
APPENDIX 2—2003 COAL SCREENING PROCESS SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Coal Leasing Amendments Act of 1976 requires federal coal lands considered for leasing to be identified in a comprehensive land use plan. Most, but not all, of the federal coal lands within the current Rawlins Resource Management Plan Planning Area (RMPPA) were last evaluated in 1990 (Bureau of Land Management [BLM] 1990). However, only unleased lands were evaluated; in accordance with regulations found in 43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 3461, unsuitability criteria cannot be applied to leased lands. Consequently, lands held by the coal leases in 1990 were exempt from evaluation under the coal screening process. Further, some of those previously leased federal coal lands are no longer under lease and, therefore, are eligible for evaluation at this time.

To implement competitive coal leasing under regulations contained in 43 CFR 3420, BLM established (on November 9, 1979) a number of federal coal production “regions,” including the Green River–Hams Fork Region, the federal coal region in which the RMPPA is located. The region was then decertified by the Green River-Hams Fork Regional Coal Team to allow the “lease-by-application” (LBA) process for coal leasing within the region. A decision document and request for public comment were published in the *Federal Register* (December 28, 1987). Only two comments were received, both supportive of an LBA process within the region. Because of the limited industry interest in additional tracts of federal coal in the region, it was determined that leasing in the region would henceforth be administered under the LBA process, in accordance with 43 CFR 3425.

Since the federal coal lands within the RMPPA were last reviewed and evaluated in 1990, there have been changes in the lease status within the Carbon Basin coal area. At that time, the 1990 Great Divide Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) was prepared; approximately 60 percent of the federal coal lands within the Carbon Basin coal area were not included in the 1990 coal screening and planning process. The remaining portions of federal coal lands were not included in the coal screening process because of the lack of interest expressed in leasing the federal coal lands in this area. Development of the leased coal was never pursued, and the subject lease (Original Carbon Basin lease) expired in 1992.

Subsequent to the 1992 lease expiration, Ark Land Company of St. Louis, Missouri (an affiliate of Arch of Wyoming, Inc., operator of the Medicine Bow and Seminoe II mines), filed an LBA with BLM (pursuant to 43 CFR 3425.1) on federal coal lands within the Carbon Basin coal area. Upon filing of the LBA, BLM conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the coal planning decisions in the Carbon Basin Coal Area; the subsequent Decision Record found that 12,118 unleased acres in Carbon Basin were acceptable for further consideration for coal leasing. Following completion of the EA, BLM prepared the Carbon Basin Coal Project Environmental Impact Statement (CBCPEIS) and the subsequent Record of Decision that was completed in March 1998. As a result of these investigations and findings, the Ark Land Company obtained federal coal lease WYW 139975 (December 1, 1999), comprising 5,235.15 acres of federal coal within the Carbon Basin coal area (covering both surface and underground mining). This lease is effective for 20 years, and thereafter as long as the condition of continued operation is met. The continued operation stipulation requires the operator to produce 1 percent of the recoverable coal reserves existing on the lease by December 1, 2009, or the lease will be terminated at that time by operation of law. This approval corresponds with the requirements for leasing of land as stated in the Approved RMP.

In addition to federal coal lease WYW 139975, the Ark Land Company holds other federal coal leases associated with Arch of Wyoming, Inc.'s, Medicine Bow and Seminoe II mines, both of which are located near Hanna. Mining activity at these two mines has ceased. Reclamation of both mines is anticipated to continue until 2008.

With the termination of mining operations at the Medicine Bow and Seminoe II mines, and in the absence of development of the Carbon Basin coal area, there will soon be no active mining or ongoing development of federal coal within the RMPPA. Current indications are that there will be no additional coal leasing activity for the duration of the 20-year planning period. However, as part of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS cumulative impact analysis, development of the Carbon Basin coal lease was analyzed at levels identified in the CBCPEIS.

The objectives in managing the federal coal resource in the planning area are (1) to provide for both short- and long-range development of federal coal in an orderly and timely manner, consistent with the federal coal management program, policies, environmental integrity, national energy needs, and related demands, (2) to identify federal coal that is acceptable for further consideration for leasing, and (3) to identify appropriate mitigation for sensitive areas.

