



Geothermal Leasing Environmental Assessment and Resource Management Plan Amendment

October 2012

Saguache, CO San Luis Valley Field Office

The San Luis Valley Field Office 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), published September 1991. The BLM is announcing the availability of the EA for a **30-day protest period ending October 31, 2012** and a **60-Day Governor's Consistency Review period ending November 30, 2012**.

Background

The *Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Geothermal Leasing in the Western United States* analyzed geothermal potential, leasing alternatives, and leasing stipulations for the subsurface mineral estate administered by BLM in Colorado, including the SLRA-RMP. The Record of Decision for the PEIS amended 14 RMPs in Colorado but did not include the SLRA-RMP. The BLM proposes to amend the SLRA-RMP using this environmental analysis. Decisions made in this project will only apply to BLM-administered lands.

The Environmental Assessment

The EA describes the purpose and need for the proposed land use plan amendment, three alternatives for the plan amendment, the affected environment in the planning area, the anticipated impacts (direct, indirect, and cumulative) from each alternative on the affected environment, and the consultation and coordination the BLM has conducted for the planning effort. The EA is available for viewing and download on the BLM Web site www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/slvfo/Geothermal_Leasing.html.

Each alternative is a stand-alone suite of geothermal leasing allocations and management actions that falls within the spectrum of possible actions, from making no change to existing management to a conservation-oriented approach to resource management. The No Action alternative would continue to manage the planning area under the existing 1991 management decisions. Alternative B presents a middle-of-the-road suite of management actions, closing some areas to geothermal leasing but keeping the majority of the decision area open to leasing

with stipulations. Alternative C is a conservation-oriented alternative that proposes to place constraints on and close more areas to leasing. The BLM has chosen Alternative B as the Proposed Alternative; the Proposed Alternative is not the agency's final decision but represents its proposed actions to amend the existing 1991 management decisions.

Next Steps

Pursuant to BLM's planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610.5-2, any person who participated in the planning process for this RMP Amendment and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the planning decisions may protest approval of the planning decisions in writing to the BLM Washington Office by October 31, 2012. The address for mailing protests is noted in the final RMP Amendment/EA. The regulations specify the required elements of your protest, and protestors should take care to document all relevant facts. Emailed and faxed protests will not be accepted as valid protests unless the protesting party also provides the original letter by either regular or overnight mail postmarked by the close of the protest period. Under these conditions, the BLM will consider the emailed or faxed protest as an advance copy and will afford it full consideration.

The BLM will also submit the final RMP Amendment EA/FONSI to the Colorado Governor for a **60-day Governor's Consistency Review, beginning October 1 and ending November 30, 2012**.

Project Schedule

October-November 2012: The BLM will resolve protest issues.

December 2012: Decision Record for the Amendment is completed.

For Further Information

San Luis Valley Field Office
46525 Highway 114
Saguache, Colorado 81149

www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/slvplc/Geothermal_Leasing.html

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Dear Readers

This is the fourth in a series of newsletters from the San Luis Valley Field Office about the *Geothermal Leasing Environmental Assessment and Resource Management Plan Amendment*. This newsletter announces the availability of the Environmental Assessment for a 30-day protest period and the 60-day Governor's Consistency Review.

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

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