

Comment Letter 11

BLM Letter Response

TOSCO CORPORATION
SUITE 2800, STELLAR PLAZA
1088 EIGHTEENTH STREET
DENVER, COLORADO 80202
303/292-8218

August 29, 1984

CORPORATE OFFICES
2401 COLORADO AVENUE
SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA 90406
310/307-8000

Mr. Curtis Tucker
Book Cliffs Resource Management
Plan Team Leader
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078

Re: Draft Book Cliffs Resource
Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Tucker:

As you know, Tosco Development Corporation, a wholly owned subsidiary of Tosco Corporation, is presently planning a major oil shale project on 17,000 acres of oil shale leases from the State of Utah in the central portion of the Book Cliffs Resource Area.

Representatives of Tosco have carefully reviewed the draft Resource Management Plan ("RMP"). We commend the Bureau of Land Management ("BLM") and other contributing public agencies for the thoroughness and clarity of the document.

In the past, Tosco has expressed a variety of concerns with respect to the alignment of utility corridors on federal lands adjacent to the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation (note Tosco's comments to the draft Uintah Basin Synfuels Development Environmental Impact Statement). We have stated our belief that in determining the future alignment of utility corridors it is unwise for the BLM or the Department of the Interior to make any assumptions about the Ute Tribe's future land use planning objectives or policies ... particularly with respect to the existence and location of "utility corridors" within the reservation. We believe that the BLM should take appropriate steps to ensure that all federal oil shale and other mineral reserves within the Book Cliffs Resource Area are provided with adequate access across land within the BLM's jurisdiction. We have

247

CHAP. 5 — PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENTS

Comment Letter 11

BLM Letter Response

Mr. Curtis Tucker
August 29, 1984
Page 2.

specifically proposed the creation of a utility corridor immediately south, southeast and east of the southeastern corner of the Ute Reservation to ensure that existing and future oil shale projects in the west central and southwestern portions of the resource area will be able to locate access roads, powerlines, pipelines and other similar facilities around the reservation on land subject to BLM jurisdiction.

In response, the BLM has promised either to amend existing management framework plans to establish such a corridor when Tosco evidences its intent to proceed with its project or to include such a corridor in future resource management plans.

We are pleased to note that the proposed corridor has been included in three of the four resource management plan alternatives, including the BLM's preferred alternative (note the location of corridor 5 on Figure 2-11, corridor 12 on Figure 2-19, and corridor 10 on Figure 2-26.). For reasons we do not fully understand, however, the proposed alignment has not been included in the current management alternative as indicated by Figure 2-5 in the draft statement. We believe that even the current management alternative should reflect the BLM's previous commitment to amend existing management framework plans to ensure access to Tosco's project from the northeast across non-Indian lands. More specifically, we suggest Figure 2-5 be revised to include a corridor around the southeastern corner of the Ute Reservation linking the western end of corridor 4 with the northern end of corridor 9 for the reasons previously stated. The proposed revision will ensure that adequate corridors have been provided under all land management alternatives for the potential development of existing projects in the resource area without any reliance upon unwarranted or unrealistic assumptions about future land use policies on surface areas within the reservation.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Very truly yours,


W. Dixon Shay
Director, Government Relations

WDS/jal

11.1

248

11.1

A specific right-of-way proposal by Tosco, Inc., has been approved within the segment indicated. Approval of the right-of-way does not, however, result in the designation of a right-of-way corridor under the existing Management Framework Plan (MFP). Corridors are designated through the planning process, by either a plan amendment or a new plan. The Resource Management Plan will replace the MFP and designate a corridor along this segment when the plan is approved. Amending the MFP when the RMP is nearly completed would not be cost effective.

CHAP. 5 — PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENTS



Wildlife Management Institute

Suite 725, 1101 14th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005 • 202/371-1808

DANIEL A. POOLE
President
L. R. JAHN
Vice-President
L. L. WILLIAMSON
Secretary
WESLEY M. DIXON, Jr.
Board Chairman

August 28, 1984

Mr. Curtis Tucker
Book Cliffs Resource Management Plan
Team Leader
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078

Dear Mr. Tucker:

The Wildlife Management Institute is pleased to comment on DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ON THE BOOK CLIFFS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN, Utah.

