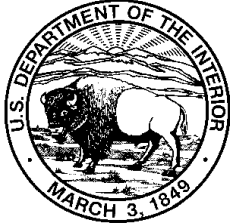


**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**



Environmental Assessment UT-080-06-488

**Enduring Resources, LLC.
Big Pack Environmental Assessment**

Location: Township 12 South, Range 22 East, all sections; and
Sections 15-17, 20-23, and 26-36 of Township 11 South, Range 22 East.

Salt Lake Meridian

Applicants: Enduring Resources, LLC.
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December 2008

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**Enduring Resources’
Big Pack Environmental Assessment
UT-080-06-488**

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1.0 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to analyze Enduring Resources, LLC's (Enduring Resources, the operator) proposed natural gas development of the Big Pack Project Area (BPPA or Project Area) in Uintah County, Utah. This EA is a conceptual analysis of potential impacts that could result with the implementation of the Proposed Action or alternatives. An EA ensures compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) while assisting the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in project planning and in making a determination as to whether any "significant" impacts could result from the analyzed actions. An EA also provides evidence for determining whether a statement of "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) will be prepared or whether an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be required. A FONSI is a document that briefly presents the reasons why implementation of the Proposed Action or alternatives would not result in "significant" environmental impacts. If the decision maker determines that this project has no "significant" impacts following the analysis in the EA, a Decision Record and FONSI would be prepared approving the selected alternative. If the project is found to have "significant" impacts, an EIS would be prepared.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Enduring Resources notified the BLM Vernal Field Office (VFO) of their intent to develop their leased gas resources from the Wasatch Group and Mesaverde Formation in the BPPA. The Project Area comprises approximately 34,471 acres consisting of lands administered by BLM (28,600 acres), the State of Utah (4,482 acres), and private holdings (1,389 acres). Although the entire Project Area is analyzed in this EA, BLM standards referenced within this document would apply only to Federal lands and/or leases. Standards for State and private lands would be determined by the appropriate surface management agency (SMA).

The northern border of the BPPA is approximately 40 miles south of Vernal, Utah (**Figure 1-1**). The legal location of the BPPA is composed of all or portions of the following Sections, Townships (T) and Ranges (R) within the Salt Lake Meridian:

All Sections of T12S, R22E; and Sections 15-17, 20-23, and 26-36 of T11S, R22E.

According to the Utah Department of Oil, Gas, and Mining (UDOGM), 42 wells have been developed in the BPPA. Eight of the existing wells are producing, six of which are operated by Enduring Resources. Thirty wells have been abandoned and the remaining four wells are shut in. The existing wells within the BPPA are not included in the Proposed Action. Additional existing infrastructure within the BPPA includes roads, pipelines, storage tanks, and other surface facilities.

1.3 PURPOSE & NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

BLM's need for the project is to respond to Enduring Resources' proposal to develop their leases. National mineral leasing policies, and the regulations by which they are enforced, recognize the statutory right of leaseholders to develop mineral resources to meet continuing national needs and economic demands as long as undue environmental degradation is not incurred. The BLM is considering this proposal because the activity is an integral part of the BLM's oil and gas program under authority of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 (MLA), as amended; by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), as amended; and by the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987

(FOOGLRA), as amended. Additionally, oil and gas exploration and development is recognized as an appropriate use of BLM-administered public lands in the VFO Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) (BLM 2008a). BLM's purpose is to consider approval of the Proposed Action in a manner that avoids or reduces impact on sensitive resource values associated with the Project Area as identified in the RMP, and is consistent with the rights granted to the applicant.

1.4 CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN(S)

The management of public lands under the jurisdiction of the BLM and resources within the Project Area is directed and guided by the VFO *Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Resource Management Plan* (BLM 2008a). The ROD and Approved RMP provides for a substantial amount of mineral revenue based on estimated oil and gas production while protecting other resources within the planning area. The primary management objectives of the RMP for minerals and energy resources, consistent with the National Energy Policy, are to:

- Meet local and national non-renewable and renewable energy and other public mineral needs, and
- Support a viable long-term mineral industry related to energy development while providing reasonable and necessary protections to other resources.

All three of the alternatives would be in conformance with the ROD and Approved.

1.5 RELATIONSHIP TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS, OR OTHER PLANS

The proposed activity is in conformance with the MLA, as amended; FLPMA, as amended; and FOOGLRA, as amended. This EA was prepared by the BLM in accordance with NEPA and in compliance with all applicable regulations and laws passed subsequently, including the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, U.S. Department of Interior requirements and guidelines listed in the *BLM Manual Handbook H-1790-1* (BLM 2008b), and Utah BLM NEPA Guidebook (BLM 2006). This EA assesses the environmental effects of the Proposed Action (Alternative A) and alternatives, and also serves to document public participation and consultation conducted with other agencies.

The alternatives considered in this EA are also consistent with the Uintah County General Plan (Uintah County 2005). The Uintah County Plan generally indicates support for development proposals in its emphasis of multiple-use public land management practices and its emphasis of responsible use and optimum utilization of public land resources. Within the Uintah County General Plan, multiple-use is defined as including, but not limited to, the following historically and traditionally-practiced resource uses: grazing, recreation, timber, mining, oil and gas development, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and water resources as they become available or as new technology allows.

1.6 IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

Public notification of the Proposed Action occurred by posting the project description to the Environmental Notification Bulletin Board (ENBB) on September 26, 2006. One inquiry from the public was received by telephone after the action was posted to the ENBB. However, the only issue raised was concern over the size of the project (number of wells). A public comment period was also requested.

Internal scoping was utilized to help identify resources potentially impacted by the proposed project. All resources considered are listed in **Appendix A**. Those resources identified as not present (NP) in the Project Area or not impacted (NI) were not carried forward into the EA. Resources identified as potentially impacted (PI) were carried forward in **Chapter 3** (Affected Environment) and **Chapter 4** (Environmental Impacts) of this EA.

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