



Hollister Field Office Oil & Gas Leasing and Development EIS Planning Update

US Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management - California

January 2014

Introduction and Overview

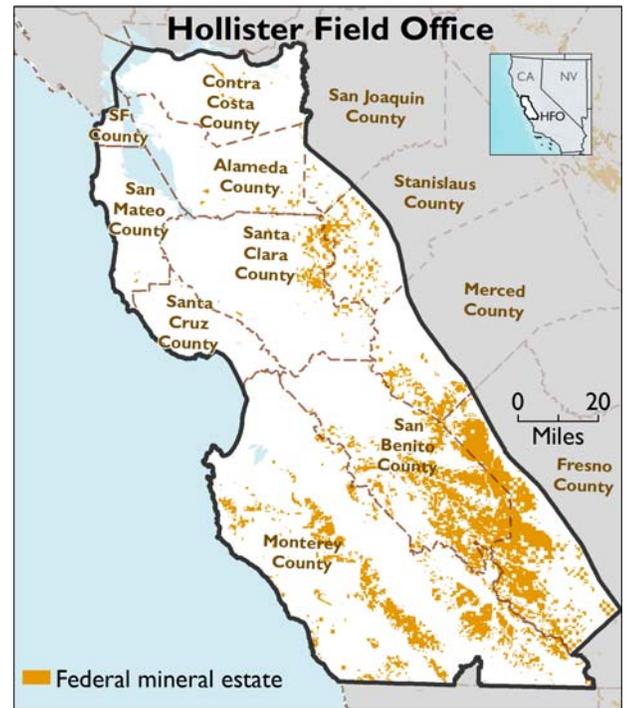
The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) California State Office is conducting a scoping process to solicit public comments on how oil and gas resources on federal mineral estate should be managed in the BLM's Hollister Field Office (HFO), and whether the BLM should include areas of California beyond the HFO in this process.

The public scoping process is the first step in preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

The purpose of this planning process is to analyze the effects of alternative oil and gas management approaches on lands with federal mineral estate within the BLM's HFO. The need for the plan amendment is to incorporate new information about well stimulation technologies, natural resource conditions, and socioeconomic trends to update the reasonably foreseeable development scenario (RFD) and HFO Resource Management Plan (RMP). The decision to be made is to establish additional lease stipulations, conditions of approval, or best management practices to guide safe and responsible oil and gas development.

Depending on the results of this scoping process, the BLM may also use this process to consider amending RMPs for other field offices in California with oil and gas leasing and development (Bakersfield, Palm Springs-South Coast, Mother Lode, and Ukiah Field Offices).

Early public involvement is crucial to identify various issues that should be addressed in the EIS. The scoping period provides the public with an opportunity to learn about the EIS, to help identify issues and concerns to be addressed in the EIS, and to provide input used in developing alternatives to be analyzed in the EIS.



HFO Planning Area

The HFO is an administrative unit of the BLM that encompasses the entirety or portions of twelve counties in north-central coastal California (see map). Within this planning area, the BLM manages approximately 280,000 acres of subsurface mineral estate underlying federal surface land and 577,000 acres of split estate land.

NEPA and the EIS

NEPA requires consideration of a reasonable range of oil and gas management alternatives to be analyzed in any EIS.

Each alternative will be analyzed for its anticipated environmental impacts. This comparative analysis will help decision makers choose a path forward that is in alignment with the multiple-use mission of the BLM.

The EIS will provide information for the BLM to amend the Hollister RMP in order to establish additional stipulations, conditions of approval, best management practices, or terms and conditions to further guide safe and responsible lease development practices. The EIS will also help decisionmakers select a "Preferred Alternative" in the Final EIS. Public input on issues related to these decisions is essential and encouraged.

Independent Science Assessment

The BLM is concurrently initiating a separate, independent, peer-reviewed assessment of the current state of industry practices for well completion and stimulation in California. This assessment of well completion and stimulation practices will include maps, findings, and synthesized sets of data that will inform the BLM's environmental analysis documents for subsequent oil and gas lease sales as well as for subsequent oil and gas development NEPA analysis. It is anticipated that the information generated by this assessment will be used to inform the planning process.

