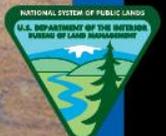


Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES.1 Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) White River Field Office (WRFO) has prepared this Oil and Gas Development Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement (RMPA/EIS) to evaluate and amend, if necessary, the current management decisions for oil and gas resources within the WRFO Planning Area. The current management decisions for oil and gas resources are described in the White River Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Resource Management Plan (approved July 1, 1997), as amended (1997 White River RMP).

This RMPA/EIS was prepared using BLM's planning regulations (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 1600) and guidance issued under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. Section 102 of the FLPMA sets forth the policy for periodically projecting the present and future use of public lands and their resources through the use of a planning process. Sections 201 and 202 of the FLPMA are the statutory authorities for land use plans prepared by BLM. The associated EIS meets the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), Department of the Interior (DOI) Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 Final Rule (43 CFR Part 46), and the requirements of BLM's *NEPA Handbook 1790-1* (BLM 2008) and *Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1* (BLM 2005).

Resource management plans are land use plans that establish goals and objectives for resource management and guide land management actions, which are based on the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. Occasionally, decisions on how the land is managed needs to be revised or amended to respond to new, intensified, or changed uses on public lands, prompting an RMP revision or amendment. There has been a substantial increase in oil and gas activity (i.e., exploration and development) in the WRFO Planning Area in recent years, which is a trend that is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Since 1997, the combination of new technology and greater demand for natural gas has stimulated interest, by the energy industry, in developing the extensive natural gas resources in the region, including the Piceance Basin.

The WRFO Planning Area for this RMPA/EIS includes all lands, regardless of surface management or ownership, within the WRFO geographic boundary. The WRFO Planning Area includes approximately 2.7 million acres of BLM, National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), state, and private lands located in northwestern Colorado, primarily in Rio Blanco County, with additional tracts located in Garfield and Moffat counties. Within the WRFO Planning Area, the BLM administers approximately 1.5 million surface acres and 2.2 million acres of federal oil and gas minerals (subsurface) estate. Management decisions made as a result of this RMPA/EIS process will apply only to BLM-administered lands in the WRFO Planning Area.

ES.2 Purpose and Need

The FLPMA of 1976 requires that the BLM to “develop, maintain, and when appropriate, revise land use plans...” (43 United States Code [USC] §1712). The BLM has proposed that an amendment to the 1997 White River RMP be prepared to evaluate changing conditions in the WRFO Planning Area that have raised new issues and concerns since approval of the 1997 White River RMP. The CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.13) require an EIS to “briefly specify the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives

including the proposed action.” Chapter 1 (Purpose and Need for Action) provides additional details regarding the context and framework for establishing and evaluating the reasonable range of alternatives presented in this document.

ES.2.1 Purpose

The BLM must establish guidance, objectives, policies, and management actions for lands and resources under the jurisdiction of the WRFO, while maintaining the valid existing rights and other obligations already established, and to guide decision making for future site-specific actions. This includes establishing appropriate goals, objectives, management actions, priorities, and procedures to manage the projected increase in oil and gas activity in relation to other resources within the WRFO Planning Area.

The purpose of this Amendment to the 1997 White River RMP is to provide effective management direction for public lands administered by the WRFO based on an analysis of oil and gas exploration and development in excess of levels evaluated in the 1997 White River RMP. Many elements of the 1997 White River RMP are adequate and remain valid, and the BLM intends to carry these management decisions forward. This RMPA/EIS will incorporate, by reference, the current decisions from the various WRFO implementation plans and the 1997 White River RMP and amendments. Decisions may be evaluated and revised as necessary to reflect changing conditions; however, any major changes in management would require more detailed NEPA analysis.

The BLM is also preparing the plan to identify master leasing plan (MLP) areas. These are areas that possess a majority of federal interest with medium to high potential for oil and gas occurrence, and wherein industry has expressed an interest in leasing the area. Identification of the areas is being done to ensure orderly, effective, timely, and environmentally responsible leasing of federal oil and gas resources.

