



Southwest Resource Advisory Council Oil and Gas Sub-group Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

What is a Master Leasing Plan (MLP)?

To learn about Master Leasing Plans in Colorado, go to

http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Programs/oilandgas/BLM_Colorado_Master_Leasing_Plans.html.

What is the Southwest Resource Advisory Council's (SWRAC) Oil and Gas Sub-group?

The Oil and Gas Sub-group was established by the SWRAC to consider oil and gas issues affecting public lands within the Tres Rios Field Office (TRFO). At the request of the BLM, this sub-group initiated a community involvement process in 2015 to identify key issues and concerns related to leasing of federal minerals within a geographic “[Area of Interest](#)” in eastern Montezuma and western La Plata Counties. The sub-group will provide recommendations to the SWRAC as to whether a Master Leasing Plan (MLP) should be completed or not for that area.

What is the process that will be used to consider an MLP in Southwest Colorado?

The Oil and Gas Sub-group will host public meetings in Durango, Cortez, Hesperus and Mancos, Colorado, in 2016. These meetings will provide the public with information about the processes associated with developing oil and gas resources on public lands and gather input from the public. At the conclusion of the community involvement process, the members of the Oil and Gas Sub-group will make recommendations to the SWRAC regarding the following questions:

- What are the key issues/needs for the communities and interested stakeholders within the MLP Area of Interest?
- Are these key issues/needs adequately addressed by the “tools” currently available to the BLM (e.g. the TRFO Resource Management Plan, applicable laws and regulations, etc...)?
- If not, should the BLM consider preparing an MLP to address these issues/needs?
- If preparation of an MLP is recommended, what is the recommended geographic area of interest?

After reviewing the Oil and Gas Sub-group’s findings, the SWRAC will decide whether to craft a resolution to forward to the BLM for consideration. In order for the resolution to be considered by the BLM, it must be approved by a majority vote of SWRAC members within each category.

What is the time line of events for the community involvement process?

November 19, 2015 - A public meeting was held at the Dolores Public Lands Office to kick-off the community involvement process.

The upcoming public meetings are designed to allow the Oil and Gas Sub-group to provide insight to the SWRAC on the potential MLP in the TRFO through research, development and public input. The meetings are:

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| ➤ Thursday, February 11, 2016 @ 10 a.m.-12 p.m.
La Plata County Fairgrounds, Durango, CO | ➤ Wednesday, March 16, 2016 @ 10 a.m.- 12 p.m.
Montezuma County Annex Building, Cortez, CO |
| ➤ Thursday, February 11, 2016 @ 6-8 p.m.
Mancos School Gym, Mancos, CO | ➤ Wednesday, March 16, 2015 @ 6-8 p.m.
Fort Lewis Mesa Elementary, Hesperus, CO |

The agendas for the meetings February 11, 2016, and March 16, 2016, are identical to allow the public two opportunities to attend a meeting within each county. If needed, additional community involvement meetings may be scheduled.

Why is BLM considering a MLP?

There has been external interest in preparing a MLP in western La Plata and eastern Montezuma Counties following the announcement of the BLM competitive oil and gas lease sales within the TRFO in 2012 and 2013. Due to the timing of the issuance of the TRFO Resource Management Plan (RMP), the leases were deferred. Upon issuance of the approved plan, the BLM was in a position to look at this area more closely.

In addition, as a result of public input from the 2011 Draft Land Management Plan Supplement and concurrent Leasing Reform that was issued (2010), the BLM completed analysis of the three broad geologic basins (see [Tres Rios Approved Resource Management Plan, Appendix R](#)). These three areas did not meet the criteria identified in [BLM Washington Office Instruction Memorandum No. 2010-117](#).

In March 2015, the BLM requested assistance from the SWRAC to initiate a community involvement process intended to collect information and consider the potential benefits of preparing a MLP. Additionally, the SWRAC asked the Board of County Commissioners for Montezuma and La Plata counties to actively engage in this community process by recommending representatives from their local communities to be on the SWRAC's Oil and Gas Sub-group. This group of individuals met November 19, 2015, where they identified the process, timelines and approach to gathering information from the community (see above community meeting schedule).

How will the recent [Notice of Intent](#) to Amend the Resource Management Plan for the Tres Rios Field Office and analyze Areas of Critical Environmental Concern impact the potential Master Leasing Plan process?

Due to a procedural error that occurred during the Tres Rios Field Office (TRFO) [RMP](#) process, the BLM is preparing a Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment and associated Environmental Assessment to evaluate and consider the designation of 18 areas that were found to have relevance and importance consistent with BLM manual direction for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), as identified in the draft RMP (2013) [Appendix U](#).

Two of the nominated areas, [Anasazi Culture](#) and the [Mesa Verde Entrance](#), are within the [Area of Interest](#) (the area identified for a potential Master Leasing Plan). These areas will be analyzed to determine whether or not an ACEC designation is merited regardless of the decision to move forward with a MLP.

During the development of the ACEC Environmental Assessment, the BLM will develop a range of alternatives for each area that could include special management like closed to leasing or open to leasing, and leasing with the following stipulations; controlled surface use, no surface occupancy and/or timing limitations to protect the relevant and important resource values. Descriptions of the existing stipulations in the TRFO RMP can be found in the TRFO RMP, [Appendix H](#).

To learn more about the nominated ACECs, go to http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Information/nepa/TRFO_NEPA/acecs.html.

How can I participate?

If you are interested in participating in the process there are several options:

1. Attend one of the scheduled community involvement sessions listed above.
2. Email comments to blm_co_trfo_oilandgas@blm.gov.
3. Submit written comments at any of the scheduled meetings above or mail to BLM, 29211 Highway 141, Dolores, CO 81323, Attn: SWRAC Sub-group Process.