

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
FARMINGTON FIELD OFFICE**

**Project: Williams Middle Mesa Plan of Development
EA Log Number: DOI-BLM-NM-F010-2011-254-EA
Location: Various Locations in San Juan, New Mexico.**

Decision Record

It is my decision to approve the Proposed Action (Alternative B), which would grant a modification to the seasonal closure Condition of Approval for the Middle Mesa portion of the Williams Rosa Unit which would be needed for an approximate 5-year period. Williams' proposed Rosa Unit Middle Mesa Plan of Development (POD) would utilize horizontal drilling to maximize natural gas extraction from the Basin Mancos pool with less surface disturbance and greater recovery of resources than vertical drilling. The Proposed Action is in compliance with the 2003 Farmington Resource Management Plan (RMP).

Alternatives Considered:

The EA considered two alternatives in detail and three alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed analysis. The Proposed Action offers to grant a modification to the seasonal closure.

Rationale:

I have carefully considered the effects of the proposed action on the human environment using an interdisciplinary and systematic approach and ensured an appropriate level of involvement of the public. The environmental analysis was presented in the Final Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-201-254-EA) for the "Middle Mesa Plan of Development" which was quantitative where possible and qualitative when necessary. BLM has carefully followed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, ensured adequate public involvement, disclosed the effects of the alternatives, discovered the issues ripe for discussion in the EA, carefully considered alternatives and followed established procedures for consideration of cultural resources and threatened and endangered species. The BLM has considered and balanced the local short term uses, long-term productivity, and recovery of the resources.

The intent of using a Plan of Development (POD) was to consider the broader impacts and to disclose to the public and analyze the impacts from a broader perspective; recognizing that future actual impacts associated with the proposed development will be analyzed in site specific NEPA analyses; this approach was taken to assess the cumulative impacts of all the proposed development.

This Decision Record (DR) does not approve any applications for permit to drill (APDs). The following specific factors were used to document the agencies' hard look and form the basis of my decision:

BLM used an Interdisciplinary and Systematic Approach and involved the Public

Interdisciplinary Team:

The Farmington Field Office (FFO) Interdisciplinary team (ID-team) was extensively involved in the preparation of the EA (Table 3-1, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254). The ID-team was integrally involved by understanding the proposal, developing the purpose and need, reviewing the issues, developing a range of alternatives, assessing the impacts, and resolving the comments on the draft EA. Final comment resolution included the ID-team to ensure that all comments were captured and that the response was appropriate.

“Table 3-1 is a summary of the information contained in the ID-team Checklist which summarizes the preliminary findings for the many resources that BLM considers when reviewing a proposal on public lands. BLM specialists use their experience in the field, professional expertise, review GIS information, range files, well files, archaeological reports, resource inventories, and reports such as plant and paleontological surveys to determine which of the resources need detailed discussion and which might be considered, but not in detail. The purpose of this screening, which is appropriate under NEPA, is to identify the important relevant issues for the Decision Maker to understand and take a “hard look” at.” (Section 3, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

Scoping:

BLM properly scoped to identify the relevant issues to be discussed in the EA. BLM was diligent in trying to discover the issues ripe for discussion in the EA by extensive outreach. Based upon internal and external scoping, issues were identified for discussion in the EA.

“The BLM/FFO presented Williams Middle Mesa POD proposal for public input at their open house held on April 21, 2011. On April 26, 2011, a letter that provided information on the project and sought public scoping comment was mailed to 60 individuals and groups. The mailing included federal and state agencies, municipal offices, businesses, interest groups, and individuals. A legal notice was published in *The Daily Times*, the Farmington, New Mexico, paper, on April 27, 2011, to inform the public of the proposed action and the 30-day scoping comment period. Seven comment letters were received from the April 27, 2011 scoping effort. These comments were reviewed and taken into consideration during the preparation of this EA.” (Section 1.5, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

“On May 4, 2011, a scoping and consultation letter was mailed by the BLM/FFO to representatives of two Native American tribes: the Navajo and Southern Ute Indian Tribe. The Navajo Nation responded on June 21, 2011.” (Section 1.5, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

Public Involvement:

The public was involved during scoping (as discussed above) and also after the “draft EA” was posted on the BLM website for the public to review. (Section 1.5, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

“The draft EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were posted on the BLM/FFO intranet site on August 30, 2011 for a 30-day public comment period. The comment period for the draft EA was extended to ensure that all who wanted to comment had an opportunity. Three parties requested additional time to submit comments. BLM /FFO posted on their web-site a one week extension and notified the requesting organizations. A total of eight comment letters were received.”

