



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Casper District Office
1701 East E Street
Casper, Wyoming 82601-2167

3420

WYW322794

Belco

OCT 11 1999

Dear Reader:

This final environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared pursuant to 40 CFR 1500-1508, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), applicable regulations and statutes, to address possible environmental and socioeconomic impacts that could result from this project. This final EA is not a decision document. It has been prepared to comply with the United States Department of the Interior, United States Geological Survey, and Belco Petroleum Corporation (Belco) agreement concluded on March 1, 1982, and to comply with a decision by the Interior Board of Land Appeals dated December 5, 1997 (IBLA 94-684). The 1982 agreement calls for the BLM to prepare an EA on the exchange of federal coal for Belco (now Enron) lease W-0322794 encumbered by Interstate Highway 90 (I-90).

The original Belco lease (W-0322794) embraced 4,551.46 acres in Johnson County, Wyoming. The lease terminated in 1986 with Belco reserving the rights to an exchange as provided for under the I-90 Exchange Act of 1978.

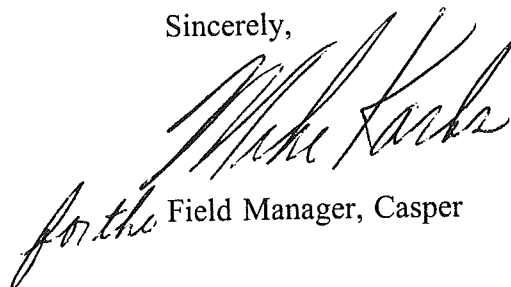
The Hay Creek tract was a potential coal leasing tract identified by BLM and the coal industry during the regional leasing process in the early 1980s. The tract was not offered for competitive leasing in the 1982 lease sale or subsequently to this date. The tract is about 12 miles north of Gillette in Campbell County, Wyoming. The Hay Creek tract is north of and contiguous with the Buckskin Mine.

A formal public hearing on the proposed coal lease exchange was held at the Towers West in Gillette, Wyoming on August 17, 1999. The hearing was attended by 17 people, of which four gave testimony. Chapter 5 contains a transcript of that meeting, all comment letters received, as well as BLM's responses to those letters.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Casper Field Office during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the 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 the 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.

This final EA is not a decision document. Its purpose is to inform the public of the anticipated impacts associated with implementing the proposed action and to evaluate alternatives to the proposal. A decision record detailing the BLM's decision will be prepared and made available following a 30-day final EA review period. A copy of this final EA has been sent to affected government agencies and to those persons who responded to scoping or otherwise indicated to BLM they wished to receive this document. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Karbs at (307) 261-7600, e-mail Mike_Karbs@blm.gov, or at the above address.

Sincerely,


for the Field Manager, Casper

Enclosure