

NOTE TO READERS:

PLEASE RETAIN YOUR COPY OF THIS DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT. DEPENDING ON THE COMMENTS AND CONCERNS THAT ARE RECEIVED ON THIS DRAFT DOCUMENT, WE ANTICIPATE PREPARING AN ABBREVIATED FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT. IN THAT CASE, ONLY CHANGES TO THE DRAFT DOCUMENT WOULD BE NOTED IN THE FINAL, AND YOU WOULD NEED A COPY OF THE DRAFT TO REFER TO.



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Casper Field Office
2987 Prospector Drive
Casper, Wyoming 82604-2968

3425 (LBA)
WYW151133
Belle Ayr 2000

DEC 02 2000

Dear Reader:

This copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Belle Ayr 2000 Coal Lease Application, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Serial Number WYW151133, is provided for your review and comments. This draft EA has been prepared to analyze the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of issuing a Federal coal lease for the Belle Ayr 2000 coal tract located adjacent to the Belle Ayr and Caballo surface coal mines in southeastern Campbell County, Wyoming.

A formal public hearing on the proposed Belle Ayr 2000 coal lease application will be held at 7:00 PM on, Thursday, January 18, 2001, at the Clarion Western Plaza Hotel (formerly the Holiday Inn), 2009 S. Douglas Highway, Gillette, Wyoming. The purpose of the hearing is to receive comments on the proposed coal lease sale, on the fair market value and maximum economic recovery of the Federal coal resources in the proposed Belle Ayr 2000 tract, and on the Draft EA. Prior to the formal hearing, there will be an open house at 6:30 P.M. at the above address to answer questions related to the coal lease-by-application process and this coal lease application.

BLM will accept comments on this Draft EA, as well as on the issues of fair market value of the tracts, and maximum economic recovery of coal in the tracts through January 31, 2001. BLM will publish a Notice of Availability and Notice of Public Hearing in the Federal Register. Federal register notices can be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara>. Comments received after the end of the 30-day comment period will be considered in the Final EA if time permits.

If you wish to comment on the Draft EA, we request that you make your comments as specific as possible. Comments will be more helpful if they include suggested changes, sources, or methodologies. Opinions or preferences will not receive a formal response. However, they will be considered and included as part of the BLM decision making process.

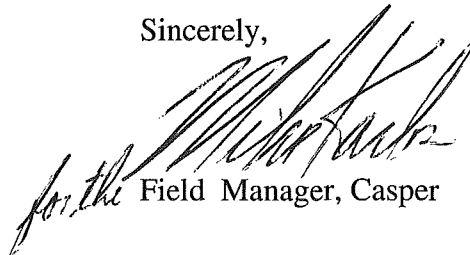
This Draft EA was prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and applicable regulations, and other applicable statutes, to address possible environmental and socioeconomic impacts that could result from this project. This Draft EA is not a decision document. Its purpose is to inform the public of the impacts of leasing and mining the Federal coal proposed for lease in a maintenance coal lease application, and to evaluate alternatives to leasing and mining the proposed maintenance coal lease application.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the address listed below during regular business hours (7:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and will be published as part of the Final EA. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Please send written comments to Bureau of Land Management, Casper Field Office, Attn: Nancy Doelger, 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, WY 82604. Written comments may also be e-mailed to the attention of Nancy Doelger at "casper_wymail@blm.gov". E-mail comments must include the name and mailing address of the commentor to receive consideration. Written comments may also be faxed to the attention of Nancy Doelger at (307)-261-7587.

If you have any questions or would like to obtain additional copies of this Draft EA, please contact Nancy Doelger at (307) 261-7627, or at the above address.

Sincerely,


for the Field Manager, Casper