

# Leasing Reform Public Involvement

January 25, 2012

## ***CURRENT STATUS***

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Colorado finalized and is currently employing its oil and gas Leasing Reform Implementation Strategy. The implementation strategy will ensure that oil and gas leasing on public lands conforms to the BLM leasing reform policy, which includes additional public involvement and environmental protection. As a part of the leasing reform policy, BLM Colorado involves the public and seeks input throughout the entire cycle of the oil and gas leasing process.

## ***BACKGROUND***

BLM Colorado prepared the Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Implementation Strategy to comply with Washington Office (WO) Instruction Memorandum (IM) No. 2010-117, *Oil and Gas Leasing Reform – Land Use Planning and Lease Parcel Reviews*. The strategy establishes a process to ensure orderly, effective, timely and environmentally-responsible leasing of oil and gas resources on federal lands in Colorado. The strategy complies with applicable federal laws, regulations and bureau policy. This strategy will create more certainty and predictability to protect multiple resource values when BLM Colorado makes oil and gas leasing decisions and provides meaningful public involvement. BLM Colorado initiated leasing reform in March 2011. Implementation items that offer additional opportunities for public involvement include:

**Lease Parcel Review and Lease Issuance:** When Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for oil and gas leasing are received from industry, the BLM reviews identified lands for availability and then parcels them for inclusion in the next available quarterly lease sale. Information on the parcels nominated is posted for public review early in the process. The processing time from the EOI deadline to the date the parcel offered for sale has been approximately five months. Under these new guidelines, the sale process will take approximately 11 months to allow for adequate NEPA analysis, a 30-day public review and comment period and a 90-day sale posting requirement.

**Internal and External Coordination:** Under the new guidance, the BLM will invite the Colorado Department of Natural Resources to participate on the Interdisciplinary Parcel Review Team. The BLM Colorado State Office will send the field offices a copy of the industry-provided split estate owners list and BLM field offices will notify split estate owners of parcels nominated for review.

**Public Comment Period for Environmental Assessments:** The field office will provide a 30-day public review and comment period for the leasing environmental assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact. Parcels identified by the field office with significant impacts as a result of this analysis will also be documented and addressed at this time.

**Lease Sale Parcel Protests:** National policy requires that, when possible, protests be resolved prior to the lease sale. In longstanding BLM practice, a parcel that is protested will not be issued until the protest is resolved.