response to the PRA statement associated with the collection over the past three years, and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting

format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every three years — even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

Consistent with the requirements of 5 CFR 1320.11, the BLM published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) soliciting public comments on the information collection requirements contained in the proposed rule (90 FR 23507). The BLM received one comment in response to the proposed rule that address the information collection aspects of the rule. The commentor was generally supportive of the changes introduced by the rule changes and noted that the changes will be substantially less burdensome on stakeholders than the efforts detailed in the 2024 Final Rule. A copy of this comment is included with the information collection request submitted to OMB in association with the final rule.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

The BLM provides no payments or gifts to the respondents.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

Not applicable.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

Respondents are not required to answer questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should:

- * **Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Unless directed to do so, agencies should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a sample (fewer than 10) of potential respondents is desirable. If the hour burden on respondents is expected to vary widely because of differences in activity, size, or complexity, show the range of estimated hour burden, and explain the reasons for the variance. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices.**
- * **If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens.**
- * **Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here.**

Table 12-1 shows the estimated per-hour cost for respondents. The mean hourly wages respondents were determined using national Bureau of Labor Statistics data at http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm. The benefits multipliers of 1.4 is implied by information at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecec.nr0.htm>. Table 12-2, below, shows our estimates of the annual hour and hour-related cost burdens for each information collection activity. All the information collections occur upon occasion. We have based the majority of the hourly compensation on the BLS category of “All Occupations” as submissions can be made by almost anyone. However, since in some special

instances it may be possible that a professional prepares an SA recommendation, we have also included potential costs for engineers and lawyers in the estimated weighted hourly cost calculation in Table 12-1, below. The number of estimated respondents and estimated response time are based on the BLM's experience with similar comment processes.

Table 12-1: Estimated Hourly Cost for Respondents

Position	Mean Hourly Wage	Benefits Multiplier	Hourly Rate with Benefits	Percent of Collection Time Completed by Each Occupation	Weighted Average Hourly Cost
All Occupations – 00-0000	\$32.66	1.4	\$45.72	80%	\$36.58
Engineers - 17-2199	\$58.52	1.4	\$81.93	10%	\$8.19
Lawyers - 23-1011	\$87.86	1.4	\$123.00	10%	\$12.30
Totals:	–	–	–	100%	\$57.07

Table 12-2: Estimates of Annual Burden Hours and Related Costs

Information Collection	Number of Respondents	Estimated Average Response Time (hours)	Annual Burden Hours	Compensation Cost	Annual Cost
SA Recommendation (43 CFR 2361.1(c))	10	15	150	\$57.07	\$8,560.50

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual non-hour cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected in item 12.)

- * The cost estimate should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component (annualized over its expected useful life) and (b) a total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component. The estimates should take into account costs associated with generating, maintaining, and disclosing or providing the information (including filing fees paid for form processing). Include descriptions of methods used to estimate major cost factors including system and technology acquisition, expected useful life of capital equipment, the discount rate(s), and the time period over which costs will be incurred. Capital and start-up costs include, among other items, preparations for collecting information such as purchasing computers and software; monitoring, sampling, drilling and testing equipment; and record storage facilities.
- * If cost estimates are expected to vary widely, agencies should present ranges of cost burdens and explain the reasons for the variance. The cost of purchasing or contracting out information collection services should be a part of this cost burden estimate. In developing cost burden estimates, agencies may consult with a sample of respondents (fewer than 10), utilize the 60-day pre-OMB submission public comment process and use existing economic or regulatory impact analysis associated with the rulemaking containing the information collection, as appropriate.
- * Generally, estimates should not include purchases of equipment or services, or portions thereof, made: (1) prior to October 1, 1995, (2) to achieve regulatory compliance with requirements not associated with the information collection, (3) for reasons other than to provide information or keep records for the government, or (4) as part of customary and usual business or private practices.

