

Geothermal Leasing Environmental Assessment and Resource Management Plan Amendment

December 2010

San Luis Valley Public Lands Center

Monte Vista, CO

[San Luis Valley Public Lands Center](#) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to consider which BLM-administered lands to make available for geothermal leasing, and under what conditions. The EA will include an amendment to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) [San Luis Resource Area Resource Management Plan \(SLRA-RMP\) of September, 1991](#). The BLM is announcing the availability of the Final Scoping Report which summarizes the public comments received and issues identified during the scoping period. The map below shows BLM-managed lands as yellow, U.S. Forest Service lands as green, and private lands as grey.



The Final Scoping Report

Scoping is a process designed to allow public participation in determining the range of issues and alternatives to be addressed in a NEPA document. Scoping helps ensure that real problems are identified early, that they are properly studied, that issues of no concern do not consume time and effort, and that the proposed action and alternatives are balanced, thorough, and able to be implemented.

The official close of the scoping period was October 13, 2010 and the [Final Scoping Report](#) is now available for downloading and viewing from the SLVPLC Geothermal Leasing website. Comments will continue to be accepted throughout the EA/RMP amendment process as time allows. While a variety of issues were raised in the comments, the dominant themes included:

The NEPA Process:

Commenters (1) requested additional comment periods throughout the writing of the EA/RMP amendment, (2) suggested general guidelines and best management practices (continued above right)

(continued from below left) to include in the alternatives, (3) requested a range of alternatives that would protect high resource value areas, (4) requested site-specific analysis, and (5) requested the inclusion of mitigation measures to protect important fish, wildlife, water, cultural and visual resources, geologic features, recreation areas, and special designation areas.

Implementation of geothermal development:

Commenters expressed concern about the impacts of drilling, including groundwater contamination, hydraulic fracturing, and waste byproducts, and asked the BLM to ensure that hot springs, wildlife, and other resources are not disturbed, and to consider locating development in the lowest-conflict areas.

Leasing allocations:

Commenters suggested specific areas as closed to geothermal leasing and requested that the BLM consider and analyze these closures as part of at least one RMP amendment alternative.

Next Steps

As mentioned previously, the purpose for amending the SLRA-RMP is threefold,

1. Identify areas closed or open to geothermal leasing; if BLM-administered subsurface mineral estate is to be open to geothermal leasing, the appropriate lease stipulations will also be addressed;
2. Consider significant new information related to special status species that was not analyzed in the 1991 RMP EIS; and,
3. Complete Tribal, Sect. 106 (National Historic Preservation Act) and Sect. 7 (Endangered Species Act) consultations.

The Final Scoping Report gives the BLM important information to begin developing the range of geothermal leasing alternatives that will explore different means for meeting the purposes mentioned above. Over the next couple of months, the BLM will draft alternatives and begin analyzing their effects on the area's resources. Be sure to check back on the SLV Geothermal Leasing website for updates on alternative development!

Correction: In the June 2010 newsletter, the text incorrectly included a statement that said U.S. Forest Service lands would be addressed in the EA. The decisions considered in the EA and made by the BLM will apply to BLM-administered surface and subsurface geothermal mineral estates. Forest Service lands are not included in the EA and no decisions will be applied to them.

Dear Readers

This is the second in a series of newsletters from the San Luis Valley Public Lands Center about their *Geothermal Leasing Environmental Assessment and Resource Management Plan Amendment*. This newsletter announces the availability of the Final Scoping Report, summarizes the findings of the Report, and provides an overview of the next steps for this project.

In This Issue:

The Final Scoping Report

Next Steps

If you did not also receive this newsletter by e-mail, please submit your e-mail address to slvplc_comments@blm.gov to be added to the electronic mailing list.

Project Schedule

Final Scoping Report Available Dec. 10, 2010

EA/RMP Amendment: March 2011

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