ES.2.2 Need

The Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA) Reauthorization of 2000 directed the DOI to produce a scientific inventory of oil and gas resources and reserves underlying federal lands. The resulting EPCA inventory identified the Uinta-Piceance Basin (Colorado and Utah) as one of five sub-basins in the continental United States with large resources of undeveloped oil and gas energy potential. In addition to the EPCA inventory, development of interstate transportation pipelines and improved drilling technology has also influenced increases in exploration, development, and production of oil and gas resources in the WRFO Planning Area.

The BLM has determined that the level of oil and gas activities and the primary area of development evaluated in the 1997 White River RMP has changed considerably. The 1997 White River RMP projected and analyzed an Reasonable Foreseeable Development (RFD) Scenario of 1,100 potential oil and gas wells that would encompass ten acres of disturbance per well (including roads and pipelines) developed over a 20-year period at a rate of approximately 55 single well pads per year (BLM 1996). The 1997 RFD Scenario also projected that nearly two-thirds of the oil and gas development activity would take place in the Douglas Creek Arch south of Rangely, Colorado, with the remaining activity dispersed throughout the rest of the WRFO Planning Area. While this projection has been fairly accurate for the activity south of Rangely, there has been a substantial increase in natural gas exploration and development in the Mesaverde Play Area (MPA), located generally within the Piceance Creek Basin in the central portion of the WRFO Planning Area.

An updated RFD Scenario was prepared in 2007 as a result of the changing conditions in oil and gas development to present a 20-year forecast of drilling activity on federal, state, and private lands within WRFO boundaries (BLM 2007). The 2007 RFD Scenario projected the potential need for the construction of between 550 and 2,556 well pads, averaging eight drilled wells per pad, over a 20-year period (2009 through 2028), with the majority of development occurring in the Piceance Creek Basin of the WRFO Planning Area. Based on the 2007 RFD Scenario and increasing permit applications since 2001, there is a need to update the 1997 White River RMP to reflect the 2007 RFD Scenario findings.

These reasons emphasize the changing conditions in the WRFO Planning Area and the BLM has identified the need to manage the potential impacts of the projected increase in oil and gas activity in relation to other resources within the WRFO Planning Area and the BLM's mission of multiple use and sustained yield. Therefore, the BLM has determined that an amendment to the 1997 White River RMP is required.

ES.3 Public Involvement

The BLM's decision-making process is conducted in accordance with the requirements of the CEQ regulations implementing NEPA, and the DOI and BLM policies and procedures implementing NEPA. The NEPA and the associated regulatory and policy framework require federal agencies to involve interested public in their decision-making.

In accordance with CEQ scoping guidance, BLM provided opportunities for public involvement as an integral part of amending the 1997 White River RMP and preparing this EIS. The intent of the scoping process is to provide an opportunity for the public, tribes, other government agencies, and interest groups to participate in the planning process and to identify planning issues to be addressed by alternatives or analyzed in the EIS.

Publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) on June 14, 2006 announced BLM's intention to amend the 1997 White River RMP (BLM 1997) and prepare an EIS. Formal agency and public scoping for the Draft RMPA/EIS took place from June 14, 2006 to September 30, 2006. Public scoping meetings were held on September 12, 13, and 14, 2006 in Meeker, Rangely, and Rifle, Colorado, respectively. The BLM organized the meetings in an open-house format, with a formal presentation made by the WRFO Field Manager. The BLM provided a newsletter, maps of the WRFO Planning Area, and comment forms at each scoping meeting. The BLM encouraged attendees to provide written comments. The BLM considered all issues identified during the scoping period, the established planning criteria, and resource management goals and objectives in formulating the alternatives.

A Notice of Availability announcing the release of the White River Field Office Oil and Gas Development Draft RMPA and EIS was published in the Federal Register on September 7, 2012 initiating a 90-day public comment period. The BLM later extended the comment period for an additional 45 days, ending the comment period on January 28, 2013.

