

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PERMIT ISSUED TO STUDY PROPOSED GAS PIPELINE ROUTE IN ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE RANGE

The Alaskan Arctic Gas Study Company of Toronto, Canada, has been issued a permit by Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct an on-the-ground examination of specific sites within the northern portion of the Arctic National Wildlife Range.

Interior officials stress that the permit does not constitute and is not to be construed in any way as constituting a commitment or promise of any kind that the Department will issue the company any other permit, lease, license, or grant of any kind.

Five routes in all are under consideration. A joint task force of the Interior Department and Federal Power Commission is preparing an environmental impact statement concerning the consequences of each possible route -- or no route. Three of the five proposed routes are outside the Wildlife Range. The impact statement would not be complete without an assessment of the two proposed routes across the Range.

The company will gather the basic information it needs to support its application for a natural gas pipeline route that may cross the Wildlife Range. Under a special permit last summer the company took soil samples in the area. This summer, company engineers and environmentalists will examine the surface conditions along the proposed routes and at specific sites where facilities for operating and maintaining a pipeline might be located.

Interior and company officials have thoroughly discussed the conditions under which the site examinations may be made. Among the conditions, which are a part of the permit, is a requirement that a Project Monitor from the Fish and Wildlife Service be present during all site examinations to insure environmental protection and to prevent any potential adverse impact on wildlife populations. All operations must be approved by the Project Monitor, and any violation of the permit conditions could result in a shutdown of field activity. The field party will travel by aircraft daily to and from the study sites.

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