

CHAPTER 2.0 - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

NEPA requires consideration and evaluation of reasonable alternatives that meet the project's purpose and need while minimizing or avoiding environmental impacts. NEPA also requires the evaluation of a No Action Alternative and a practical range of other "reasonable" action alternatives. "Reasonable" alternatives as defined by the CEQ are those that are technically or economically feasible using common sense. Reasonable alternatives are formulated to address issues and concerns raised by the public and agencies during scoping. Alternatives were determined not to be technically and/or economically, or environmentally practical or feasible, are identified in the EIS but have been eliminated from detailed study.

In this EIS, two alternatives, the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative, are given detailed consideration. Three other alternatives were identified and found to be not reasonable. They are described and discussed in Section 2.4.

To determine if the maximum quantity of recoverable coal in the federal mineral estate was identified for mining, the BLM evaluated the original coal LBA submitted on March 24, 2004. Based on BLM's evaluation, additional coal was identified as being recoverable outside of the coal LBA tract on a federal surface and mineral estate lease already held by BBCC. The project area boundary was expanded to include this coal and was presented to BBCC as BLM's Preferred Alternative. The BBCC agreed to modify their proposal as suggested by the BLM to include the additional mineral estate and associated surface lands. The coal LBA tract acreage remained the same as originally applied for in the March 24, 2004, coal LBA tract submittal.

Under the Proposed Action, the LBA tract as applied for would be offered for lease at a competitive sale and would be subject to standard and special lease stipulations developed for the LBA tract. The Proposed Action assumes that BBCC would be the successful bidder on the LBA tract if it were offered for sale.

2.2 PROPOSED ACTION

This section describes BBCC's Proposed Action to lease and extract currently unleased federal coal reserves from the LBA tract. Implementation of the Proposed Action would likely result in the extraction of previously leased federal coal reserves, and private coal reserves within the project area in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, as identified in **Figure 2.1** and described in **Table 2.1**.

2.2.1 Location and Overview

The project area is located approximately 28 miles southeast of Rock Springs, Wyoming, and 14 miles south of Interstate 80. **Figure 1.2** presents a map of the project area in relation to surrounding facilities and highways. Access to the project area is via Interstate 80 and the Black Butte Mine access road. The project area encompasses 4,359 acres, of which 1,399 acres are federal surface and mineral estate (the LBA tract, WYW-160394), 640 acres are previously leased federal surface and mineral estate (WYW-6266), 160 acres are state mineral and federal surface estate, and 2,159 acres are private surface and mineral estate. **Figure 2.1** is a map of the LBA tract and additional lands comprising the project area and provides detail on potential mine project features. **Table 2.1** presents a description of the project area lands and a surface and mineral ownership summary.