ES.4 Planning Issues

In its planning process, the BLM uses the concept of issues and unresolved conflicts, as presented in the NEPA regulations. Issues may include demands for resources, as well as concerns and conflicts, associated with balancing a mix of multiple uses, or unresolved conflicts associated with past, present, and future management of public lands or resources. As part of the scoping process, the BLM solicited comments and concerns from the public, organizations, tribes, and federal, state, and

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local agencies, as well as from BLM specialists. Issues identified from comments obtained during the scoping for the RMPA/EIS were organized into the following two categories:

- Issues within the scope of the EIS and used to develop alternatives or otherwise addressed in the EIS through the NEPA process.
- Issues outside the scope of the EIS that could require policy, regulatory, or administrative actions.

In addition to the issues identified during scoping, other resource and use issues are identified in the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (2005). All of these issues were considered in developing the alternatives brought forward in this RMPA/EIS.

The issues identified during scoping were grouped into six broad topics. The issues within each topic that were identified as being within the scope of the RMPA/EIS are summarized below.

Topic 1: Natural Resources

- Air Quality
 - Would an effective air quality monitoring program be established?
 - Would nearby Class I Wilderness Areas and National Parks be affected?
 - What are the cumulative effects to air quality of the proposed oil and gas development?
- Water Quality
 - How would produced water be handled and disposed?
 - Would sufficient fresh water be available for oil and gas production?
 - Could subsurface releases of gases and drilling fluids result in migration of these materials along fault lines to groundwater or surface waters?
 - Would fracturing fluids result in a decline in water quality?
 - How would oil and gas development be managed to reduce impacts to wetlands, surface water, and groundwater?
- Vegetation
 - How should vegetation, noxious weeds, and riparian areas be managed to achieve healthy forest and rangelands while providing for livestock grazing and habitat for fish and wildlife?
- Fish, Wildlife, and Special Status Species
 - How would impacts to greater sage-grouse, Colorado River cutthroat trout, and other special status species be managed?
 - Would fragmentation of wildlife and habitat be avoided, and would fawning/calving habitat corridors be protected?
 - Would BLM restrict activities in certain areas during certain times of year to avoid negative impact to breeding or nesting birds or wintering populations of big game?
- Would the wild horse population be protected from effects of oil and gas development?

- How should development be managed to maintain, enhance, or protect wilderness characteristics?

Topic 2: Heritage Resources Management

- How would cultural resources, archaeological sites, and historical sites be protected and conserved?

Topic 3: Management of Human Activities and Uses

- Recreation Management
 - How would oil and gas development impact hunting, primitive recreation such as hiking, camping, and wildlife viewing, and other out-of-state visitor experiences?
 - Would areas open to drilling still be open to public recreational use?
 - Would BLM designate Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs)?
- Rangeland Management
 - How would oil and gas development impact vegetation and grazing for livestock and wildlife?
- Land and Realty, Utility Corridors, Rights-of-Way, and Withdrawals
 - Would stipulations be applied to individual sites rather than as a mandatory condition of all leases?

Topic 4: Transportation and Access Management

- How would oil and gas development impact traffic in the area?
- Would new and existing roads and trails be maintained or improved?
- Would new oil and gas access roads be open to use by off-road vehicles?
- What best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to avoid and/or minimize impacts to sensitive (e.g., streams and riparian areas) resources?
- What steps would be taken to evaluate proposed construction or improvement of roads for impacts to the transportation network and to the environment?

Topic 5: Management for Aesthetic and Social Values

- Social and Economic Values
 - What methods or models would BLM use to evaluate the social and economic benefits and costs of the proposed oil and gas development?
- Visual Resource Management
 - Would the existing character of the landscape be preserved, including unique backcountry landscapes?
 - How would BLM address light pollution, regional haze, and the degradation of viewsheds, including the viewshed from Dinosaur National Monument?

Topic 6: Integration of Management with other Agency Plans

- Will coordination and consistency with county land use plans, emergency services, state resource management plans, and other Federal Plans and Guidance be considered?

Additional details regarding these issues and issues that are either outside the scope of this EIS or that could require policy, regulatory, or administrative actions are provided in Chapter 1 (Purpose and Need for Action). Additional details on public involvement are presented in Chapter 5 (Consultation and Coordination).