Oil & Gas Resources in the HFO

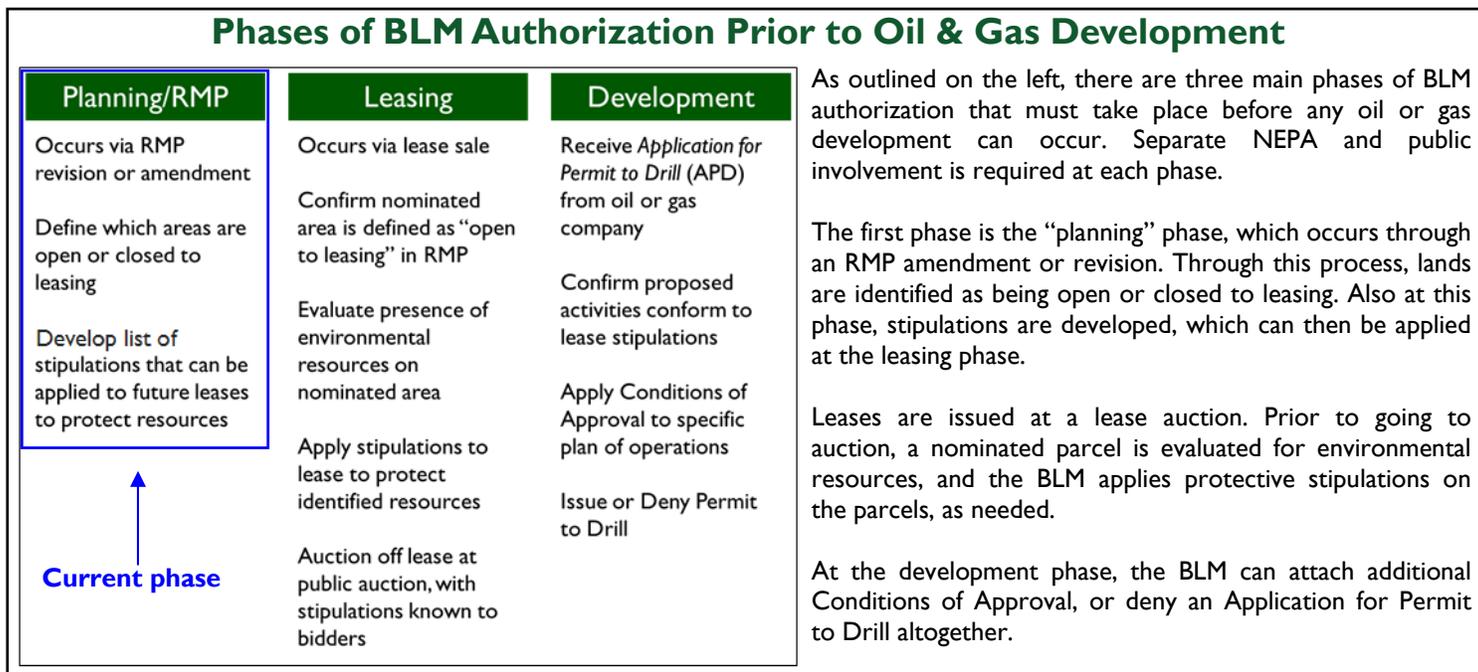
There is currently oil and gas production within the Planning Area. Most of the production comes from oil fields near Coalinga and the Jacalitos Valley in the San Joaquin Management Area (MA). Additionally, the San Ardo and associated oil fields are located within the Salinas MA; however, little of this area is on lands managed by the BLM. Likewise, the Vallecitos oil fields are in the San Benito MA, but, again, little of the production is on lands managed by the BLM. Exploratory oil wells have historically been drilled on less than 5 percent of the leases issued on BLM public lands.

The HFO manages 45,900 acres of federal oil and gas leases and 80 BLM-permitted oil and gas wells. This is the total number of wells on federal mineral estate, including wells on both federal surface and split estate lands.

Decisions to be Made

The Hollister RMP revision may establish additional stipulations, conditions of approval, best management practices, or terms and conditions to further guide safe and responsible lease development practices. The RMP revision may also identify new areas to be closed to oil and gas leasing.

Decisions coming out of the EIS will not affect oil or gas extraction on state lands or private lands that do not have federal mineral estate. Decisions coming out of the EIS will not authorize any actual drilling for exploration or development of oil and gas resources. Subsequent NEPA analysis would be required for any such proposals, which would involve further public scoping, public involvement, and environmental impact analysis. The RMP amendment would not result in opening areas to oil and gas leasing that are currently closed.



