

Huang Yu

Reykjavík, 31. október 2024  
UST202410-172/P.V.B.  
09.04.00

**Subject: Permit to fly a drone in protected area**

The Environment Agency of Iceland has received an application from Huang Yu, dated miðvikudagur, 17. október 2024, for permit to fly a drone within Búðahraun, Dynjandi, Dyrhólaey, Geysir, Goðafoss, Gullfoss, Hraunfossar and Barnafoss, Mývatn, Skógafoss, Stóruð and the beach at Arnarstapi and Hellnar.

Búðahraun is protected as a nature reserve, cf. regulation no. 357/1979. Disturbance to geological formations, vegetation and wild animal life in the protected area is prohibited.

Dynjandi is protected as a natural monument, cf. regulation no. 348/1971. Construction work, disturbance to geological formations and other changes to landscape is subjected to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland. According to the rules of conduct operating an unmanned aircraft/drone within the protected area is subjected to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland in the period of May 1<sup>st</sup> and September 30<sup>th</sup>.

Dyrhólaey is protected as a nature reserve, cf. regulation no.101/1978. Construction work and disturbance to geological formations and wild animal life in the protected area is prohibited. According to the management plan regulations permission must be obtained from the Environment Agency for operating an unmanned aircraft/drone within the area.

Geysir is protected as natural monument, cf. regulation no. 660/2020. All disturbance of geological monuments is prohibited, incl. any inscriptions and disturbance of the activity and water level of the hot spring area, disturbance of hot springs, hot springs, soils and rocks, without permission. Operating an unmanned aircraft/drone within the protected area is subjected to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland.

Goðafoss is protected as natural monument, cf. regulation no. 647/2020. Disturbance to vegetation, wildlife and geological formation is prohibited. Operating an unmanned aircraft/drone within the protected area is subjected to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland.

Gullfoss is protected as a nature reserve, cf. regulation no. 141/1979. Disturbance to geological formations, vegetation and wild animal life is prohibited. Operating an unmanned aircraft/drone within the protected area is subjected to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland.

Hraunfossar and Barnafoss is protected as a natural monument, cf. regulation no. 410/1987. Disturbance to geological formations, vegetation and wild animal life in the protected area is prohibited.

Mývatn and Laxá area is protected according to act no. 97/2004. Permission from the Environment Agency of Iceland is needed for construction work and all activity that can affect wildlife, geological formations, vegetation and landscape in the area.

Skógafoss is protected as a natural monument, cf. regulation no. 477/1987. Disturbance to geological formations, vegetation and wild animal life in the protected area is prohibited. Photography, cinemaphotography and events that can affect visitors experience in the area are subjected to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland. Operating an unmanned aircraft/drone within the protected area is subjected to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland.

The beach at Stapi and Hellnar is protected as a nature reserve cf. regulation no. 284/1988. Disturbance to geological formations, vegetation and wild animal life in the protected area is prohibited. Operating an unmanned aircraft/drone within the protected area is subjected to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland.

Stóruð is protected cf. regulation no. 850/2021. Operating an unmanned aircraft/drone within the protected area is subjected to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland.

Vatnsfjörður is protected as a nature reserve cf. 96//1975. Disturbance to geological formations, vegetation and wild animal life in the protected area is prohibited.

### **Description of the project:**

Permit is requested to fly a drone within Búðahraun, Dynjandi, Dyrhólaey, Geysir, Goðafoss, Gullfoss, Hraunfossar and Barnafoss, Mývatn, Skógafoss, Stóruð and the beach at Arnarstapi and Hellnar. Map showing flight routes for the drone within Geysir, Gullfoss, Mývatn and Skógafoss were included in the application. Number of employees would be 2 persons and no need to go off paths. No flights would be carried out if a large group of birds is present. In some areas flight altitude would exceed altitude limits but application for exemption has been filled to the Icelandic Transport Authority.

### **Review:**

In accordance to art. 25. in regulation 665/2012 the Environment Agency of Iceland requested a review from the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, on October 24<sup>th</sup> 2024. The review from Icelandic Institute of Natural History was received on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2024. In their review it is stated that the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, thinks it is unwise to grant permission for drone flights within the protected area at a time when birdlife is particularly vulnerable, especially during nesting and molting periods. The specified dates,

November 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> 2024, is outside of that period, but it should be noted that waterfowl are present at Mývatn year-round. The Institute of Natural History does not oppose granting the permit, provided care is taken not to disturb birdlife.