ES.5 Alternatives

Federal agencies are directed to develop and assess reasonable alternatives that meet the purpose and need for agency action in an EIS. The CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA direct federal agencies to “rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and for alternatives which were eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated” (40 CFR Part 1502.14 (a)). Reasonable alternatives include those that are practical or feasible from the technical and economic standpoint and use common sense, rather than alternatives that are simply desirable from the standpoint of the proponent. The CEQ regulations also direct federal agencies to include a No Action Alternative (40 CFR Part 1502.14 (d)). The alternatives are summarized below. Detailed discussion of these alternatives is presented in Chapter 2 (Alternatives).

ES.5.1 Alternative A – No Action

The management focus for Alternative A is the current management goals, objectives, and direction as specified in the 1997 White River RMP; however, the analysis updates the 20-year development projection from the 1997 White River RMP to reflect the current rate of about 220 new drilling permits per year with modifications through plan maintenance consistent with 43 CFR 1610.5-4 guidance. The alternative continues current allowable uses and management actions for resources and resource programs under the levels and locations of future oil and gas development projected in the 2007 RFD Scenario.

Implementation of Alternative A is assumed to result in up to 4,603 new wells on 550 new well pads and approximately 6,600 acres of associated disturbance from well pads, roads, and other facilities (i.e., gas plants, pipelines, and other infrastructure) during the 20-year period of analysis.

ES.5.2 Alternative B

This alternative emphasizes conservation and protection of other resources and resource uses, concurrently with oil and gas production. The implementation of Alternative B would limit the duration and overall extent of development activities in order to maintain existing resource conditions throughout all phases of development (i.e., from initial construction through post-production). The BLM would apply additional management actions to further protect the environment for these resources.

The managed development approach utilized under Alternative B is a significant distinction from Alternative A. A key element of the managed development approach evaluated under this alternative is limiting the spatial extent of surface disturbance. The overall vision for a managed development approach described for this alternative would be to cluster, collocate, and consolidate surface facilities and other ground disturbing activities to manage the acute or collective degree of effects from the proposed development. Limitations would be achieved in part by managing the

extent of big game seasonal range subjected to cumulative adverse behavioral effects (e.g., harassment, avoidance) attributable to oil and gas activities. The managed development approach offers operator incentives for concentrated development. This approach includes establishing big game and sage-grouse thresholds, for cumulative adverse behavior effects, to be applied by each Game Management Unit (GMU), as defined by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), and by leaseholder (e.g., a threshold of a certain percentage of big game crucial winter range occurring within a leaseholding). Under Alternative B, the goal would be to manage big game habitat utility and suitability to sustain at least 90 percent of CPW long-term population objectives throughout active development.

Implementation of Alternative B is assumed to result in up to 9,191 new oil and gas wells on 1,100 new well pads and 13,200 acres of associated disturbance from well pads, road and other facilities during the 20-year period of analysis.

ES.5.3 Alternative C (Preferred Alternative in the Draft RMPA/EIS)

Alternative C emphasizes short-term use of the environment (i.e., in the construction/development phase) and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term community function and ecological integrity (from initial construction to post-production). The management focus for Alternative C is similar to Alternative B; however, Alternative C places management emphasis on maintaining long-term community function and ecosystem integrity. For example, disturbance thresholds for acute effects (i.e., short-term impacts associated with well construction, drilling, and completion) under this alternative would be higher, and more exceptions and modifications to lease stipulations may be granted compared to Alternative B.

Under Alternative C, the BLM's management goal for big game habitat would be to manage big game habitat utility and suitability to sustain at least 70 percent (versus 90 percent in Alternative B) of CPW's long-term population objective throughout active development. All seasonal big game ranges within the WRFO would be subject to timing limitations that could extend up to 90 days (versus 120 days in Alternative B) within established windows. Timing limitations would be applied through conditions of approvals (COAs) for existing leases and through stipulations on new leases. Similar to Alternative B, exceptions to timing limitations would be offered contingent on development remaining within the thresholds for acute and collective cumulative adverse behavior effects (evaluated by total leaseholdings within a GMU).