Technical Expertise:

Based on scoping, issues to be discussed were identified including potential impacts to wildlife (Table 3-1, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254). To ensure a thorough discussion addressing the right questions, BLM brought together wildlife specialists from several different agencies to brain storm issues and develop recommendations for a future wildlife study. Subsequent to the “steering committee” BLM met with New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to review the proposed study and make final recommendations for a wildlife study. This was to ensure that the agency with jurisdictional expertise was involved.

“A “Steering Committee” made up of wildlife biologists from the US Forest Service, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), US Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico State University, BLM and others was organized to help identify issues and make recommendations to BLM regarding future studies to assess impacts to wildlife on probable development on the east side of Navajo Reservoir.” (Section 1.5, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

In May 2011, a steering committee of representatives from agencies, conservation groups, and academia was formed to brainstorm and recommend study plans to evaluate big game baseline data collection and potential impacts that could occur on the east side of the Rosa Unit. The BLM contacted representatives of San Juan Citizens Alliance, the Nature Conservancy, and others to request their participation on the steering committee. The committee has since met numerous times and engaged in extensive dialogue and communication.

“In May 2011, a steering committee made up of wildlife biologists from the US Forest Service, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), US Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico State University, BLM, and others was organized to help identify issues and make recommendations to BLM regarding future studies to assess impacts to

wildlife on probable development on the east side of Navajo Reservoir. The BLM contacted representatives of San Juan Citizens Alliance, the Nature Conservancy, and others to request their participation on the steering committee. The steering committee met four times from May 10, 2011 to September 1, 2011.” (Section 1.5, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

The Steering Committee met four times from May 10, 2011 to September 1, 2011 (email from John Hansen, October 31, 2011).

“A “Peer Review” of the recommendation from the “Steering Committee” was conducted by the NMDGF and assisted the BLM in making a final recommendation for a future study to help provide quantitative information for future development and NEPA analysis. Although the study plan was not developed for the Middle Mesa portion of the Rosa Unit, the information gained is expected to be useful for future analyses.” (Section 1.5, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Range of Alternatives:

BLM properly discussed and considered a wide range of alternatives that looked at alternative ways of solving the issues and looking for opportunities to reduce negative impacts to the environment while allowing the lease holder to enjoy their lease rights. This included the proposed action, required no action alternative and several alternatives considered but not carried forward for detailed analysis (Section 2.3, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

“The BLM NEPA Handbook (USDI/BLM 2008b) states that for EAs on externally initiated proposed action alternatives, the no action alternative generally means that the proposed activity will not take place. This option is provided in 43 CFR 3162.3-2 (h)(2). In this case, because the lands are subject to existing fluid minerals leases, the no action alternative is not a "no development" alternative. Rather, taking "no action" (that is, not undertaking to consider development of the POD as proposed) would reject the applicant's proposal but would nonetheless result in consideration of individual APDs submitted by Williams on a case-by-case basis. The no action alternative would deny the approval of the Middle Mesa POD, which as proposed would require a modification to the seasonal timing limitation COA for the wildlife SDA. Current land and resource uses would continue to occur in the proposed project area. Williams would continue to develop the Middle Mesa portion of the Rosa Unit consistent with their existing lease rights.” (Section 2.1, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

Impact Analysis:

BLM used all available data and information (Bibliography, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254), reviewed recent policies (Section 1.6, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-

2011-254), and ultimately disclosed long and short term impacts. Cumulative Impacts were also considered (Section 5, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254). Between the draft EA and the final EA a new section was added to the EA in the form of “Table 2-2. Summary of Environmental Consequences” which allowed a concise comparison of the impacts.

Identified irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources:

The irretrievable commitment of resources and authorization to use the land for mineral development was decided at the time the mineral lease was issued to Williams Production Company, LLC. Because this proposal does not approve any surface disturbing activities no additional irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources has been identified.

Extended the comment period:

BLM was flexible and allowed maximum input regarding the draft EA. As documented in Section 1.5 of EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254:

“The draft EA and FONSI were posted on the BLM/FFO intranet site on August 30, 2011 for a 30-day public comment period. The comment period for the draft EA was extended to ensure that all who wanted to comment had an opportunity. Three parties requested additional time to submit comments. BLM /FFO posted on their web-site a one week extension and notified the requesting organizations.”