- 12.1 The Plan needs much more information to be acceptable for wildlife. No details are provided telling where the developments will be made, who will benefit, or how much they will cost. Overall impacts are not shown in a master chart.
- 12.2 There is no schedule for assigning monitoring responsibility, timing or costs. The Utah Division of Wildlife should have a large part in monitoring wildlife effects.
- 12.3 There is no definition of "stable use". We are at a loss to know if this is the population level desired by the Utah Division of Wildlife or is a BLM term.
- 12.4 The term "Authorized Grazing Use" (page xv) is confusing as is the frequent reference to active preference (listed as 102,915 AUM) to compute livestock reductions. Based on active preference the reductions look very large, but realistically the computation base should be the average 3 year use. Reductions then would show the true number of AUM's to be lost. The 3 year average use is 66,980 AUM's. Moderate reductions are shown by this base, only a reduction of 13,607 AUM's for the resource protection alternative and only 93 AUM for the balanced use alternative.

DEDICATED TO WILDLIFE SINCE 1911

- 12.1 Additional details pertaining to wildlife habitat developments will be addressed in the activity planning phase of the BLM's wildlife program. Habitat management plans (HMPs) will be prepared to cover the entire SCRA and will detail developments as to location, cost, and the benefiting species.

Overall impacts to wildlife are addressed in Appendix 15, Section C (p. A15-19) by alternative. Additional information is available in the technical report referenced as Hamilton 1984, "Impacts to wildlife/wildhorses by alternative".
- 12.2 Monitoring costs, responsibility, and timing will be addressed in the HMP process (see Response No. 12-1). Coordination and cooperation with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) is an ongoing process that will continue into the future. The UDWR plays a major role in providing wildlife population data relative to the habitat management process undertaken by BLM.
- 12.3 The term "stable use" is defined on p. 215 of the DEIS under the terminology of "prior stable population numbers". The term and its definition is jointly derived from UDWR and BLM data and projections. The prior stable numbers presented in the RMP are desired population levels as determined by UDWR.
- 12.4 The term "authorized grazing use" on page xv in the DEIS has been changed in the FEIS to "active grazing preference". The term "active grazing preference" has been further defined in the glossary of the FEIS.
- 12.5 Information to show the proposed livestock increases and decreases to both the active grazing preference and the average use based upon three representative years has been shown throughout the DEIS. Changes from average use show changes from what is happening now. The changes from active preference show the changes that would effect how a livestock operator could function. Active grazing preference was established as the base for livestock grazing at the time of adjudication (mid 1960's). This base was established through range inventories and studies. These studies determined the amount of AUM's that are allocated to an area of public lands for both livestock and wildlife and are based on the type and amount of vegetative resources.

CHAP. 5 — PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENTS

Comment Letter 12

BLM Letter Response

Mr. Curtis Tucker

-2-

August 28, 1984

12.6

This plan has one of the highest livestock subsidies we have yet seen. We computed the costs for the developments listed on page 24 by using midrange unit costs given on page 75.

We find the resource protection alternative will cost \$348,000 and increase the AUM's by only 1,700 (page 24) at an average cost of \$205 per AUM. The balanced use (preferred) alternative will cost \$1,090,175 and increase AUM's by only 2,000. The cost will be \$545 per AUM.

No locations are given for these developments. However, based on BLM policy, we assume that most or all will be on the 245 allotments classed as Improvement or "I" giving an average allotment subsidy of \$13,920 in the resource protection allotment and \$43,619 in the balanced use alternative. We question whether these large subsidies to a few operators are justified when most of the good to be accomplished could be done with reductions in numbers of livestock at no cost to the taxpayer. These subsidies far exceed the interest rate and will never be recovered from grazing fees.

We prefer the resource protection alternative, but even this one should be carefully examined to reduce costs of range improvements.

Some specific comments follow:

12.7

p. 83 Reductions in wealth; these statements are based on the number of AUM's in active preference and relate to the increase of capital value of ranch property for each federal AUM. This ranch value is not recognized by the federal government.

12.8

p. 83 How can big game hunting and recreational income be the highest in the balanced use alternative rather than in the resource protection alternative? Please explain how less AUM's allocated to wildlife result in more hunting.

The balanced use alternative does not tell us what will be done or where - only that more of every resource will be produced, even though monitoring and agreement with the permittees have a five year period before anything is accomplished.

These remarks have been coordinated with William B. Morse, the Institute's western representative.

Sincerely,



Daniel A. Poole
President

DAP:msm

12.6

The location of livestock projects by allotment is located in Appendix 5.

All livestock projects would be developed with a multiple use concept (See Appendix 8). These projects would provide both tangible and intangible benefits for other resources in addition to livestock. Wildlife and wild horses would benefit from increased water and forage. Ecological condition and plant vigor would improve through improved livestock, wildlife, and wild horse distribution.

