

**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-C030-2011-0252-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-C030-2011-0252-EA, in which 32 of 35 parcels containing approximately 5,908 acres of federal minerals would be offered for lease at the January 24, 2012 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 3 parcels considered in the EA containing approximately 1,406 federal mineral acres in whole or part would be deferred due to greater sage-grouse, 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 35 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 35 parcels of federal minerals, covering 7,314 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 32 parcels containing 5,908 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: Bottineau, Bowman, Burke, Divide, Dunn, Golden Valley, McKenzie, Mountrail, Renville, Slope, Stark, 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 3 lease parcels in whole or part (1,406.14) acres of federal minerals) from the upcoming lease sale. More specifically, 3 lease parcels have been found to contain priority sage-grouse habitat (1,406.14) federal mineral acres; therefore, these lease parcels would be deferred at this time pending further review and analysis.

Public Comments:

This EA was made available for a 30-day public comment period which ended on September 26, 2011. No comments were received regarding the EA during the 30 day comment period. 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 January 20, 2012

Concurrence by:



M. Elaine Raper, District Manager

Date January 20, 2012

Approved by:



Theresa M. Hanley, Deputy State Director, Division of Resources

Date January 24, 2012