U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 S. Townsend Ave.
Montrose, CO 81401

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2013-0010 EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC-75916

LOCATION:

COC-75916 Lease-by-Application

Township 12 South, Range 91 West, 6th P. M
Section 31: Lots 11 through 26 inclusive
Section 32: Lots 10 through 15 inclusive

Township 12 South, Range 92 West, 6th P.M.
Section 36: S2

Township 13 South, Range 92 West, 6th P.M.
Section 1: Lots 5 through 8 inclusive

Township 13 South, Range 91 West, 6th P.M.
Section 5: lots 2, 3, 4, 10, & 11, W/2W/2NENE, NWNE, NESWNE, SESWNE, N/2NWSWNE, N/2NW, N/2N/2SENW, E/2NW/SE, W/2W/2NESE, N/2NENESE, NENWNESE;
Section 6: Lots 1 through 4 inclusive

*containing 1,789.2 acres more or less

PROJECT NAME: Spruce Stomp Coal Lease by Application

APPLICANT: Bowie Resources, LLC

BACKGROUND

Currently, Bowie Resources, LLC (Bowie) operates the Bowie No. 2 Mine, which is an underground longwall coal mine northeast of the town of Paonia, Colorado. Coal mining has

been conducted in the North Fork Valley for over 100 years. The Bowie No. 2 Mine has been in operation since November 1997 and is capable of producing approximately 5,000,000 tons of coal annually.

Bowie Resources, LLC (Bowie) submitted a federal competitive coal lease-by-application (LBA) to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on October 12, 2012. The proposed LBA contains lands managed by the BLM Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG), as well as private lands. The LBA (COC-75916), called Spruce Stomp, contains approximately 1,789.2 acres and is immediately adjacent to existing coal leases held by Bowie. The proposed lease covers approximately 1,332.6 acres of National Forest System land, 88.4 acres of BLM land and 368.2 acres of private surface with federal minerals (see Maps 1 and 2). The application area contains an estimated 8.02 million tons of recoverable coal. All of the coal mineral estate is administered by the BLM. The BLM is required by law to consider leasing competitively federal coal for economic recovery.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon a review of potential environmental impacts contained in the following two NEPA documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively, with other actions in the general area.

1. 2013, Preliminary Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2013-0010-EA) (EA), Bowie Coal Lease Modification Application.

2. 2000, USDA FS and BLM Environmental Impact Statement for the Iron Point Exploration License, the Iron Point Coal Lease Tract, and the Elk Creek Coal Lease Tract (a.k.a., "North Fork Coal EIS") and Record of Decision, March 30, 2000.

RATIONALE

This FONSI is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

CONTEXT

The Proposed Action is in Delta County, CO, on lands managed by BLM and USFS, as well as private lands (with federal coal). This project is a site-specific action directly involving underground mining of federal coal reserves in a lease-by-application (LBA) tract with approximately 1,789.2 acres immediately adjacent to existing coal leases held by Bowie. Minor and short-term direct and indirect surface impacts are expected.

Preliminary

INTENSITY

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Benefits of the project would be continuation of coal production for approximately four years and contribution to the supply of coal to meet the nation's energy demands. Lease stipulations were applied on the modification tracts to reduce impacts to resources including but not limited to vegetation, riparian, T&E, wildlife habitat and air quality. None of the environmental effects discussed in the EA are considered significant.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.

Lease stipulations would reduce the potential impacts to public health and safety to a level that is not significant. No public traffic is allowed in the mine surface facilities and the temporary drill pad locations will be controlled during project surface activities. Precautions for public health and safety will also be implemented during transport of equipment along public roads to and from the project area.

3) Unique Characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

Inventories have been completed for historic and cultural resources in the area and no potential impacts have been identified. There are no identified Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wilderness Areas, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, Prime or Unique Farmlands, or Floodplains. The Proposed Action includes lease stipulations to minimize any effects to the small areas of wetlands and a short segment of stream determined eligible for consideration as a Wild and Scenic River.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

This decision for leasing additional coal reserves and its effects are not unique, decisions have been made in this area for many years, and leasing is not highly controversial scientifically. There is some uncertainty about the long-term cumulative effects of GHGs and how these effects can be managed and cannot be quantified or predicted at this time. There may be public opinion controversy; however, the potential intensity of effects on the quality of the human environment is minimal.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The project is not unique or unusual in this area. Coal mining has been ongoing in the area for over a century and both the BLM and the USFS have experience implementing similar actions. Effects from the Proposed Action are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

Preliminary

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Proposed Action would not set a precedent for future coal leasing, extraction or mine venting decisions. Any future proposals would have to be evaluated on their own merits. The Proposed Action does not entail any known issues or elements that would create a precedent for future activities.

7) Consideration of the action in relation to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

Other projects, including future coal mining, are foreseeable. The Proposed Action was considered in the context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions, and it is not anticipated that cumulative impacts of any significance would occur.

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

Inventories have been completed for historic and cultural resources in the area and no significant impacts to districts, sites, highways, structures, or potential loss or destruction of significant scientific resources, have been identified. Two historic properties are located within the projected subsidence area. Although this could cause minimal effects to the historic properties, it is not expected that they would be adversely affected.

9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.

All threatened, endangered, candidate and sensitive species known to occur in the analysis area were considered in the EA. None of these species would be adversely affected by the proposed action.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The Proposed Action does not violate or threaten violation of any federal, state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. State, local and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process.

DETERMINATION

This FONSI is based on the information contained in the DOI-BLM-CO-150-2013-0010 EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). It is my determination that:
1) the implementation of the Proposed Action will not have significant environmental impacts;

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2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan; and 3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is not required.

Approved:

This is an unsigned FONSI,
released with the preliminary EA,
for public review and comment.

_____ _____

Barbara Sharrow Date
Field Manager
Uncompahgre Field Office

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