



# United States Department of the Interior

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Buffalo Field Office  
1425 Fort Street  
Buffalo, Wyoming 82834-2436

3160

JUL 19 2005

Dear Operator,

The 1985 Buffalo Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) identified the Fortification Creek area as a "Special Management Area" (FCSMA) because it contains one or a combination of important resources such as wildlife habitat, high visual quality, a wilderness study area, steep slopes and erosive soils, and significant cultural, historic or paleontological values. The FCSMA has considerable interest for many uses as evidenced by the Sierra Club's nomination of an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and the Wyoming Wilderness Association's request to expand the Wilderness Study Area (WSA) which will be considered in the next RMP revision. In addition, the PRB EIS requires that operators submit a plan of development (POD) for this area that is acceptable to BLM.

Because of the public interest and concerns relative to this area and the Coal Bed Natural Gas (CBNG) operators desire to develop this area, the Buffalo Field Office (BFO) met with operators on December 16, 2004. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss what BLM felt was needed for companies to prepare Plans of Development that could maintain/protect the resource values in the FCSMA while allowing for responsible CBNG development. BLM shared best management practices (BMPs) for the area and requested that the involved companies work together to establish common travel and utility corridors, and water management strategies. On March 16, 2005 we sent to the operators, guidelines and BMPs to be included in FCSMA POD submissions.

BLM has now received and reviewed six PODs from five companies. An initial staff review indicated that operators have not coordinated their planning efforts with other companies, or sufficiently included suggested BMPs into submitted PODs.

In order to assure that resource objectives can be met in the FCSMA, we believe a holistic approach to development is necessary. Therefore, the BFO will develop a plan to meet those objectives. The plan will incorporate all available operator and BLM data as well as the March 16, 2005 guidelines and BMPs to identify most suitable locations for access, corridors and facilities that will minimize impacts. The goal is to have the plan completed by September 1, 2005.

In order to expeditiously and effectively complete this plan so that it realistically represents future development, we request that you provide us with your known future development plans within the FCSMA by August 1, 2005. For all your holdings within the FCSMA please submit your primary access, proposed road, pipeline, power line, well, compressor and water management strategy and facility locations. We would prefer you send digital data as well as any maps you may already have. The best format for digital data is as follows:

- ArcInfo Coverages
  - Shapefiles (.shp)
  - Geodatabases (.mdb)
  - Layer files (.lyr)
- Projection: nad83, zone 13

If you have already submitted a POD, please contact Bill Ostheimer regarding processing approaches and timelines. The BFO will continue to process PODs and will use the plan as the BLM preferred alternative in the environmental assessment and approval process.

If BLM does not receive information for all areas of the FCSMA, we will make assumptions about future development. Based on feedback, the BLM may host a meeting to discuss the input received. We intend to work closely with the companies and landowners with interests in the area, to complete the plan. Please submit your future development plans by August 1 so that we may complete the plan by September 1. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter. Any questions on this matter should be directed to either Richard Zander at 307-684-1161 or Bill Ostheimer at 307-684-1117.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris E. Hanson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "H".

Chris E. Hanson  
Field Office Manager