

Public Notice

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Glenwood Springs Energy Office and Grand Junction Field Office are initiating an environmental assessment (EA) for the Orchard II Master Development Plan (OMDP) submitted by EnCana Oil & Gas (USA) Inc. for proposed oil and gas exploration and development east of DeBeque, Colorado. The OMDP, prepared by EnCana and submitted to the BLM, describes the operator's plan for development of federal leases within the area and provides details regarding proposed well pads, roads and pipelines.

The proposal identifies the drilling of 95 wells in a 2-3 year period, beginning in spring 2008. The wells would be drilled from 25 proposed well pads and one existing pad, and would require the improvement or construction of 8.8 miles of roads. Additionally, the gathering system for the proposed wells would require installation of 15.5 miles of buried pipelines. Directional and closed loop drilling technology would be used to drill the majority of the wells.

The OMDP area encompasses approximately 12,067 acres of Federal surface and mineral ownership within portions of Sections 4, 8-10, 13-21, 28-33, T8S, R96W; Sections 6 & 7, T9S, R96W; Sections 24, 35 & 36, T8S, R97W; and Sections 1, 12 & 13, T9S, R97W, Sixth Principal Meridian. Within the proposed development area, 9,454 acres are under the jurisdiction of the BLM (Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction Field Offices), 25 acres are under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Reclamation, 56 acres are under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service, 1,760 acres are split estate (i.e., private surface with Federal mineral subsurface ownership), and 772 acres are private land with private mineral rights.

The planning area is located approximately two to ten miles east of DeBeque, Colorado within the Little Alkali Creek, Alkali Creek, Smith Gulch, Horsethief Creek and Little Horsethief Creek watersheds. The OMDP generally includes portions of 28 sections of BLM land accessed along Garfield County Road 306 and Mesa County Roads T.00, V.00 and V.50. Public motorized access is available to the OMDP area on County Roads.

The BLM will prepare an EA to disclose the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts of the development plan and a No Action alternative. As a starting point in the assessment, the BLM is soliciting input on the issues that will be considered in the preparation of the EA. At this time, you are encouraged to provide any comments, issues or concerns that you may have with regard to the proposed development plan.

To best facilitate BLM's review and use of comments during the EA process, comments must be received by January 18, 2008. Written comments and questions should be directed to the Glenwood Springs Energy Office at 2425 S. Grand Ave., Suite 101, Glenwood Springs, CO 81601. Electronic comments may be submitted to gsfomail@co.blm.gov

Copies of the OMDP that further detail the proposed oil and gas development are available for review at the BLM Glenwood Springs Energy Office, 2425 S. Grand Ave., Suite 101, Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Digital copies of the OMDP proposal and project maps are available at http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gsf/GSFO_MasterPlansOfDevelopment.html