There are no filing fees or other cost associated with this information collection other than those accounted for in Table 12-2, above. Respondents are not required to purchase special equipment to prepare and submit a SA recommendation. Additionally, the USGS quadrangle maps that are requested to accompany a SA recommendation are freely available on-line at <https://www.usgs.gov/programs/national-geospatial-program/topographic-maps>.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the

method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

Tables 14-1 and 14-2 show the BLM's estimates of the hourly cost burdens to the Federal government. The hourly pay rates for the General Schedule (GS) positions in the State of Alaska are at [SALARY TABLE 2025-AK](#). Executive salary is available at [Executive Senior Level](#). Information at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecec.nr0.htm> implies the benefits multiplier of 1.6. The GS-level, staff positions, and time allocations are based on the BLM's staff assigned to these tasks.

Table 14-1: Estimated Hourly Federal Wage Cost

Position and Pay GS Grade	Hourly Pay Rate	Benefits Multiplier	Hourly Rate with Benefits	Percent of the Information Collection Completed by Each Occupation	Weighted Average Cost Per Hour
BLM Alaska Staffing Estimates:					
GS-13, Step 6 (Project Manager)	\$66.61	1.6	\$106.58	14%	\$14.92
GS-12, Step 3 (COR)	\$51.22	1.6	\$81.95	10%	\$8.20
GS-9, Step 8 (AO assistance)	\$40.83	1.6	\$65.33	5%	\$3.27
GS-11, Step 8 (RDO SMEs)	\$49.40	1.6	\$79.04	45%	\$35.57
GS-12, Step 8 (RDO AFMs)	\$59.22	1.6	\$94.75	12%	\$11.37
GS-13, Step 10 (RDO DM)	\$74.22	1.6	\$118.75	10%	\$11.88
ES-1 (State Director)	\$108.80	1.6	\$174.08	1%	\$1.74
GS-15, Step 10 (Assistant State Director)	\$93.53	1.6	\$149.65	1%	\$1.50
GS-15, Step 6 (ASD - Resources)	\$92.59	1.6	\$148.14	1%	\$1.48
GS-13, Step 10 (AKSO SMEs)	\$74.22	1.6	\$118.75	1%	\$1.19
			Totals:	100%	\$76.18

Table 14-2: Estimated Annual Cost to the Federal Government

Collection of Information	Number of Responses	Staff Hours per Response	Total Hours	Weighted Hourly Rate	Dollar Equivalent
SA Recommendations (43 CFR 2361.1(c))	10	120	1,200	\$76.18	\$91,416
				Total:	\$91,416

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments in hour or cost burden.

The rule removes and revises the information collection requirements pertaining to submitting recommendations to designate lands as an SA within the Reserve. The previous information collection requirements are moved from the rescinded 43 CFR 2361.30 to 43 CFR 2361.1(d). The information collected as part of this requirement is more effective by reducing overly complex administrative processes. The BLM believes that this rule increases clarity and efficiency in identifying lands being recommended as a SA.

The BLM does not believe that the revised information collection requirements for SA recommendations would result in a change in public burdens under this OMB control number. For example, as previously noted, the only significant revisions to the information collection requirements are the simplification of the administrative process and specific request for USGS quadrangle maps to be included with SA recordation's. As a practical matter, under the current rules respondents would likely submit maps with SA reconditions and this is currently factored into the current burden estimates.

The estimated number of annual responses will be adjusted from 100 to 10 as we believe that it is unlikely that the BLM would receive more than 10 recommendations year. This adjustment will reduce the annual estimated burden hours associated with SA recommendations from 1,500 to 150.

- 16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.**

The BLM has no specific plans for tabulation or publication the results of this collection of information. Most likely BLM would prepare a summary of the comments and recommendations it received, which it would publish along with responses to those comments/recommendations.

- 17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.**

There are no forms associated with these information collection activities. The OMB control number and expiration date are available at www.reginfo.gov.

- 18. Explain each exception to the topics of the certification statement identified in "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions."**

There are no exceptions to the certification requirements outlined in 5 CFR 1320.9.

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