Planning Criteria

With respect to the RMP amendment, preliminary planning criteria include the following:

- The plan amendment will be completed in compliance with Federal Land Policy and Management Act, NEPA, and all other federal laws, executive orders, and management policies for the BLM.
- The plan amendment will retain the existing resource condition goals and objectives in the Hollister RMP.
- The plan amendment will analyze impacts to areas that are currently open to leasing and will not consider opening areas to leasing that are currently closed.
- The plan amendment will recognize valid existing rights.

How Can You Participate?

Public involvement is an integral part of preparing the California Oil & Gas Leasing and Development EIS. This public scoping period gives the public and other interested agencies and organizations the opportunity to provide comments on issues to be addressed and information sources to use in the EIS before the BLM begins drafting it.

The official scoping period began with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on August 5, 2013, and will continue for 207 days (ending on February 28, 2014). During the scoping period, the BLM will host four public open houses across the planning area and in Sacramento. Notices directing the public to the EIS website, which has information on these meetings, will be published in local newspapers.

The public is formally invited and encouraged to participate in preparation of the EIS during public scoping period. Some ways you can participate are by:

- ✓ Attending one or more of the open house meetings to learn about the project and planning process and to meet BLM representatives;
- ✓ Reviewing the progress of the EIS on-line at the EIS website at: www.blm.gov/ca/eis-og. The website will be updated with information, documents, and announcements throughout the EIS preparation;
- ✓ Mailing a comment to the EIS mailing address at:
BLM, California State Office
Attn: HFO O&G Leasing EIS
2800 Cottage Way, Rm. W-1623,
Sacramento, CA 95825
- ✓ Emailing a comment to the project email address BLM_CA_OGEIS@blm.gov;
- ✓ Joining the EIS mailing list to receive future mailings and information, by emailing us at BLM_CA_OGEIS@blm.gov;
- ✓ Submitting any process-related questions to the e-mail address provided above.

Upcoming Public Meetings

Each meeting will start with an open house at 6 pm and will be followed by a presentation from 6:15 to 6:35. A public discussion session will follow for up to one hour, followed by additional open house time until 8:00.

The public discussion portion of the meeting time will be for members of the public to make public statements, although only written comments will be entered into the project record.

The open house time will be for browsing the information stations that will be set up, having conversations with BLM staff, and for preparing written comments for those who seek to do so at the meeting.

Wednesday, January 29, 2014

San Juan Oaks Golf Course
3285 Union Road, Hollister, CA 95023

Tuesday, February 4, 2014

Doubletree Hotel
2001 Point W Way, Sacramento, CA 95815

Tuesday, February 11, 2012

Cesar Chavez Library
615 Williams Road, Salinas, CA 93905

Wednesday, February 12, 2014

Harris Ranch Inn & Restaurant
24505 W Dorris Avenue, Coalinga, CA 93210

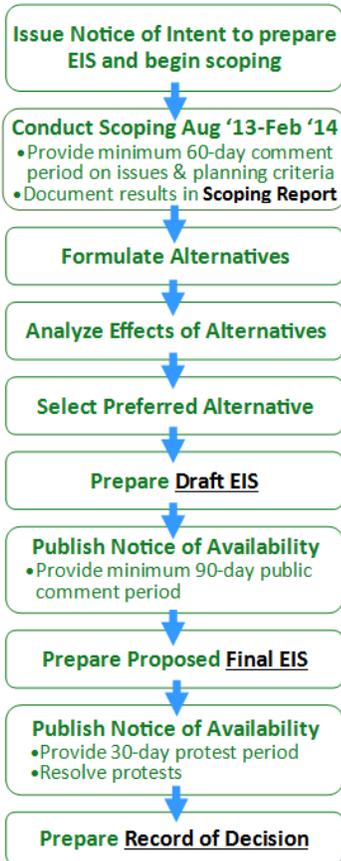
What Kinds of Comments are Helpful?

- Providing studies or data on the environmental impacts of hydraulic fracturing, specifically for oil and gas in the Monterey shale and other formations. These kinds of comments can contribute to a more robust environmental impact analysis.
- Describing specific environmental, human, or economic resources that you are concerned about and how they may be affected by oil and gas leasing decisions on federal mineral estate in the HFO.
- Suggesting areas of land to be made remain open or be closed to leasing, and suggesting stipulations (restrictions) on certain parcels of land or for certain kinds of resources on lands. These kinds of comments tie directly into the decisions that would be made in an RMP amendment and help analysts and decisionmakers focus on key areas of concern.
- Suggesting alternatives to be considered in the EIS.
- Suggestions on geographic scope of the EIS.

EIS Flowchart

EIS Process Flowchart

Current phase →



* Required documents in black and underlined