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Subject: Application for research permit at protected sites

The Environment Agency of Iceland has received an application from University of Niigata, dated 25th of July 2024, for collecting rock samples at Mývatn/Laxá, Rauðhólar and Þjórsárdalur.

Hjálparfoss, Gjáin, Háifoss and Granni are protected as natural monument, cf. regulation no. 110/2020. Disturbance to geological formations, vegetation and wild animal life in the protected area is prohibited. Permission must be obtained from the Environment Agency for organized events and projects that pose a risk of disturbance to geological formations, wildlife or guests in the area. Operating an unmanned aircraft/drone within the protected area is subjected to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland. Furthermore the area in Þjórsárdalur is protected as a nature reserve.

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.

Rauðhólar was protected as a country park in 1974. Pedestrian traffic is allowed in the whole area, and obstructing it with fences is prohibited unless there are crossing steps at regular intervals. All ground disturbance is prohibited within the country park, except with the Environment Agency's permission.

According to art. 31 in the Nature Conservation Act no. 60/2013 it is prohibited to drive off road in Iceland. If off-Road driving is a necessary component of the sampling, the Environment Agency of Iceland can give authorization.

Description of the project:

The research project examines why explosions in hot molten lava-water interactions occur or not. To answer this the applicant needs to collect rock (lava and scoria) samples from

sites where these explosions have occurred. Five people will conduct the sampling by hand with a short geological hammer and scoop. Great care will be taken to preserve the landscape. In total around 60 kg of volcanic rock will be sampled and licence to export the samples to Japan will be obtained from the Icelandic Institute of Natural History. The sampling will be conducted between 6th to 30th of August 2024.

Review:

In accordance to art. 17. in regulation 665/2012 the Environment Agency of Iceland requested a review from the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, the Lake Mývatn Research station on 21st of June 2024. The review from Icelandic Institute of Natural History was received on 28th of June 2024. In their review the Icelandic Institute of Natural History did not object to the sampling.

Impact assessment:

The Environment Agency of Iceland considers the project to be minimal and not likely to have negative impact on the conservation value of the areas if great care is taken to minimize all disturbance to the environment.

Conclusions and conditions:

The Environment Agency of Iceland hereby grants University of Niigata permission on its behalf to collect geological samples within the areas listed and described above between 6th to 30th of August 2024 on the following conditions:

- Keep this letter with you on site during the project. The permit conditions should be introduced to the staff of the project before work begins.
- 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.
- Every measure should be taken to avoid damage to the sites and unnecessary disturbance while collecting samples.
- Samples should be collected where any resulting disturbance to soil, vegetation or geological formations is not visible to other visitors.
- When it is necessary to go off-path, extra care must be taken not to cause damage to terrain, including vegetation, soil and geological formation. All traces of activity must be removed afterwards.
- Crew members should always stay on authorized paths/tracks/roads.
- The crew must follow rules of conduct that apply to the area.
- Time spent in the area should be limited as possible.
- Every measure must be taken not to cause damage to the site and limit the size of the research site.
- All disturbances to geological features should be done in consultation with rangers.

- If any complications occur during the project, please contact the ranger or the Environment Agency of Iceland, tel. +354 591 2000.
- This permit is only valid for research purposes. It does not include permit to utilize the samples for commercial purposes. The samples cannot be signed over to third party for commercial use.
- All vehicles used during field exploration must be labelled with the identity of the researcher's institute. All participants in the project must wear high-visibility clothing during field work, labelled with the identity of the researcher or the research institute.

If the developer 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.

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

A permission from the Prime minister's office might be needed according to Act no. 58/1998.

Permit from the National Energy Authority is needed for researches in geothermal areas (www.os.is).

If you wish to export samples from Iceland a special permit is needed from the Icelandic Institute of Natural History (www.ni.is).

The Environment Agency of Iceland wishes to receive, free of charge, a copy of all reports and scientific articles that result from the research project.

Sincerely

Daníel Freyr Jónsson
advisor

Sveinn Kári Valdimarsson
advisor