BLM followed established protocol for consideration of resources protected by statute:

Cultural resources – A Class I and Class III survey of the entire area of potential affect for the proposed eight well pads and two remote stimulation pads was surveyed in accordance with the *Procedures for Performing Cultural Resources Fieldwork on Public Lands in the Area of New Mexico BLM Responsibilities* (Section 4.3, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254). Pending final facilities design and identification of addition infrastructure needs (e.g., pipelines), additional inventory would be conducted if required and a final inventory report would be submitted at that time.

“Detailed cultural resource inventory data would be compiled for specific drilling locations pursued in the future and would be in accordance with the *Procedures for Performing Cultural Resources Fieldwork on Public Lands in the Area of New Mexico BLM Responsibilities* (USDI/BLM 2005). Prior to the submittal of APDs for development of the individual well locations, site-specific cultural resource inventory reports would be submitted to the BLM/FFO.” (Section 4.3.1.1, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Conducted Tribal Consultation - On May 4, 2011, BLM sent a scoping and consultation letter to representatives of two Native American tribes: the Navajo Nation and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe (Section 1.5, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

“On May 4, 2011, a scoping and consultation letter was mailed by the BLM/FFO to representatives of two Native American tribes: the Navajo and Southern Ute Indian Tribe. The Navajo Nation responded on June 21, 2011.”

Consistency with the Biological Assessment prepared for the Resource Management Plan (RMP). The BLM reviewed and determined that the proposal is in compliance with listed species management guidelines outlined in the September 2002 Biological Assessment (Cons. #2-22-01-I-389) (Appendix D, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

“No USFWS listed species, or potential habitats, were found in the proposed area of effect. The proposed action may affect, is not likely to adversely affect federally listed threatened and endangered species. The FFO reviewed and determined that the proposed action alternative is in compliance with listed species management guidelines outlined in the September 2002 Biological Assessment (Cons. #2-22-01-I-389). No further consultation with the USFWS is required (USDI/BLM 2002).” (Section 4.12.1.2, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

BLM ensured conformance with the Resource Management Plan (Section 1.4, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254):

“The Mancos Shale reservoir was analyzed in the RFDS (Engler et al. 2001) as an emerging gas play similar to the existing shale gas plays being developed at the time of the report.”

“The RFDS did not identify exact locations but predicted the number of locations on a township-range basis. Based on the assumptions in the RFDS, the PRMP/FEIS estimated long-term disturbance resulting from oil and gas development to compare broad-scale impacts between alternatives. According to the PRMP/FEIS, the actual number and locations of wells to be drilled would be subject to economic and technological considerations (USDI/BLM 2003a). The 2003 ROD approved as the final RMP an alternative that designated 2,597,193 acres of BLM-managed land (including the area of the proposed action alternative) as already leased and open to oil and gas development or available for future leasing (USDI/BLM 2003a, page 3). That alternative, as analyzed in PRMP/FEIS, addressed the cumulative development of 9,942 new oil and gas wells. The projected development was not apportioned to specific hydrocarbon reservoirs.”

Reasonably Foreseeable Development (RFD) Scenario: (Section 1.4, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254):

The Mancos shale was appropriately identified and discussed in the RFD (2001) as an emerging gas play similar to the existing shale gas plays being developed at the time of the report. Mancos Shale gas wells were combined with those of the Dakota Formation.

“Currently, 3,722 wells have been spud in the FFO since implementation of the RMP and ROD. Of those wells, 1,452 have been twinned or co-located.”

“In the PRMP/FEIS it was estimated that the long-term surface disturbance associated with the 9,942 new oil and gas wells would be about 16,106 acres (assuming 2-acre average long-term disturbance for a new well pad, an average of 1-acre long-term disturbance for new roads/pipelines, 0.5 acre long-term disturbance for a twin/co-location, and based on 46 percent recompletions or directional drills).”

In this part of the San Juan Basin the Mancos Shale is a gas prone reservoir. The total number of Dakota-Mancos gas wells predicted to be drilled on Federal lands was 4,108. The 53 horizontal wells proposed are within the forecasted 4,108 wells. Although it is important to consider the number of wells drilled relative to the RFD another important factor is the total surface disturbance. This proposal decreases the total surface disturbance compared to conventional development using vertical wells.