Implementation of Alternative C is assumed to result in up to 15,042 new oil and gas wells on 1,800 new well pads and 21,600 acres of associated disturbance from well pads, roads and other facilities during the 20-year period of analysis.

ES.5.4 Alternative D

The management focus of Alternative D is the development of oil and gas resources. Management under Alternative D emphasizes the production of oil and gas resources under the environmental protection for other resources afforded by applicable laws, regulations, and BLM policy. The BLM would not apply management actions to provide environmental protection for other resources other than what is consistent with applicable laws and policy (e.g., Clean Air Act regulations, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act [ESA], National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System [NPDES] guidelines).

Implementation of Alternative D is assumed to result in up to 21,200 new oil and gas wells on 2,556 new well pads and about 30,700 acres of associated disturbance from well pads, roads and other facilities during the 20-year period of analysis.

ES.5.5 Alternative E (Proposed Amendment)

The BLM considered issues identified from public comments, the established planning criteria, and resource management goals and objectives in formulating this alternative and management of oil and gas development under this alternative combines elements of Alternatives A, B, C, and D. In acknowledging a trend for an increasing number of wells per pad, Alternative E reflects surface disturbance associated with development that would be similar to Alternative B (1,100 well pads or 13,200 acres) while allowing for well numbers anticipated under Alternative C (15,040 wells). The majority of development is expected to occur within the MPA, with approximately 972 well pads within the MPA and 128 well pads outside the MPA.

Under Alternative E, the BLM's management goal for big game habitat would be to ensure big game habitats provide components and conditions necessary to sustain big game populations at levels commensurate with multiple use objectives and state-established population objectives (as in Alternative A). All seasonal big game ranges within the WRFO would be subject to timing limitations that could extend up to 120 days (as in Alternative B) within established windows. Timing limitations would be applied through conditions of approvals (COAs) for existing leases and through stipulations on new leases. Similar to Alternatives B and C, exceptions to timing limitations would be offered contingent on development remaining within the thresholds for acute and collective cumulative adverse behavior effects (evaluated by total leaseholdings within a GMU).

The BLM would adopt the Dinosaur Trail MLP. Leasing within the MLP would progress in phases to address resource values and concerns. Leasing would first occur in the southern portion of the MLP, where the oil and gas occurrence potential is rated medium to high. Leasing within sage-grouse habitat, areas of low oil and gas potential, or areas adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument would occur once the BLM has completed additional analysis and planning. Within sage-grouse habitat in the MLP, sage-grouse management would be emphasized and leasing would only occur after the BLM has issued the Record of Decision for the Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse RMPA. In areas of the MLP that are outside of sage-grouse habitat, but are within either low oil and gas potential or adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument Headquarters leasing would only occur after the BLM has completed a RMP Revision and determined whether or not leasing is appropriate given considerations such as the potential impacts to visual resources, night skies, and soundscapes.

ES.6 Affected Environment

Detailed description of the affected environment within the WRFO Planning Area is presented in Chapter 3 (Affected Environment). The WRFO administrative office is located in the town of Meeker in northwestern Colorado. The BLM-administered lands include all but a small portion of Rio Blanco County, with additional tracts located in northern Garfield County and southern Moffat County.

Rio Blanco, Moffat, and Garfield counties were established between the late 1800s and early 1900s in response to resource extraction booms. Today, energy development, resource extraction, agriculture, and recreation remain important to Rio Blanco County. Energy development, tourism, ranching, and farming are the main industries of Garfield County. Agriculture and mining are the main industries in Moffat County.

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The WRFO administers livestock grazing for cattle, sheep, and horses on approximately 1,954,100 acres. Soils and vegetation in the WRFO Planning Area generally provide rangeland suitable for year-round cattle and sheep grazing at lower elevations; however, supplemental feeding is often required, especially at higher elevations.