Fifty percent of the livestock grazing fees come back to the grazing district for the development of livestock projects through the range improvement fund. Over the ten-year project period, this would amount to approximately \$374,000 for the Resource Protection Alternative and approximately \$463,200 for the Balanced Use Alternative. An additional \$93,400 (Resource Protection Alternative) or \$117,000 (Balanced Use Alternative) would be available through Advisory Board monies derived through livestock grazing fees. It is also a common practice for the livestock permittee to support 50 percent of the cost of livestock projects within their allotments.

12.7

Please refer to Appendix 12, page 3, fourth paragraph which explains our use of "capitalized value for grazing preferences".

12.8

An error was found in the revenue generated from the increase in big game hunting and recreational income for the Resource Protection and Balanced Use Alternatives. It has been corrected in the FEIS. The total revenues would increase by \$304,200 for the Resource Protection and \$339,750 for the Balanced Use Alternative. Balanced Use Alternative revenues would be higher because the population increase resulting from BLM projects would be 11,000 more people than for the Resource Protection Alternative.

Using the corrected figures, there would be more hunter days under the Resource Protection Alternative (4060 days, as compared to 3,350 days under the Balanced Use Alternative).



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

AUG 28 1984

Mr. Curtis Tucker
Book Cliffs Resource Management
Plan Team Leader
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078

Dear Mr. Tucker:

In response to the letter from Roland G. Robison, BLM Utah State Director, we have reviewed the Draft Book Cliffs Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared by the Vernal District, Bureau of Land Management, May 1984. Our review was directed to whether the action described in the draft EIS involved matters within our jurisdiction by law or special expertise or had any potential impact on NRC licensed facilities. No potential effects were identified; therefore, we have no specific comments on the draft EIS.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft document.

Sincerely,

Richard H. Vollmer, Director
Division of Engineering
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Thank you your comment.

251

September 3, 1984

Bureau of Land Management
Blue Mountain Allotment
Attention: Carl Wright

Dear Mr. Wright:

14.1

In reviewing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Book Cliff Resource Management Area, it appears that under the Balanced Use Alternative (preferred alternative), the temporary nonrenewable A.U.M.'s would be reduced on the Blue Mountain Allotment. The proposed reduction would be from 449 A.U.M.'s under the Current Management Alternative to 325 A.U.M.'s under the proposed monitoring level, a reduction of 124 A.U.M.'s. At this time it would be very detrimental to our cattle operation. We feel the allotment has not been overgrazed and with some type of sagebrush treatment the allotment will continue to handle the amount of cattle which we are running at the present time.

We would like to meet with you people before a final decision has been made.

Sincerely,

E. Vaughn Wilkins
Ervin L. Wilkins

252

Thank you for your comment.

14.1 See Response 1.1.

Under the Proposed Plan, sagebrush treatment has been recommended for the Blue Mountain allotment. The Temporary Non-renewable (TNR) AUMs you previously received were based on the Blue Mountain Allotment Management Plan and the sagebrush treatments that were completed in the early 1960s. BLM studies indicate that these treatments need to be redone and that the available AUMs have decreased.

The Proposed Plan allows for monitoring to be accomplished on the Blue Mountain Allotment at average use (449 AUMs). Any adjustments to this level would be accomplished following monitoring.



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF MINES

P. O. BOX 25066
 BUILDING 20, DENVER FEDERAL CENTER
 DENVER, COLORADO 80225
 Intermountain Field Operations Center

September 6, 1984

Memorandum

To: Mr. Curtis Tucker, Book Cliffs Resource Management Plan Team Leader, Bureau of Land Management, 170 South 500 East, Vernal, Utah 84078

From: Acting Chief, Intermountain Field Operations Center

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Book Cliffs Resource Management Plan

Personnel of the Intermountain Field Operations Center, Bureau of Mines, have reviewed the subject report, as you requested.

Four alternatives for managing the resources on 1.1 million acres of public land in northeastern Utah are described and analyzed. Our comments concern management of the Federal mineral resources in the resource area, which are related mainly to the planning issue of mineral development.

