

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Elko Field Office**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Bruffey Canyon 1-14 Oil/Gas Well
(NV-010-APD-2007-002; BLM/EK/PL-2007/017)**

Cleary Petroleum Corp. holds the oil and gas lease for public lands administered by the Elko Field Office in Eureka County, Nevada. The parcel is located in a wildcat oil and gas area in the Pine Valley area. They submitted an application for a permit to drill (APD) a well in the leased parcel (NV-010-APD-2007-002). The proposal has two phases; an exploratory phase and, if oil is found, a post-drilling production phase. To access the well site, 1600' of pre-existing road will be improved and 120' of new road will be constructed.

Based on my review of the attached environmental assessment (EA; BLM/EK/PL-2007/017), I have determined that the proposed action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required prior to BLM approval of the project. This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts, as discussed in the EA.

Context

The project area is in Pine Valley, about 32 miles south of the city of Carlin, Nevada, on fan piedmont remnants and valley fill, with elevations around 5760 feet. Annual precipitation is about 9 inches. The project would disturb about 3 acres, of which 1.18 acres would be for improvement of 1600' of existing access road and 120' of new access road to the well site. This area is characterized as a sparsely populated agricultural area, and the dominant use of public lands is for livestock grazing. The closest ranch buildings or corrals are located one and one-half miles from the project. The area is within a seeded (1960s) rangeland treatment area in the Bruffey grazing allotment. Big sagebrush, rubber rabbitbrush, crested wheatgrass and Great Basin wildrye are the dominant plants. There are Utah juniper trees near the proposed access road, and adjacent to the proposed drill site.

Intensity

1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The exploration for and, if successful, domestic production of oil and/or gas resources on leased public lands would benefit the security and welfare of the American citizens at risk from the disruption of energy supplies and drastically increased prices, and thus help meet the intent of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Potential adverse impacts on natural resources such as wetland and riparian areas, big game, and special status fish and

wildlife species as discussed in the EA would be minimized by implementation of the best management practices and mitigation measures identified in the EA.

2) *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.*

Potential impacts to public health and safety, including safety of workers, would be avoided by adherence to standard practices required for well drilling activities. Any oil or hazardous material that is discharged to the reserve pit during an emergency situation would be removed and disposed of in compliance with Notice To Lessees (NTL-2B) in a certified injection well or other certified disposal site.

3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

A survey of the areas to be disturbed by construction of an access road and development of the well pad did not identify any cultural resource sites. No park lands, special recreation areas, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness or wilderness study areas, or other area of critical environmental concern would be affected by the proposed action. Impacts to wetland and riparian areas in the project area would be reduced by requiring, as a condition of approving the APD, installation of sediment filters such as straw waddles at key locations below the drill pad to prevent sediment from entering the surface water along watered portions of the Pine Creek drainage. Construction activities are not planned to occur during the avian nesting season, but it is a standard operating procedure to require surveys for active nests if disturbance is rescheduled during such periods.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The effects of well construction are well known and not highly controversial. No conflicts with natural resources and uses are noted. The project includes construction of an access road, which will require use of gravel from an existing public mineral material pit that is permitted to the BLM.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The effects of well construction are well known, and none of the effects on any resource evaluated in the EA are considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. All drilling and construction methods proposed to be employed are accepted standard and best management practices. The application includes a plan for reclaiming areas disturbed, the success of which would be monitored by BLM.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

Surface use plans are analyzed and approved on a site and project-specific basis. This is the first exploration well proposed in the lease, and no producing wells have been developed in the area. Future development of any additional wells in the leased parcel would be considered when proposed.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

Past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions in the area are mostly related to management of the area for livestock grazing. Future development of oil and/or gas resources in the area is not reasonably foreseeable, because no producing oil and/or gas wells have been located in the Elko District, including the Pine Valley area, within the last ten years. The impacts of the proposed action when considered with continued grazing and other land disturbing activities in the area would not result in any cumulatively significant impacts at the local or watershed scale.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

A survey of the proposed well site and access road was completed and did not identify any properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). BLM policy provides for inadvertent discovery and mitigation procedures to be included as a condition of approving an APD. The proposed action will not cause the loss or destruction of any significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.*

BLM concludes in the EA that no adverse impacts to any species listed under the Endangered Species Act would result from the proposed action. No critical habitat has been designated.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

Inclusion of standardized language concerning BLM's responsibilities for cultural resources and Native American consultation, special status species and migratory birds, as a condition of approving the APD will ensure no Federal requirement for the protection of these resources is violated. The operator is required to obtain any Federal, State or local permits required for the protection of wildlife, air and water resources.

Kenneth E. Miller
District Manager

Date