

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Miles City Field Office
111 Garryowen Road
Miles City, Montana 59301-7000**

**Decision Record and Leasing Recommendation
Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2016-0022-EA**

Decision:

It is my decision to implement the proposed action as identified in the Miles City Field Office (MCFO) Oil and Gas Leasing Environmental Assessment (EA), DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2016-0022-EA, in which 6 nominated lease parcels in whole containing 1,028.59 federal surveyed mineral acres in whole would be offered for competitive and/or noncompetitive lease issuance at the May 4, 2016 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.

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 proposed action and alternatives have been reviewed and found to be in conformance with the following BLM plans and associated Record of Decision(s):

2015 Rocky Mountain Region Record of Decision (ROD) and Miles City Approved Resource Management Plan and the MCFO RMP with the associated Final EIS dated September, 2015.

Alternatives Considered:

Alternative A – No Action. The No Action Alternative would exclude all 6 parcels within the MCFO 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 6 parcels covering 1,028.59 surveyed acres of federal mineral 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.

Public Comments:

This EA, along with the unsigned FONSI, was made available for a 30-day public comment period which ended on December 30, 2015. A total of 6 written and 1 verbal comment submissions were received during the 30-day comment period, which resulted in 31 substantive comments addressing various resources throughout the analysis area. After review and consideration of the comments, some modifications were made to the EA. A summary of the 30-day public comments and changes made to the EA as a result of the comment period can be found in Appendix D of the EA.

Rationale for the Decision:

The decision to approve Alternative B, the proposed action, is based on the following: 1) consistency with resource management and land use plan; 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 2015 Rocky Mountain Region Record of Decision (ROD) and Miles City Approved Resource Management Plan and the MCFO RMP with the associated Final EIS, signed September, 2015.
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 MCFO to address site specific resource concerns or new information not identified in the planning process.

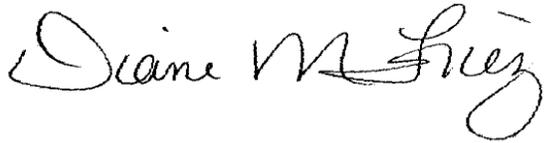
Recommended by:



Wendy M. Warren, Acting Field Manager

Date April 28, 2016

Concurrence by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Diane M. Friez". The signature is written in a cursive style. A vertical yellow line is positioned to the right of the signature.

Diane M. Friez, District Manager

Date April 28, 2016

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Donato J. Judice". The signature is written in a cursive style and is contained within a light gray rectangular box.

Donato J. Judice, Deputy State Director, Division of Energy, Minerals and Realty

Date April 29, 2016