However, at present, BLM will only complete the coal screening process through Step 2 (Application of Coal Unsuitability Criteria). This means that BLM will identify lands with coal development potential as "acceptable" or "unsuitable," but will not proceed to complete the multiple use conflicts analysis or surface owner consultation steps of the screening process until receiving an LBA (43 CFR 3420.1-4 [e] [3] and [4]). If an LBA is filed with BLM, then BLM will perform the remaining two steps of the coal screening process and amend the land use plan to incorporate the decisions for the portions of land that are considered acceptable for leasing.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

On February 25, 2003, BLM published a Notice of Intent to revise the Great Divide RMP and called for coal and other resource information. The data call requested coal resource data and/or other information relative to determining interest in potential coal development within the RMPPA. No comments were received as a result of this data call. In particular, no comments or statements of interest were received from the coal industry (potential lessees).

During March 2003, BLM conducted a series of scoping meetings to encourage participation in the RMP planning process and, again, to seek resource data and other information useful to the planning process within the RMPPA.

Comments were received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) as required under the consultation requirement of the coal unsuitability criteria found at 43 CFR 3461.

AREA DESCRIPTION

All areas underlain by coal resources in the RMPPA were reviewed for coal leasing and development potential. The areas with greatest potential were in the Hanna coal field, which lies in the eastern portion of the Green River-Hams Fork coal region, and the Green River Basin, lying in the central portion of this region (USDI, BLM 1990 and 2003; Glass and Roberts 1979). The indicated area(s) comprise a total of seven individual federal coal development potential areas (CDPA) underlain by an estimated

2,630,800,000 tons of federal coal. This coal contains an average of 10,420 British Thermal Units of energy per pound (BTU/lb) and has an average sulfur content of 0.63 percent.

Only the areas containing federally owned coal within the identified coal development potential areas were reviewed and evaluated. Any consideration for possible development of federally owned coal outside of these categories will be reviewed as future demand and need is indicated. Existing federal coal leases, as previously discussed, are not appropriate for review; however, existing federal coal leases were taken into account in the reasonably foreseeable coal development scenarios and in the impact analyses conducted for the Rawlins RMP EIS.

Current active coal leases in the RMPPA are owned by Arch of Wyoming, Inc. These leases comprise the Medicine Bow mine (leases WYW-82736, WYW-72989, and WYW-58095) and the Seminoe II mine (leases WYC-033800, WYW-045728, and WYW-049338). No coal is being mined from these leases. Sales are from stockpiled coal resources, and the only current activity on the leases consists of reclamation. No new coal mining activity is projected from these leases.

Presumably, Arch of Wyoming, Inc. would develop the Carbon Basin Coal Project in conjunction with the conclusion of operations at its Medicine Bow and Seminoe II mines. While Ark Land Company holds a valid, existing lease within the Carbon Basin area of the RMPPA, the possibility remains that under current and anticipated market conditions, the lessee may not actively pursue development of the lease within the projected 20-year planning period. This, in combination with the apparently limited mine life remaining at the Medicine Bow and Seminoe II mines, and the indicated general lack of other industry interest in further coal leasing within the RMPPA, suggests that the coal development potential within the RMPPA is marginal, at best, over the applicable 20-year planning period.

COAL SCREENING/PLANNING PROCEDURES

The Federal Coal Management Program established four major steps to identify areas of federal coal that are acceptable for further leasing consideration under the process listed in 43 CFR 3420.1-4(e)(1-4). The four steps are (1) identification of areas with coal development potential, (2) application of the unsuitability criteria, (3) evaluation of other multiple use conflicts, and (4) surface owner consultation.

Application of the latter three coal screening steps (as further described below) results in (a) identifying areas that are acceptable for further leasing consideration in each of these three steps, and (b) identifying areas that are unsuitable (Step 2), unacceptable (Step 3), or unavailable (Step 4) for further leasing consideration. Those federal coal areas that pass through the screening process are determined to be acceptable for further consideration for leasing. Collectively, these steps are called the “Coal Screening Process” (43 CFR 3420.1-4 [e] [1-4]) and are applied to the federal coal review area(s).

The following is a description of the steps of the coal screening process and how they were applied to the federal CDPAs. Please note, however, that for the Carbon Basin Coal Project, the screening process was completed only through the second step for this RMP. Multiple-use conflicts analysis and surface owner consultation steps were deferred until an LBA is filed or industry begins expressing an interest in developing coal resources in the planning area.

Step 1—Identification of Coal Development Potential

All areas of known and assumed federal coal with development potential for both surface and subsurface mining are identified using geological and economic data.

