

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
FARMINGTON FIELD OFFICE  
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A  
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

July 14, 2008

Dear Interested Party:

In September of 2003 the Bureau of Land Management issued a Record of Decision relative to the Farmington Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement. Subsequent to this the Farmington Resource Management Plan with Record of Decision was issued in December of 2003. Page 15 of this document under "Land Use Plan Monitoring" stipulates that the BLM monitor implementation of the plan's decisions, their effectiveness, and whether they are compliant with the plan.

In keeping with the mandate noted above, the Farmington BLM has determined that one area of the plan needing review is the provision allowing exceptions to the seasonal closures that restrict oil and gas activities such as drilling new wells, building roads or well locations, constructing new pipelines, or significant construction activity in wildlife SDAs (page 5, Farmington RMP). The intent of the seasonal closures was to reduce the amount of wildlife disturbance during critical periods of a big game animal's life processes, e.g., fawning/calving or simply overwintering. However, the number of exceptions granted during the first five years of the RMP's existence has generated concern among various wildlife interests. Recognizing the need for a clearly defined criteria, the Farmington BLM has determined further environmental analysis is warranted.

Fundamental to the preparation of the environmental assessment will be the solicitation of input from various stakeholders regarding the content of the current exception criteria and their application. A copy of this document is attached to this letter for your reference should you desire to submit comments. In order to help you draft your comments the Proposed Action and alternatives at this point are:

**No Action Alternative:** Maintain the existing exception criteria as they apply to the specific oil/gas field activities identified in the Farmington Draft Environmental Impact Statement, i.e. drilling of new oil or gas wells, construction of cross country pipeline, seismic exploration, construction of new roads or wells pads, or any type of significant construction activity.

**No Exception Alternative:** The No Exception Alternative (to not have a process to request or grant an exception to a seasonal closure) for drilling of new oil or gas wells, construction of cross country pipeline, seismic exploration, construction of new roads or wells pads, or any type of significant construction activity is not a viable option.

**Modified Criteria Alternative:** Under this alternative those types of oil and gas field related activities that would be permissible under specific environmental conditions would be more clearly defined.

Comments concerning the preparation of the Farmington Exception Criteria Environmental Assessment should be submitted to the BLM at the address below no later than August 20, 2008.

Bureau of Land Management  
Att: Steve Henke, District Manager  
1235 La Plata Highway  
Farmington, NM 87401

Following the receipt and review of comments on the exception criteria alternatives an environmental assessment of the potential impacts associated with each alternative will be prepared.

Your participation in this very important process is greatly appreciated. Should you have specific questions, please contact John Hansen at 505-599- 6325.

Sincerely,

//s// Steve Henke

Farmington District Manager