Several federally listed species may occur in the WRFO Planning Area, including black-footed ferret, Canada lynx, Colorado pikeminnow, Dudley Bluffs twinpod, and Dudley Bluffs bladderpod. In addition, elk, mule deer, pronghorn, black bear, mountain lion, white-tailed prairie dog, and many bird species occur in the WRFO Planning Area.

There are various authorizations to use public surface for leases, permits, and easements within the WRFO Planning Area. Mineral resources in the WRFO Planning Area include leasable (e.g., oil and gas, geothermal, coal, sodium and oil shale), locatable (e.g., uranium), and salable minerals (e.g., sand and gravel). Oil and gas wells are common throughout Rio Blanco County excluding the White River National Forest. Extending 10 miles west from the Town of Rangely, there is extensive oil and gas development. Oil shale resources are located in Rio Blanco and Garfield counties. Areas identified as suitable for coal leasing are located in the northwestern and northeastern portion of Rio Blanco County.

Recreational activities in the WRFO Planning Area are varied and include hunting, fishing (cold and warm water), boating (open canoeing and rafting), camping, hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. The White River Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA) supports elk, mule deer, coyote, bear, and mountain lion hunting. Hunting is the most prominent recreational use and occurs throughout the WRFO Planning Area.

Steady population growth, especially around Rangely and Meeker, has placed an increasing recreational demand on adjacent undeveloped public lands as visitors and nearby residents seek a diversity of recreational opportunities. Colorado's population has grown significantly in the past 10 years, and an increasing number of people are living near or seeking undeveloped public land for recreational use. In addition, Colorado remains a popular destination for tourists, especially those seeking experiences in an undeveloped setting. As a result, public lands administered by the BLM are absorbing increasing recreational use.

ES.7 Environmental Consequences

Detailed descriptions of impacts of the five alternatives are provided in Chapter 4 (Environmental Consequences), along with a discussion of the cumulative impacts, irretrievable and irreversible commitments of resources, and unavoidable adverse impacts of the alternatives.

Implementation of Alternative A would result in the fewest number of wells (4,603) and well pads (550), the least surface disturbance (6,600 acres), and the lowest density of disturbance in the Mesaverde Play Area. Impacts from surface disturbance and well development would generally be lower under this alternative due to the smaller scale of development. Impacts from road wear and tear, such as erosion and disturbance to wildlife, would also be lower due to the lower number of truck trips required. Wildlife impacts would be managed in part with timing limitation stipulations, which could prolong development on a well pad, increase the total number of truck trips, and extend impacts associated with surface disturbance. Under Alternative A, social and economic conditions would not change as a result of proposed oil and gas development.

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Compared to Alternative A, Alternative B would have more wells (9,191) and well pads (1,100), more surface disturbance (13,200 acres), and a higher density of disturbance in the Mesaverde Play Area. Overall resource impacts would be higher than Alternative A due to the larger scale of development. Some reduction in impacts, such as to wildlife, would be achieved by implementing stricter management restrictions and expanding lease stipulation areas. The largest extent of no surface occupancy (NSO) lease stipulations would be established under this alternative. Impacts from road wear and tear would be higher than Alternative A because more truck trips would be required. Wildlife impacts would be managed using timing limitation stipulations and acute and collective development thresholds on big game seasonal range. The thresholds would promote clustered development, which could increase impacts related to surface disturbance in development zones, but in the short term, would also keep more surface areas free of disturbance. Compliance with the threshold concept would also promote timely, successful reclamation, allowing surface areas to more rapidly recover their pre-disturbance condition.

Compared to Alternatives A and B, Alternative C would have more wells (15,042) and well pads (1,800), more surface disturbance (21,600 acres), and a higher density of disturbance in the Mesaverde Play Area. Overall resource impacts, including impacts from surface disturbance, for oil and gas activities, would be higher than Alternatives A and B due to the larger scale of development. Alternative C would have management actions and lease stipulations that reduce impacts similar in scope to Alternative B, but less restrictive. Impacts from road wear and tear would also be higher than Alternatives A and B because more truck trips would be required. Wildlife impacts would be managed using timing limitation stipulations and acute and collective development thresholds on big game seasonal range. The thresholds would be higher than Alternative B, and thus would do less to maintain existing conditions.