Consistent with law, regulation, and policy:

IM-2008-032 directs how the BLM can properly consider an exception, waiver, or modification and specifically how to consider a modification to a Condition of Approval (COA) that is normally applied (Section 1.3, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

The Mineral Leasing Act authorized the BLM to issue oil and gas leases for the exploration of mineral resources and permits the development of those leases (Section 1.4, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Consistent with CFR 3160 (as amended) 32 design features are included to reduce impacts to the environment (Section 2.2, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Williams will obtain other permits as required and will dispose of cuttings in New Mexico Oil and Gas Conservation Division (NMOCD) approved facilities, and will conduct operations in conformance with NMOCD spacing requirements (Section 2.2, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Comments Addressed:

An unsigned FONSI and EA were posted to the BLM intranet site and a total of eight comments were received. A thorough review of the comments was conducted and each carefully considered and addressed. (Appendix C, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Some minor changes to the EA resulted; however, there were no substantive (requiring a new alternative or major change to the content of the EA) comments received (Section 1.5 and Appendix C, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Fewer Adverse Environmental Impacts

The development of the proposed POD is on land leased in 1948 (Section 1.1, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254). The irrevocable commitment of resources and authorization to use the land for mineral development was decided then. Subsequent to the leases in 2003, the RMP affirmed that “valid existing rights” would be recognized. The decision before the BLM is not so much “if” development can occur; but rather “how” development will occur. The EA documents the impacts to the human environment of development.

Impacts are clearly compared in “Table 2.2 Summary of Environmental Consequences” which presents a summary of the impacts disclosed in Chapter 4 of the EA.

Several of the key factors are presented as follow:

Less Surface Disturbance:

For the no-action alternative - “Approximately 162 of soils would be disturbed resulting in low to moderate short-term impacts. Approximately 72 acres of soils would be subject to long-term impacts until final abandonment.” (Section 4.1.1, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

For the action alternative – “Approximately 52 of soils would be disturbed resulting in low to moderate short-term impacts. Approximately 8 acres of soils would be subject to long-term impacts until final abandonment.” (Section 4.1.1, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

Cultural Resources:

The proposal would disturb 52 acres or less than 1 percent of Middle Mesa Wildlife SDA, the design features outlined in Section 2.2 would decrease the potential to impact cultural resources (Section 4.3.1.3, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Less Green House Gas Emissions:

Although emissions were not quantified, the design features included in the Middle Mesa POD for the proposed action alternative would decrease air emissions because the design features include natural gas-fired generators for the drill rig and minimizing vehicle-trips.

“The design features included in the Middle Mesa POD for the proposed action alternative that could decrease air emissions include implementing natural gas-fired generators for the drill rig and minimizing vehicle-trips. While it is not possible to accurately estimate the reduction in air emissions that would be achieved by the design features at the POD level, further NEPA analysis will consider the air quality impacts for components of the POD as they are implemented.” (Section 4.2.1.2, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

Less Direct impacts to Wildlife:

There would be less direct impact to wildlife from habitat loss or modification as existing roads and well pads would be used, multiple wells would be drilled from individual well pads, and only one well pad would be drilled during the winter months which would centralize impacts in one location. Mitigation measures are designed to minimize vehicle traffic to the greatest extent possible during the winter months. (Section 4.11.1.3, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

“These conclusions about wildlife impacts are supported by the following reasons:

- Less than 1 percent of the Middle Mesa Wildlife SDA would be affected.
- Habitat fragmentation would be minimized through the use of existing disturbance.
- Characterization of the project area as low wintering big game density with good browse availability (Wunder, pers. comm. 2011).
- The effectiveness of specific design features (mitigations) as listed in Section 2.2.”

Less Habitat Fragmentation:

Mitigation measures were designed to minimize vehicle traffic to the greatest extent possible during the winter months. Multiple wells would be drilled from individual well pads, and only one well pad would be drilled during the winter months which would centralize impacts in one location (Section 4.11.1.3, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

“Design features that would minimize loss of effective habitat, and the potential for injury or mortality, especially during the winter closure period, include:

- Only one rig will be used for drilling operations between December 1 and March 31.
- If needed, only one rig move will be made between December 1 and March 31, and will not exceed 1.5 miles.
- Stimulation activities will not be conducted between December 1 and March 31.
- A residential camp will be utilized to reduce truck traffic to the drilling rig.
- Workers will be transported to and from the residential camp by high-capacity vehicles to minimize vehicle traffic.

- Workers schedules will be 12-hour shifts 7 days on and 7 days off to minimize vehicle traffic.
- Workers occupying the residential camp during non-work hours will restrict their excursions outside of the camp boundaries.
- Except for emergency situations and one shift change per day, all vehicle traffic will be restricted to daylight hours.”

