

Líf og umhverfisvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands
Sturlugata 7
102 Reykjavík
Iceland

Reykjavík, 31. ágúst 2022
UST202208-065/P.V.B.
09.05.01

Subject: Application for a research project within protected areas

The Environment Agency of Iceland has received an application from the Institute of Life and Environmental Sciences, dated the 9th of August 2022, for a research program within the protected areas of Reykjanes public park, Fjallabak nature reserve, Geysir, Kerlingarfjöll and Hveravellir from August 2022 to 1st of September 2025.

Fjallabak is protected as a nature reserve, cf. regulation no. 354/1979. Construction work, extraction of minerals, disturbance to geological formations, vegetation and wild animal life in the protected area is subject to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland.

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. Researches that require disturbance of soil og animals are subject to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland.

Hveravellir is protected as natural monument, cf. regulation no. 217/1975. Construction work and disturbance to geological formation is subjected to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland.

Kerlingarfjöll is protected as an area of landscape, cf. Regulation no. 822/2020. Disturbance to geological formations, landscape, hot springs, other springs and ecosystems in hot springs in the protected area is prohibited. Researches are subject to a permit from the Environment Agency of Iceland. Research results shall be accessible to the Environment Agency of Iceland and the Icelandic Institute of Natural History.

Reykjanes country park is protected cf. regulation 520/1975. Disturbance to geological formations is prohibited.

Description of the project:

Purpose of the project is to study ants in geothermal areas within Fjallabak nature reserve, Geysir area, Kerlingarfjöll, Hveravellir and Reykjanes country park. Distribution of the ants will be mapped and environmental abiotic factors measured to see if they affects ants density

and presence in the area. Rock, moss and vegetation will be lifted using a little shovel and hands to see if ants can be found. Rocks, moss and vegetation will be replaced after sampling takes place. Maximum three samples will be collected at each site. Detailed description of the methods used for the research were attached to the application. Drone would be used to take aerial photo of the research sites. The research will take place from August 25th to December 31st 2025 and conducted by 4 employees.

Impact assessment:

The Environment Agency of Iceland considers the project not likely to have negative effect on nature, visitors or conservation value of the sites if conditions of the permit are followed.

Conclusions and conditions:

The Environment Agency of Iceland hereby grants Institute of Life and Environmental Sciences permission on its behalf to conduct research within Fjallabak nature reserve, Geysir area, Kerlingarfjöll, Hveravellir and Reykjanes country park as described above on August 25th 2022 to December 31st 2025 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.
- 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.
- Time spent outside designated footpaths should be limited.
- All traces of the work must be removed carefully from the site by the end of the work/project.
- If any complications occur during the project, please contact the ranger or the Environment Agency of Iceland, tel. +354 591 2000.
- All traces of the project must be removed when the project is over.
- The crew should be conscious of other guests on the sites and make sure that the research filming causes as little disturbance as possible to other visitors. 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- All participants in the project must wear high-visibility clothing during field work, labelled with the identity of the researcher or the research institute.
- The project's staff is required to prevent all disturbance to the environment and make sure that all litter is removed from the sites.

- 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.
- 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.
- For safety reasons, the pilot of an unmanned aerial vehicle must wear marked clothing so that the person can be identified.
- **Due to security reasons, it is prohibited to fly drone less than 50m above Strokkur and Geysir.**

If the researcher 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.

Permit from the National Energy Authority is needed for research 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.

Supervision:

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

Sincerely

René Biasone
advisor

Pórdís Vilhelmína Bragadóttir
advisor