**Impact assessment:**

The Environment Agency of Iceland considers the project not likely to have negative effect on nature and conservation value of the sites at the time requested. Droneflight might have negative impact on birdlife at lake Mývatn if drone is used over icefree areas where birds are. Droneflight might have negative impact on other visitors experience in the sites but the impact can be reduced if conditions of the permit are followed.

**Conclusions and conditions:**

After revision of the application, regulations for the sites and management plans it is concluded that no permission is needed to fly a drone at Búðahraun, Dynjandi and Hraunfoss and Barnafossin in the period requested if the flight does not disturb wildlife and other visitors experience.

The Environment Agency of Iceland hereby grants Huang Yu permission on its behalf to fly a drone within Dyrhólaey, Geysir, Goðafoss, Gullfoss, Mývatn, Skógafoss, Stóruurð and the beach at Arnarstapi and Hellnar as described above on November 1<sup>st</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> 2024 on the following conditions:

- Keep this letter with you on site during the project.
- The applicant shall inform rangers in the area about their arrival and departure. This is to be done 24 hours before entering the area and again before leaving it.
- If the project dates or description changes the Environment Agency shall be notified as soon as possible.
- Crew members should always stay on authorized paths/tracks/roads.
- The crew must follow rules of conduct that apply to the area.
- If any complications occur during the project, please contact the ranger or the Environment Agency of Iceland, tel. +354 591 2000.
- The project's staff is required to prevent all disturbance to the environment and make sure that all litter is removed from the sites.
- If the material is meant for public viewing it must be noted in the video/subtext that permission from the Environment Agency was obtained for the filming/photography.
- An unmanned aircraft should never be flown in close proximity to people. Please take precaution not to disturb people's experience, their safety or personal privacy nor the general peace of the protected areas being filmed.
- According to Icelandic law it is forbidden to fly close to cliffs where birds nest. An unmanned aircraft should never be flown near animals or birds, neither in nesting areas nor during nesting season or any other seasonal time when animals or bird habitats are considered vulnerable.
- Flight time should be kept to a minimum and flight should be avoided during the area's busiest times of the day.

- If the use of unmanned aircraft causes disturbance to wildlife in the area, its use should be ceased at once.
- The conductor of the unmanned aircraft is responsible for the aircraft within the protected area. This includes taking responsibility of any possible risk of harm to people, fauna and nature and leaving no permanent marks on the site in question. Should the aircraft crash, all components from it must be collected and removed from the area.
- **It is not allowed to fly drones over icefree parts of lake Mývatn due to wildlife protection.**
- **It is forbidden to fly drones in the canyon in front of the waterfall at Skógafoss due to wildlife protection.**
- For safety reasons, unmanned aircraft are not allowed to fly below 50 m above Strokki.
- It is forbidden to fly drones next to bird cliffs in a closer proximity than 50 meters, if birds are in the cliffs.
- If falcons or eagles are seen in the area, it is not allowed to fly the drone there.

If the licensee causes damage to nature, according to art. 87 in the Nature Conservation Act no. 60/2013, the Environment Agency of Iceland can, according to the Nature Conservation Act, f.e. order the licensee to fix damage to nature and vegetation and/or stop the project.

The Environment Agency of Iceland can according to art. 89 in the Nature Conservation Act no. 60/2013 change conditions of the permit, add new conditions or withdraw the permit in order to prevent damage to nature if environmental conditions change.

According to art 89. in the Nature Conservation Act no. 60/2013 the Environment Agency can withdraw the permit if conditions of the permit are not complied to.

Unmanned aircraft should take off and land in a safe distance from other visitors according to regulation 990/2017 on unmanned aircrafts.

The usage of a drone shall be according to regulation no. 990/2017 on the operation of remotely piloted aircraft (<https://www.icetra.is/aviation/drones/>).

Please note that according to the regulation all drones used for commercial flight need to be registered at the Icelandic Transport Authority.

A permission from the landowners and/or the municipality might be needed for the project.

**Permission fee:**

Environment Agency of Iceland charges a fee for processing applications for permits in protected areas based on Article 92 of Act no. 61/2013 on Nature Conservation. The fee for constructions, droneflights is **83.200 ISK** according to art. 29. b. in the agency's tariff no. 1410/2023.

**Supervision:**

The Environment Agency will supervise the project. The supervisor will be a ranger from the Environment Agency.

Sincerely

Dagbjört Jónsdóttir

**advisor**

Þórdís Vilhelmína Bragadóttir

**advisor**