United States Department of the Interior

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

IN REPLY REFER TO:

AFES/MMM

APR 24 2013

Ms. Julie Lina
Regulatory and Environmental Affairs Coordinator
Pioneer Natural Resources Alaska, Inc.
700 G Street, Suite 600
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Ms. Lina:

We have received your request dated January 2, 2013, for a Letter of Authorization (LOA) for the incidental take of polar bears and Pacific walruses in association with the Pioneer Natural Resources Alaska, Inc. (Pioneer) Nuna Development Project, North Slope Exploration Project, and associated field studies (Nuna).

In response, enclosed is LOA (13-09) that authorizes Pioneer to take small numbers of polar bears and walruses incidental to year-round activities associated with Nuna projects at the locations identified in your request and detailed in the documents referenced below.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service), Marine Mammals Management Office (MMM) has determined that protection measures for polar bears described in Pioneer's *Oooguruk Development Project Bear and Pacific Walrus Avoidance and Human Interaction/Encounter Plan (Revision 3 - April 2011)*, including *Addendum C – North Slope Exploration Project 2011-2012 (August 2011)*, *Addendum D, Nuna Development Activities (August 2011)*, *Addendum E, Nuna Studies (February 2012)* as well as Pioneer's *Health, Safety And Environmental, (Standard Operating Procedures), Subject: F-019: Polar Bear Notifications (Rev: 4 Date: May 23, 2011)*, contain appropriate safeguards to limit human/animal interactions and are hereby incorporated into the terms of this LOA by reference. Pioneer field camps and personnel can limit encounters with polar bears by being observant of approaching animals (i.e., the use of polar bear guards) and breaking off interactions, if practicable, by allowing the animals to continue their travel. The Service expects Pioneer and all parties affiliated with this project to implement the terms of this LOA and these plans. Service biologists are available for consultation if questions or concerns arise during the project period at the phone numbers listed below and noted in your interaction plan.

Pioneer must use caution when operating near areas that provide suitable denning habitat for polar bears during the maternal denning period (late October to mid April). Disturbance during denning could lead to abandonment of dens and possible mortality to cubs. The U.S. Geological Survey has posted information regarding polar bear denning habitat including the polar bear den habitat GIS coverage on the Alaska Science Center (ASC) website. The den habitat map

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(ARC/INFO export file), the mapping manuscript (PDF file) and a picture of den habitat (JPG file) are now available for downloading on the ASC website (*http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/polar_bears/pubs.html*). Use these resources when planning activities in potential denning areas and contact us immediately if any dens are found during your activities.

The Service has completed intra-Service consultation and conference under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA), on the issuance of this LOAs and has determined that issuance is not likely to jeopardize the continuing existence of polar bears and Pacific walruses and is not likely to destroy or adversely modify polar bear critical habitat, as it was previously designated. Therefore, no additional authorization under the ESA is required.

This authorization is issued in accordance with MMPA Incidental Take Regulations published in the *Federal Register* (76 FR 47010), dated August 3, 2011. Please review these regulations. If you should have any further questions, please contact Mr. Craig Perham, at (907) 786-3810, or Mr. Christopher Putnam, at (907) 786-3844, of our Marine Mammals Management Office.

Sincerely,

Deborah Pierce Williams
Chief, Marine Mammals Management

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Richard Shideler, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (Email)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement
North Slope Borough, Department of Law

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION
(13-09)

ISSUED: April 24, 2013
EXPIRES: April 20, 2014

Pioneer Natural Resources Alaska, Inc. (Pioneer) is hereby authorized to take small numbers of polar bears and Pacific walruses incidental to activities in association with the Pioneer Nuna Development Project, North Slope Exploration Project, and associated field studies (Nuna). Pioneer proposes to conduct year-round exploration and development activities during Nuna projects at the locations described in your request dated January 2, 2013, and detailed in the documents referenced below.

This authorization includes all activities associated with Nuna Projects. This authorization and the required conditions below include contractors of Pioneer performing Pioneer-approved work under the scope of operations to be conducted. A detailed description of these activities can be found in Pioneer's *Request for Letters of Authorization for the Incidental and Intentional Take of Marine Mammals North Slope Exploration Project (2011-2012)* dated August 2, 2011, and *Request for Letters of Authorization for the Incidental and Intentional Take of Marine Mammals Nuna Project* dated February 2, 2012, as well as the *Oooguruk Development Project Bear and Pacific Walrus Avoidance and Human Interaction/Encounter Plan (Revision 3 - April 2011)*, including *Addendum C – North Slope Exploration Project 2011-2012 (August 2011)*, *Addendum D, Nuna Development Activities (August 2011)*, *Addendum E, Nuna Studies (February 2012)*.

This Letter of Authorization (LOA) is subject to the following conditions:

1. Intentional take is prohibited under this LOA.

2. Pioneer's *Oooguruk Development Project Bear and Pacific Walrus Avoidance and Human Interaction/Encounter Plan (Revision 3 - April 2011)*, including *Addendum C – North Slope Exploration Project 2011-2012 (August 2011), Addendum D, Nuna Development Activities (August 2011), Addendum E, Nuna Studies (February 2012)* as well as Pioneer's *Health, Safety And Environmental, (Standard Operating Procedures), Subject: F-019: Polar Bear Notifications (Rev: 4 Date: May 23, 2011)* are approved and all provisions must be

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complied with unless specifically noted otherwise in this LOA. A copy of these plans must be available on site for all personnel.

3. Pioneer Operations Managers, or designees, must be fully aware, understand, and be capable of implementing the conditions of this LOA.

4. This authorization is valid only for those activities identified in the request for a LOA dated January 2, 2013, for the Nuna Projects.

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

   - Pioneer must cooperate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Marine Mammals Management Office (MMM), and other designated Federal, State or local agencies to monitor the impacts of oil and gas exploration activities on polar bears and Pacific walrus.

   - Pioneer must not conduct activities that operate nor pass within one mile (approximately 1600 meters) of known polar bear dens, and all observed dens must be reported to the Service immediately after discovery. If occupied dens are identified within one mile of activities, work within the immediate area will cease and the Service must be contacted for guidance. The Service will evaluate these instances on a case-by-case basis to determine the appropriate action. Potential actions may range from cessation or modification of work to conducting additional monitoring, and Pioneer must comply with any additional measures specified.

   - Pioneer must designate a qualified individual or individuals to report all Pacific walrus and polar bear sightings to the Service within 24 hours of visual observation.

   - Pioneer must allow the Service to place an observer on site to monitor the impacts of the activity on polar bears and Pacific walruses, at the discretion of the Service.

   - Pioneer must submit an annual monitoring report, as required under 18 CFR 18.128(f), to the Service no later than 90 days after the expiration date of the LOA.

This Letter of Authorization is valid for the period indicated on this authorization, unless extended or terminated in writing by the Service MMM.

APR 24 2013

Chief, Marine Mammals Management

Date