15.1 Descriptions of the substantial mineral fuel resources (except coal) and salable minerals (pp. 87-97) of the resource area are good, but we suggest that the section about locatable minerals (pp. 97-99) be amended to discuss areas favorable for uranium that were noted in the National Uranium Resource Evaluation (NURE) study. The NURE study of the Vernal 1" by 2" quadrangle determined that two areas in the Book Cliffs Resource Area are favorable for uranium (U.S. Dept. Energy Open-file Report PGJ/E-026(82)); one is a belt underlain by the Mesaverde Group in the north part of the area, and the other is underlain by the Uinta Formation along the Green River near Ouray.

15.2 Although parts of the Book Cliffs (Sego) and Vernal coalfields extend into the resource area, coal resources are not mentioned in the report. Apparently, the coal is inferior to that being mined in adjacent fields and is of little commercial interest at present. Nevertheless, we believe that, for completeness, management of this resource should be discussed briefly.

253

15.1 Locatable minerals, such as gold, uranium, and copper were not described in any detail because no expressions of interest was received for them, no mining districts exist in the area, and only minor local interest is shown in these minerals. Locatable minerals are administered under the 1872 mining law, as amended, and the 43 CFR 3800 regulations. No withdrawals have been proposed within the RMP which would eliminate the potential development of locatable minerals.

15.2 No expressions of interest have been received in the BCRA for coal and no past coal development of any economic significance has occurred in the BCRA.

In addition, the known coal deposits are considered to be very marginal in quality where exposed at the surface, or be too deeply buried to be of any commercial interest in the foreseeable future. For these reasons, coal was not addressed in the RMP. If deposits having potential for economical coal mining exist, the information should be submitted to the Vernal District Office so it can be considered in a subsequent planning effort.

Comment Letter 15

BLM Letter Response 15

15.3

We believe that most of the impacts and consequences of each alternative on mineral resources are described adequately in chapters 2 and 4. The figures showing resource distribution and availability are especially helpful. One significant discrepancy, however, should be corrected. The Naval Oil Shale Reserve (NOSR II) and reclamation and power site withdrawals are said to be closed to oil and gas leasing (p. 34), but these areas (53,000 acres) are shown available for leasing on figs. 2-1, 2-8, 2-15, and 2-23. If these areas are indeed closed to leasing, they should be shown as "No lease areas" (category 4) on the figures, and the acreage should be included in "no lease" totals in tables 2-1 and 4-7. (Incidentally, the Hill Creek Special Tar Sand Area within the NOSR II is shown as a "No lease area.") We note that these areas are moderately (F2) or highly (F3) favorable for oil and gas (fig. 3-1) and a small part lies within a Known Geologic Structure (fig 3-2). We believe it is necessary to correct this discrepancy so that the status of these lands is described correctly throughout the statement and the "no leasing" acreage data include the full amount of land in this category.


 Jimmie B. Jinks

15.3 The text and figures have been corrected to reflect your concerns.



United States Department of the Interior

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
RESTON, VA. 22092

In Reply Refer To:
WGS-Mail Stop 423

SEP 4 1981

Memorandum

To: Book Cliffs Resource Management Plan Team Leader,
Bureau of Land Management, Vernal, Utah

From: Assistant Director for Engineering Geology

Subject: Review of draft environmental statement for Book Cliffs
Resource Management Plan, Utah

We have reviewed the draft statement as requested in a letter from the
State Director.

16.1

The statement does not address effects of oil-shale development on aquifers, except in considering the potential for ground-water pollution by seepage or accidental discharge from surface operations (e.g., p. 200). Impacts from disruption of aquifers, comingling of poor-quality ground water from one aquifer with better-quality water in another and loss of artesian pressure are not addressed. Because the scope of the selected plan is to include decisions as to number and location of areas for mineral development, the statement should discuss these kinds of impacts and possible mitigation.

J.R.R.
James F. Devine

255

16.1

The comingling and disruptions of waters from the Douglas Creek Aquifer and the Birds Nest Zone has received little attention to date within various environmental analysis (Bechtel 1981, USDI 1982c, Lindskov and Kimball, 1983, Holmes and Kimball, 1983).

Lack of interest is due to a number of reasons which can be summarized:

The Birds Nest Zone and the Douglas Creek Aquifers are not only separated by an oil shale zone but by several hundred feet of lower grade oil shales and marlstones. This entire zone acts as an impermeable layer.

The Birds Nest Zone is very limited in extent and only covers a portion of the acreage delineated as priority management areas.

The water quality within both aquifers is considered fair to poor. The water is not considered suitable for municipal and agricultural needs and may only be suitable for some industrial needs.

This condition is in contrast to the situation in the Piceance Basin where comingling of aquifers has been addressed as a significant issue.