

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
Region 7, Alaska**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Environmental Assessment:  
Kodiak Microwave Systems, LLC, Telecommunications Project**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is considering a right-of-way (ROW) application from Kodiak Microwave System, LLC (KMS) to construct a telecommunications project (KMS4), consisting of several remote microwave repeater stations (towers), on the northwest side of Kodiak Island within the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The project would provide broadband telecommunications services to the remote communities of Larsen Bay and Karluk. These communities currently use private satellite networks for telecommunications, which have limited usefulness due to slow speeds, frequent delays in connectivity, and low reliability. Without access to broadband internet, Larsen Bay and Karluk lack access to modern educational tools, telemedicine, and economic opportunities. This project would address the need for improved broadband service in Larsen Bay and Karluk by providing high-capacity, high-speed, low delay connectivity. This improved internet connectivity and reliability would provide residents with increased opportunities to facilitate economic development and would improve services for health care providers, schools, government agencies, tribes, non-profit entities, and residential users.

Alternative 1 is the No Action alternative. If chosen, the ROW application would be denied. Alternative 2 (Inner Route) is the originally proposed alternative provided by the applicant and included one microwave repeater station at Larsen Peak and another at Midridge. Alternative 3 (Outer Route) is a route that includes three stations, one each at Spiridon, Uganik, and Z-Ridge. The Alternative 3 route is closer to the coast than the route for Alternative 2. Construction of the project is proposed for summer of 2016. Currently there are no installations at any of the locations identified in Alternative 2 or on Uganik in Alternative 3. Small radio repeater sites have been located on Spiridon and Z-Ridge in Alternative 3, but will be removed in the summer of 2016. If either Alternative 2 or 3 are approved, a Federal right-of-way (ROW) would be granted to KMS to build the remote microwave repeater stations on the Refuge.

The draft EA identified Alternative 2 (Inner Route) as the proposed action. Although the facilities associated with Alternative 2 would be located on lands with wilderness values, they would be less visible, further from critical sea lion haul-outs and seabird colonies, and would require fewer helicopter flights for construction and maintenance over the life of the project than would facilities associated with Alternative 3 (Outer Route).

**Table of Impacts**

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT	NO ACTION - ALTERNATIVE 1	OUTER ROUTE – ALTERNATIVE 3
Soils	No changes to soil resources.	Negligible, direct, long-term adverse impacts would be expected. Approximately 36 ft <sup>3</sup> of soil would be displaced and 0.33 acres disturbed at each site.
Vegetation	Vegetation would remain unchanged.	Impacts on vegetation would be expected to be minor, affecting a relatively small area, for a long duration. Though vegetation would be permanently affected on a total of 1 acre, approximately 4.3 acres would be disturbed during construction. Invasive species prevention and mitigation measures would be properly implemented. Fuel handling procedures would minimize potential for spills.
Hazardous Materials	No contaminants are recorded in these areas and no impacts due to hazardous materials would result.	Minor, short term and long term potentials for fuel spills exist. Storage of fuels at construction sites would be limited and regulated. Containment designs and an approved SPCC plan would reduce the risks. Given the limited fuel volumes, fuel types, and stipulations regarding storage, the potential impacts of a fuel spill would be considered minor.
Surfbird ( <i>Calidris virgate</i> )	No change to current habitat.	Minor, short-term, and direct effects during construction and minor, long-term, and indirect effects through the life of the projects are expected to nesting habitat at Uganik site. There are no expected affects to surfbird nesting habitat on the other sites within this alternative. In the long term, no effects are expected as refueling and maintenance will be limited to early spring and late summer, which is before and after the nesting season.

<b>AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>NO ACTION - ALTERNATIVE 1</b>	<b>OUTER ROUTE – ALTERNATIVE 3</b>
Cultural Resources	No change to historic properties.	No change to historic properties is expected at the construction sites or staging areas.
Socioeconomic	No change socioeconomic patterns.	Nominal beneficial economic effects are expected to the communities of Larsen Bay and Karluk from an improved internet connection.
Environmental Justice	No changes to environmental justice.	No environmental justice concerns were identified.
Subsistence	No change to current resources.	No effects to subsistence resources or opportunities are expected.
Land Use	No change to current use.	Direct, minor adverse effects include the long-term removal of availability of 1 acre of recreational land. Three tower sites would be re-classified from Minimal Management to Moderate Management.
Recreation	No change to current use.	Minor, indirect effects to recreational use in the short-term due to multiple helicopter flights on the Spiridon Peninsula and near the community of Larsen Bay and indirect, long-term effects due to a change to the visual resources of the area in the long-term on the Spiridon Peninsula and Uganik Bay.
Lands with Wilderness Values	No change to current lands with wilderness values.	No towers are proposed for construction on lands eligible for wilderness designation.
Noise/Soundscape	No additional noise.	Minor to moderate short-term effects in and minor long-term effects to the soundscape of the area are expected. Noise from helicopter flights would last for up to 3 months in and around the Spiridon Peninsula during construction and would occur for a short duration (1 day) 2-3 times per year for maintenance and refueling.

## Amendment to the Kodiak Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan

The 2006 Kodiak Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan classifies all Refuge lands into one of five management categories. A management category is used to define the level of human activity appropriate to a specific area of the refuge. The lands upon which the facilities would be constructed are classified as Minimal Management. Minimal Management is designed to maintain the natural environment with very little evidence of human-caused change. Ground-disturbing activities are to be avoided whenever possible. The facilities for which the Right-of-Way would be granted are not appropriate for Minimal Management. However, compatible public uses, commercial uses, and facilities that may result in changes to the natural environment that are temporary or permanent but small in scale and do not disrupt natural processes may be authorized in Moderate Management areas. Based on the analysis provided in the EA, the Compatibility Determination and the above findings and determinations, I hereby reclassify the lands for which this Right-of-Way may be granted as Moderate Management. This reclassification applies only to the lands within the boundary of the Right-of-Way as specified in the permit and applies only as long as the Right-of-Way is in effect. Upon the successful decommissioning and rehabilitation of the sites, these lands will revert to Minimal Management status.

Karen P Clark

6/30/16

Regional Director  
Region 7, Alaska  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Date