

Issue Paper: Minerals

Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon

Background:

Mineral materials are some of our most basic natural resources, such as sand, gravel, dirt, and rock, used in every day building, and other construction uses. These materials generally are bulky and have low unit price. Their sheer weight makes their transportation costs very high. Adequate local supplies of these basic resources are vital to economic life of any community. BLM's policy is to make these materials available to the public and local governmental agencies whenever possible and wherever environmentally acceptable.

BLM sells mineral materials to the public at fair market value, but gives them free to states, counties, or other government entities for public projects. A limited amount may be provided free to non-profit groups. Materials obtained free of charge cannot be bartered or sold. BLM shares a portion of the revenues from the sale of mineral materials is shared with the state where the minerals are produced.



There is no specific application form for requesting removal of mineral materials from public lands. Persons interested in buying mineral materials should contact the local BLM District or Resource Area office closest to the area of need or closest to the public land where the desired material is found. Regulations which guide BLM's mineral materials program are found in Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Group 3600. Regulations governing contracts and permits for mineral materials are contained in Title 43 CFR, Subparts 3610 and 3620, respectively.

BLM disposes of mineral materials in conformance with agency land use plans. Anyone removing mineral materials must comply with applicable laws, including the Environmental Protection Act. Use authorization includes National Environmental Protection Act compliance. BLM conducts inspection and production verification to assure compliance with the terms of the contract or permit, and prevention and abatement of unauthorized use.

Solid Leasables (Other than Coal and Oil Shale)

The Bureau of Land Management leases certain solid minerals, like phosphate, sodium, and potassium, on public and other Federal lands. These lands include areas managed by the BLM and the Forest Service. BLM can also lease these minerals on certain private lands, provided that the mineral rights are owned by the Federal government.

Most of the minerals leased under this program are used to make fertilizer and as feed stock for other industrial processes. In some areas where the Federal government has acquired the land, BLM leases base and precious metals under this program.

BLM issues leases in two different ways for solid leasable minerals other than coal and oil shale:

- competitive issues in areas where we know there is a mineral deposit; and



- competitive leases through a bidding process

BLM will issue prospecting permits in areas where we do not know a mineral deposit exists. If a prospecting, BLM may issue a lease to that permittee without competition. BLM considers the comprehensive land use plan for the area and environmental concerns before issuing any lease.

If you are interested in leasing these kinds of minerals on Federal land, you should contact the BLM Field Office near your area of interest. You can find the regulations that govern the leasing of solid minerals other than coal or oil shale in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 3500.

Key Points:

- **Salable Minerals:** This plan retains 31,530 acres of previously closed acreage to salable mineral entry, and it also closes an additional nine to ten percent of the decision area to salable mineral entry. From 2007 to 2013, there were nearly 500 mineral material sales and permits, averaging about 400 cubic yards each. Depending on the alternative, there could be up to 19 developed rock quarries in allocations that the BLM would close to mineral development.
- **Leasable Minerals:** Under all action alternatives, the entire area being contemplated by the plan is open to leasable mineral development – unless it’s been specifically closed by act of Congress. Currently there are no oil or gas leases in the area being contemplated by the plan. Approximately 200,000 to 500,000 acres would have leasable stipulations. There could also be site-specific stipulations to protect federally-listed threatened and endangered species.
- **Locatable Minerals:** Some special areas require a plan of operation and therefore NEPA, these include Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and areas designated as “closed” to off-road vehicle use. In this revision there are approximately 100,000 acres of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and 128,757 to 178,000 acres of areas closed to off road vehicle use
- The plan retains the 98,400 acres previously withdrawn from locatable mineral entry. The plan does not withdraw lands from locatable mineral entry, but recommends lands for locatable mineral withdrawal. Congress can designate withdrawals, or the BLM can undertake a withdrawal process with a decision signed by the Secretary of the Interior
- Under **all** action alternatives, the BLM would recommend an increase of lands withdrawn from locatable mineral entry. This increase would range from 168,073 to 208,908 acres an increase of six to eight percent.
- Many recommendations for withdrawals for locatable minerals are often dictated by other management decisions like existing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern;
- Closure to salable minerals and restrictions to leasable minerals are implemented through this planning effort; and
- This planning effort does **not** withdraw lands from locatable mineral entry.

The Resource Management Plans (RMP) for Western Oregon will determine how the BLM-administered lands in western Oregon will be managed to further the recovery of threatened and endangered species, to provide for clean water, to restore fire-adapted ecosystems, to produce a sustained yield of timber products, to coordinate management of lands surrounding the Coquille Forest with the Coquille Tribe, and to provide for recreation opportunities.

For more information, please visit the BLM’s Resource Management Plans of western Oregon website at <http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/rmpswesternoregon/index.php>.