Alternative D would have the largest number of wells (21,200) and well pads (2,556), the most surface disturbance (30,672 acres), and the highest density of disturbance in the Mesaverde Play Area. Overall resource impacts, including impacts to wildlife, would be highest under this alternative due to the scale of development. Alternative D would also have the highest number of truck trips, resulting in the highest level of impacts from road wear and tear. Management restrictions and lease stipulations would be similar to Alternative A, or in some cases, Alternative C. Wildlife impacts would be managed in part with timing limitation stipulations, which could prolong disturbance on a pad, increase the total number of truck trips, and extend water resource impacts from development.

Alternative E would have the same overall number of well pads and associated surface disturbance as Alternative B (1,110 well pads or 13,200 acres), however the distribution of that disturbance is slightly modified. The majority of the disturbance is still expected to occur within the MPA (approximately 972 well pads); however Alternative E acknowledges additional development outside the MPA (approximately 128 well pads as was considered under Alternative D). In acknowledging a trend for an increasing number of wells per pad, Alternative E considers well numbers associated with Alternative C (15,042 wells). Since the well pads numbers and surface disturbance associated with Alternative E is similar to Alternative B, the anticipated mileage of roads, pipelines, and power lines would be the same. However, truck trips are dependent not only upon the number of well pads but also on the number of wells, therefore the impacts associated with road wear and tear would generally be less than Alternative C but more than Alternative B. Wildlife impacts would be managed using timing limitation stipulations and acute and collective development thresholds on big game seasonal ranges. The acute thresholds would be in between those considered for Alternatives B and C, while the collective thresholds would be the same as Alternative B. There would be less NSO stipulations (acreage) than Alternative B but more than

Alternative C. However, the potential areas of non-recoverable oil and gas mineral resources would be about the same as Alternative C.

ES.8 Summary of Changes to the Proposed RMPA and Final EIS

Alternative E was developed as the Proposed Amendment based on examination of the following factors:

- Balance of use and protection of resources
- Extent of the environmental impacts
- Input from public comments

Alternative E was developed to resolve the major issues while providing for common ground among conflicting opinions as well as multiple uses of public lands in a sustainable fashion. Text that has been revised or added to the Oil and Gas Development Draft RMPA/EIS is highlighted in gray in this Proposed RMPA/Final EIS. A summary of changes to the Proposed RMPA/Final EIS can be found in Chapter 2, Section 2.2. The Air Resources Management Plan (ARMP) was replaced with the Colorado Air Resources Protection Plan (CARPP) in Appendix J. Master Leasing Plans submitted by citizen groups are now discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.8 and Appendix I is now a new Water Resources Monitoring Plan. The Dinosaur Trail MLP would be adopted and discussion of the MLP is now found throughout the document (i.e., Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4).

ES.9 Next Steps

Comments received on the Draft RMPA/EIS were evaluated and modifications to the document were made as needed. A second NOA will be published in the Federal Register to notify the public of the availability of the Proposed RMPA/Final EIS, and a copy of the document will be filed with the EPA. Notification and distribution of the Proposed RMPA/Final EIS will be similar to that followed for the Draft RMPA/EIS (Chapter 5, Section 5.4). The publication of the second NOA initiates a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review to identify inconsistencies with state or local plans and a 30-day protest period under 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Members of the public with standing will have the opportunity to protest the content of the Proposed RMPA and Final EIS during the specified 30-day protest period. The State Director of the BLM may sign and implement that portion of the plan not under protest. Once protests have been resolved and the Governor's Consistency Review has been completed, the State Director can approve the RMPA by signing a Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD will be issued by the BLM following the Governor's Consistency Review and protest resolution. The RMPA would be continually monitored and evaluated until it is replaced or modified by another plan.

ES.10 References

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 1996. White River Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement. U.S. Department of the Interior. BLM White River Field Office, Meeker, CO. June.
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