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RMP Update: Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenario

Greetings from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Carlsbad Field Office (Field Office)! This is the seventh issue in a series of newsletters to provide interested parties with information on the Carlsbad Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision. Since the last newsletter, the Field Office has updated the Reasonably Foreseeable Development (RFD) scenario (see box), evaluated the proposed allocations by alternative for consistency, and drafted the initial affected environment and environmental consequences sections of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The RFD update and the evaluation of the alternatives allocations are discussed below.

A Reasonably Foreseeable Development (RFD) Scenario presents research related to the potential mineral reserves within a given reservoir, combined with the predictions of the extraction industry, to forecast the number of wells that could be developed within the subject area, over a set timeframe.

The BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1) states, "At the land use plan level, it is important to identify RFDs for allowable uses such as mineral leasing, locatable mineral development, recreation, timber harvest, utility corridors, and livestock grazing to enable the orderly implementation of future actions. These scenarios provide a context for the land use plan's decisions and an analytical base for the National Environmental Policy Act analysis."

In 2011 the Field Office selected the New Mexico Technical Institute of Mining and Technology (New Mexico Tech) to draft the RFD to provide a reasonable estimate of development associated with hydrocarbon production in southeast New Mexico for the next 20 years. This assessment is important because it describes the affected environment for hydrocarbon production and is the baseline from which the predicted number of wells under each alternative is determined. The predicted number of wells by alternative is further extrapolated to the predicted number of acres of surface disturbance for each alternative. These numbers are used to conduct a quantitative assessment of the environmental impacts of each alternative.

The methods used for the RFD study consist of a review of reservoir characteristics and historical production, predictive engineering production modeling, and presentation of data and conclusions in multiple formats. After the RFD was finalized in May 2012, the BLM received new information indicating significant activity in development had occurred. There were shifts in mineral potential within the planning area, with more potential in some areas and less in others than what was originally stated in the RFD. Since the RMP was still under development, the BLM had New Mexico Tech update the RFD to ensure it reflected the most current conditions.

Please see the website link below or contact the RMP Team leader for a copy of the original or revised RFD.

For any questions regarding the RMP or public involvement opportunities, or to be removed from the mailing list, please contact Aaron Stockton, RMP Team Leader, at (575) 234-5971 or astockto@blm.gov. The RMP website can be found at http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/fo/Carlsbad_Field_Office/carlsbad_rmp.html

Decisions to be Made: Minerals and Renewable Energy

Land use plans must categorize uses, or allocations, that are allowable, constrained, or prohibited on public lands and mineral estate. These allocations identify surface lands and/or subsurface mineral interests where uses are allowed, including any restrictions that may be needed to meet the goals and objectives of each alternative. Land use plans also identify areas where specific uses are excluded to protect resource values. Certain lands may be open or closed to specific uses based on legislative, regulatory, or policy requirements or criteria to protect sensitive resource values (BLM H-1610 Land

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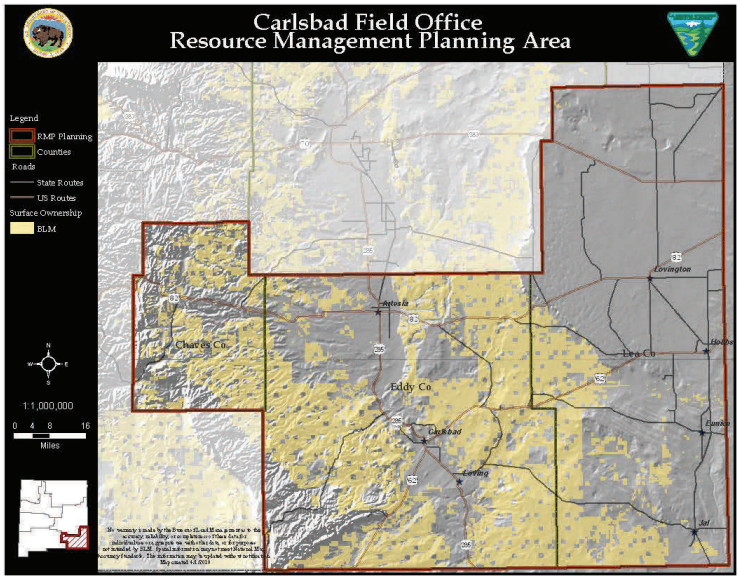
Use Planning Handbook). The RMP/Draft EIS alternatives will propose allocations for leasable minerals (i.e., oil, gas, and geothermal), salable minerals (i.e., sand and gravel), locatable minerals (i.e., gold and silver), and non-energy leasable minerals (i.e., potash). Additionally, through the Lands and Realty program the BLM will allocate lands available for renewable energy projects (i.e, wind and solar). Note that the Land Use Planning Handbook also calls for the consideration of lands suitable or unsuitable for coal leasing. No coal resources have been identified in the Field Office planning area at this time, so allocation decisions regarding coal will not be made in the current RMP revision.

FAQ: How does the BLM use GIS in the RMP Process?



Geographic information system (GIS) software is an important tool for many RMP processes. It is designed to capture, manage, analyze, and display all forms of geographically-referenced information. From displaying the physical properties of the planning area to generating calculations for impacts analysis, GIS plays an integral part in the development of the Draft EIS. Besides the creation of maps, the Field Office has been using GIS to overlay resource and resource use allocations proposed under each of the alternatives developed in the last year. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that there are no conflicts between proposed resources uses. Resource uses as outlined in the H-1610-1 Land Use Planning Manual include forestry, livestock grazing, recreation and visitor services, trails and travel management, lands and realty, renewable energy, coal, oil shale, and all types of mineral development.

Field Office staff have worked to ensure consistency in management throughout the planning area under each alternative. The GIS calculations are complex due to special designations, wildlife, rights-of-way, and renewable energy considerations among other issues. The next step in the process is to calculate the number of acres of each use and write up the associated analysis in the environmental consequences section of the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS is scheduled for publication at the end of 2015 (see schedule left).

RMP Timeline

Public Scoping	2010
Preparatory Documents	2012
Alternatives Development	2013
Draft RMP/Draft EIS (We Are Here)	2013-2015
90-Day Public Comment	2015 –2016
Revise RMP/EIS	2016
Finalize EIS	2016
Proposed RMP/Final EIS	2016
Finalize RMP with Record of Decision	2017

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