Maximizing the capture of gas resources:

Natural gas production for the proposal is estimated to be 275 bcf as compared to 20.25 bcf under the vertical well development scenario. This is nearly ten times more resources captured and ultimately ten times more royalties to the Federal Government.

“The natural gas production that would occur under the no action alternative is estimated to be 20.25 bcf.” (Section 4.7.1.1 EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

“The natural gas production for the proposed action alternative is estimated to be 275 bcf. The use of horizontal drilling would optimize natural gas production, resulting in more than 10 times the amount of production over no action.” (Section 4.7.1.2 EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Downhole Impacts were mitigated:

Casing specifications are designed by Williams Production Company, LLC and a casing program is submitted to the BLM. The BLM independently verifies the casing program and the installation of the casing and cementing operations are witnessed by certified Petroleum Engineering Technicians.

“Stimulation techniques have been used in the U.S. since 1949 and in the San Juan Basin since the 1950s. Over the last ten years advances in multi-stage and multi-zone hydraulic fracturing has allowed development of gas fields that previously were uneconomic, include the San Juan Basin. It is a common process in the basin and applied to nearly all wells drilled. There are no verified instances of hydraulic fracturing adversely affecting groundwater in the San Juan Basin”. (Mankiewicz 2011)

“Casing specifications are designed by Williams and a casing program is submitted to the BLM. The BLM independently verifies the casing program and the installation of the casing and cementing operations are witnessed by certified Petroleum Engineering Technicians. Surface casing setting depth is determined by regulation. A 9-5/8-inch surface casing would be set. Intermediate 7-inch casing would be set at the base of the Mesaverde formation to control loss circulation. Production casing of 4.5-inch would be run from total depth to surface. Each string would be cemented in place.

Cement bond logs are run on the production casing and approved by regulating agencies to prevent any subsurface fluids migrating and to protect fresh water zones. Adherence to APD COAs and other mitigation measures, such as adequate casing, cementing, and other drilling and completion methods, would minimize potential effects to groundwater quality.” (Section 4.5.1.1 EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

Resources identified as having little to no impacts:

The purpose of scoping is to identify the relevant issues that need discussion in the EA. To satisfy the “hard look” requirement scoping considered a wide range of resources and issues. There were several resources that had little or no impacts; and these were documented in the ID-team Checklist (Table 3-1, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Soils:

The expansion of eight existing well pads would have minimal impacts to soils following reclamation.

“Impacts to soils would be low because existing well pads would be used and less than 1 percent of the Middle Mesa Wildlife SDA would be disturbed. This disturbance would occur over the span of approximately 5 years. Following interim reclamation, about 8 acres of soils would be affected for the long-term until final abandonment. By following design features outlined in Section 2.2 impacts to soils would be minimized.” (Section 4.8.1.3 EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

Vegetation:

The expansion of eight existing well pads would result in minimal impacts to vegetation following reclamation.

“Short-term impacts would be realized from the removal and modification of approximately 52 acres of vegetation. Long-term impacts would affect approximately 8 acres of vegetation until final abandonment. The two stimulation pads would be fully reclaimed following the conclusion of well completion activities.” (Section 4.9.1.3 EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

Native American Religious Concerns:

No impacts to Native American Religious Concerns were identified. The Navajo Nation and Southern Ute Indian Tribe were consulted.

“No impacts to TCPs are expected to occur. The proposed action alternative is not known to physically threaten any TCPs, prevent access

to sacred sites, prevent the possession of sacred objects, or interfere or otherwise hinder the performance of traditional ceremonies and rituals pursuant to the AIRFA or Executive Order 13007.” (Section 4.4.1.2 EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

Threatened and Endangered Species:

The proposed action may affect, is not likely to adversely affect federally listed threatened and endangered species. The BLM reviewed and determined that the proposed action alternative is in compliance with listed species management guidelines outlined in the September 2002 Biological Assessment (Cons. #2-22-01-I-389) (Section 4.12, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Special Status Species:

Direct impacts from habitat loss and modification to golden eagles, bald eagles, and American peregrine falcons are expected to be low in the short term due to the utilization of existing disturbance. No other special status species are expected to be impacted.

“These impacts would be low and short to long term. Direct and indirect impacts from habitat loss and modification to golden eagles, bald eagles, and American peregrine falcons are expected to be low in the short and long term due to the utilization of existing disturbance, and the amount of disturbance in relation to the amount of suitable habitat surrounding the area.” (Section 4.13.1.2, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

Migratory Birds:

Winter drilling that would occur under the proposal would have no affect to breeding or nesting migratory birds.

