

## Finding of No Significant Impact

DOI-BLM-AZ-P010-2012-010-EA

### HASSAYAMPA FIELD OFFICE OIL AND GAS LEASING EA

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment (EA), and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, described below, I have determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

#### Context

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Arizona State Office (ASO), proposes to lease, through competitive lease sale, four (4) parcels of federal mineral estate for the purpose of oil and gas exploration and development. The parcels are located in eastern Coconino County, and include 8,887 acres of split estate lands administered by the Hassayampa Field Office. The split estate lands include 8,263 acres of surface lands administered by the State of Arizona, and 624 acres of private holdings.

This EA analyzes the oil and gas leasing action; it does not analyze potential surface disturbing development actions that may or may not be proposed in the future.

#### Intensity

*1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

Benefits of the proposed action include offering federal land mineral estate parcels for competitive oil and gas leasing to allow private individuals or companies to explore for and potentially develop oil and gas resources for sale on public markets. Production of oil and gas resources on public lands contributes to decreasing the dependence of the United States on foreign energy sources. It is the policy of the BLM as derived from various laws, including the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, to make mineral resources available for leasing to meet national, regional, and local needs. The EA indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests, or the locality, from the leasing decision. Any future development of the lease would be analyzed at the time of the site-specific Application for Permit to Drill (APD). Authorization of future development projects would require full compliance with BLM directives and stipulations.

*2. Degree of effect on public health and safety.*

The decision to lease oil and gas does not in itself affect public health and safety. If oil and gas development activities are proposed in the future, it will be subject to site-specific environmental analysis.

*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:*

Fifteen elements of the human environment were analyzed in the EA. The proposed action would not impact historic or cultural resources, wetlands, or ecologically critical areas. All parcels would be subject to stipulations that protect cultural resources. The proposed lease areas do not have wilderness, wilderness study areas, lands with wilderness characteristics, wild and scenic rivers, park lands, or prime farmlands.

4. *Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial:*

The decision to lease oil and gas does not affect the quality of the human environment, and does not have highly controversial impacts. Oil and gas leasing decisions are not unique. Four wells have been previously drilled in the project area by different operators since 1949. If development of the leases is proposed in the future, it is at that state that site specific effects to the human environment will be analyzed.

5. *Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.*

There are no effects that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk as a result of the leasing decision. These decisions are not unique or unusual, and are established by the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 (MLA) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).

6. *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:*

This decision is not precedent setting. Future oil and gas development actions will be analyzed for their site specific impacts when an APD is submitted. The Proposed Action is not unusual and significant cumulative effects are not predicted. The decision does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts:*

The decision to lease does not establish an assurance for future surface disturbing activities from which a cumulative impact analysis can be adequately addressed. The Proposed Action was considered in the context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. No significant cumulative effects are predicted.

8. *Degree to which the action may adversely affect district, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources:*

A record search indicates four previously recorded cultural sites, with five previous surveys recorded. As a result of the surveys, one site was determined to be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Properties (NRHP). Leasing of oil and gas parcels has no direct potential for surface disturbance, and no effect to the known properties is anticipated from this action. Inventory and site avoidance or mitigation will be required prior to surface disturbing activities proposed at the APD stage. All parcels would be subject to stipulations that protect cultural resources.

9. *Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat:*

The HFO staff has reviewed the parcels; no adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat under the Endangered Species Act were identified. If, at a future time, development is proposed, it would be subject to site specific environmental analysis and projects could be modified or mitigated so as to not have adverse effects. The lessee would be alerted of potential habitat for a threatened, endangered, candidate, or other special status plant or animal.

10. *Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law:*

To the best of my knowledge, 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.

Recommended by:

D. Penington Hawes

Rem Hawes  
Field Manager, Hassayampa Field Office

2/6/2013

Date

Approved by:

Rebecca Heick

for Julie Decker  
Deputy State Director, Division of Resources

2/13/2013

Date