

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
North Dakota Field Office
99 23rd Avenue West, Suite A
Dickinson, ND 58601**

**Decision Record and Leasing Recommendation
Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-MT-C030-2011-0079-EA**

Decision:

It is my decision to implement Alternative C (the Preferred Alternative) as identified in the North Dakota Field Office (NDFO) Oil and Gas Leasing Environmental Assessment (EA), DOI-BLM-MT-C030-2011-0079-EA, in which 87 of 116 parcels containing approximately 19,406 acres of federal minerals would be offered for lease at the July 12, 2011 competitive sale. Competitive leases will be issued for parcels sold at the sale, and noncompetitive leases may be issued for applications filed during the 2-year period following the sale. The remaining 29 parcels considered in the EA containing approximately 11,933 federal mineral acres in whole or part would be deferred due to greater sage-grouse, cultural, and paleontological importance, and are pending further review.

Authorities:

The authority for this decision is contained in 43 CFR 3100.

Compliance and Monitoring:

Should the parcels be developed, monitoring may be required and would be addressed and analyzed under future NEPA documentation.

Terms, Conditions, and Stipulations:

For all parcels, standard terms and conditions, as well as the lease notices and stipulations identified by parcel in Appendix A of the EA, would apply and be attached to the lease parcel(s).

Plan Conformance and Consistency:

The alternatives have been reviewed and found to be in conformance with the land use decisions described in the: North Dakota RMP (April 1988) and the associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Alternatives Considered:

Alternative A – No Action. The No Action Alternative would exclude all 116 parcels within the NDFO from the lease sale. Surface management would remain the same and ongoing oil and gas development would continue on surrounding federal, private, and state leases.

Alternative B – Proposed Action. The proposed action would offer all 116 parcels of federal minerals, covering 31,339 acres for competitive and/or noncompetitive lease issuance, in conformance with the land use planning decisions. The lease parcel number, size, and detailed

locations and associated stipulations are listed in Appendix A of the EA. Standard terms and conditions, as well as stipulations identified in Appendix A of the EA would apply.

Alternative C – BLM Preferred Alternative. The preferred alternative would be to offer 87 parcels containing 19,406 acres of federal minerals for competitive and/or noncompetitive lease issuance. The lease parcels to be offered are located within the NDFO and are dispersed across the following counties: Billings, Bottineau, Bowman, Burke, Dunn, Golden Valley, McKenzie, Mercer, Mountrail, Renville, Stark, Ward, and Williams. Standard terms and conditions, as well as stipulations identified in Appendix A of the EA would apply.

The preferred alternative would defer a total of 29 lease parcels in whole or part (11,933 acres of federal minerals) from the upcoming lease sale. More specifically, 14 lease parcels have been found to contain priority sage-grouse habitat (8,996 federal mineral acres); 11 lease parcels have been found in areas classified as high according to the Potential Fossil Yield Classification (PFYC) system map (7,627 federal mineral acres); 12 lease parcels have been found to contain sensitive cultural sites (3,292 federal mineral acres); and 5 lease parcels require additional tribal consultation (1,325 federal mineral acres); therefore, these lease parcels would be deferred at this time pending further review and analysis. Some of the aforementioned acres overlap various resources, but the deferred total acres remains 11,933.

Public Comments:

This EA was made available for a 30-day public comment period which ended on March 31, 2011. No comments were received regarding the EA during the 30 day comment period. One written comment that was outside of the scope of the EA was received from a group of surface owners. Although no comments were received, some modifications were made to the EA, and are denoted with gray-scale shading and/or strikeout in the updated EA. Refer to Chapter 5 of the updated EA for a summary of public participation and changes made to the EA.

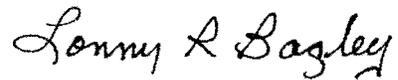
Rationale for the Decision:

The decision to approve Alternative C, the preferred alternative, is based on the following: 1) consistency with resource management and land use plans; 2) national policy; 3) agency statutory requirements; 4) relevant resource issues; and 5) application of measures to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

1. The decision is in conformance with the North Dakota RMP (April 1988) and the associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
2. It is the policy of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as derived from various laws, including the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended [30 U.S.C. 181 *et seq.*] and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, to make mineral resources available for disposal and to encourage development of mineral resources to meet national, regional, and local needs.
3. The decision is consistent with all federal, state, and county authorizing actions required for implementation of the Preferred Alternative.

4. Standard terms and conditions as well as special stipulations would apply. Lease stipulations (as required by Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations 3101.1-3) were added to each parcel as identified by the NDFO to address site specific resource concerns or new information not identified in the planning process.

Recommended by:



Lonny R. Bagley, Field Manager
Date July 11, 2011

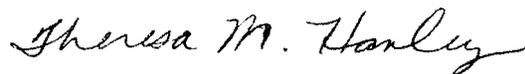
Concurrence by:



for

M. Elaine Raper, District Manager
Date July 11, 2011

Approved by:



Theresa M. Hanley, Deputy State Director, Division of Resources
Date July 15, 2011