“Winter drilling that would occur under the proposed action alternative would have no affect to breeding or nesting migratory birds. Overall, impacts to migratory birds would be low given the level of disturbance required for the proposed project and the proximity to existing infrastructure.” (Section 4.14.1.3 EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Livestock Grazing:

The utilization of existing roads and well pads would have minimal impacts on livestock grazing resources.

“The proposed eight well pads would be twinned with existing well pads, minimizing surface disturbance and forage removal. Short-term forage loss would be approximately 2.0 AUMs based on 25 acres per AUM. No

long-term loss in forage above what has already occurred from previous development is anticipated. Impacts to livestock grazing would be minimized by following the design features outlined in Section 2.2.” (Section 4.15.1.3 EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

Socioeconomics:

There would be positive impacts to socioeconomics from an increase in Federal royalty taxes and severance taxes (Section 4.16, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Recreation:

Through the use of twinning existing well pads, drilling multiple wells from individual well pads, and drilling from one pad only during the winter months, would ensure little to no impacts to recreation resources (Section 4.18, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Traffic and Transportation:

During the approximate 5 year drilling program there would be an increase of about 24 percent in annual traffic trips, over the short-term use of existing roads and well pads would have little to no impact on traffic and transportation.

“The total difference between the no action and the proposed action alternatives would be a 24 percent increase in the total number of vehicle-trips during the first 5 years of the POD. This amounts to an average of five additional vehicle-trips per day during the first 5 years of the POD. The transportation infrastructure is presently adequate to handle these additional vehicle-trips, and they would not have a measurable impact on baseline traffic conditions on U.S. Highway 550 or the other roads along the access route. Therefore, there would a short-term, low impact to transportation infrastructure and traffic conditions under the proposed action alternative.” (Section 4.19.1.2, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254)

Visual Resources:

The utilization of existing roads and well pads would have minimal impacts on visual resources.

“Drilling multiple wells from one location would minimize impacts to visual resources. Therefore, impacts would be of less intensity than the no action as only eight existing well locations and two remote stimulation pads would be utilized. There would be no long term impacts to visual resources above those already occurring because existing well pads would be used. By following design features outlined in Section 2.2

impacts to visual resources would be minimized. (Section 4.20.1.2 EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Public Health and Safety:

Impacts to public health and safety were mitigated through the BLM; application of standards and guidelines issued under Onshore Orders No 1 & 2 and through the use of standard, accepted operating procedures in compliance with Federal and State regulations (Section 4.23, EA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO10-2011-254).

Cumulative Impacts have been adequately addressed and the context “this means that the significance of this action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests and the locality. The EA adequately describes the area of potential impacts and the actions in the past, present and future that are relevant are considered.

Administrative Review and Appeal:

This Decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR 4.400 and Form 1842-1, Information on Taking Appeals to the Interior Board of Land Appeals. If an appeal is taken, a Notice of Appeal must be filed in this office at the aforementioned address within 30 days from receipt of this Decision. A copy of the Notice of Appeal and of any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs must also be served on the Office of the Solicitor at the address shown on Form 1842-1. It is also requested that a copy of any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs be sent to this office. The appellant has the burden of showing that the Decision appealed from is in error.

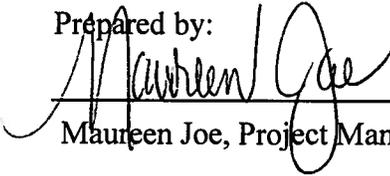
If you wish to file a Petition for a Stay of this Decision, pursuant to 43 CFR 4.21, the Petition must accompany your Notice of Appeal. A Petition for a Stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the Notice of Appeal and Petition for a Stay **must** also be submitted to each party named in the Decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a Decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied;
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits;
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted; and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

Prepared by:


Maureen Joe, Project Manager

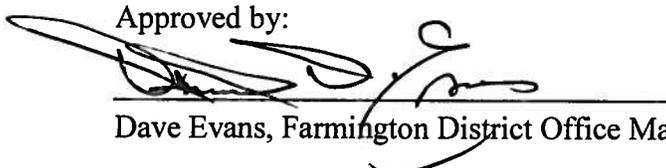
Date 12/01/11

Reviewed By:


Gary Torres, Farmington Field Office Manager

Date 12/1/2011

Approved by:


Dave Evans, Farmington District Office Manager

Date 12/1/2011