

Master Leasing Plan (MLP) Assessment Moab

Utah State Office
Moab Field Office
November 2010

Name and Location of MLP Area: Moab in east-central Utah.

Internal or External Proposal? INTERNAL

DESCRIPTION:

The proposal area covers 857,220 acres in southeastern Utah surrounding the town of Moab and Arches National Park. The western boundary of the proposed area follows the Green River and the northern and eastern boundaries of Canyonlands National Park. The southern boundary traverses east from Canyonlands National Park between North and South Sixshooter peaks and across Harts Point to State road 211 and US Highway 191. The eastern boundary follows US Highway 191 north to the western side of Behind the Rock WSA and thence along the western, northern and eastern boundaries of Arches National Park, thereby excluding both the National Park and the town of Moab from the proposed area. The boundary continues east to the Manti-La Sal National Forest then extends in a northwesterly direction to a point south of Interstate 70 then west to the Green River forming the northern boundary. This area encompasses a mix of land uses including developed and dispersed recreation, and limited oil and gas development. Interest in potash exploration and development is peaking in the area.

Map A illustrates the boundaries of the MLP proposal including the authorized, pending and deferred leases within the proposal area. Map B shows existing oil and gas fields, producing oil and gas wells, shut in oil and gas wells, and plugged/abandoned wells.

Does the area meet the criteria and qualify for MLP analysis?

Yes – The proposal meets criteria all of the MLP criteria. The entire area has been identified in the RMP as moderate to high for mineral potential which has been confirmed by discoveries and industry interest in that there are existing leases and new expressions of interest within the last several years. There have been some new resource conflicts that have emerged since the RMP, involving coordination with the NPS that could be resolved during the MLP process. The emergence of potash as an important resource in the area has also indicated that this area warrants further analysis.

Supporting Information:

1. What Resource Management Plan(s) are applicable to the MLP area?

Moab Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP); dated October 31, 2008¹ (as amended).

2. Potential resource issues raised in the MLP proposal:

¹ Accessed online at: <http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/moab/planning.html>.

Potential resource issues considered include impacts from leasing to recreation management objectives, visual resources and National Park Service (NPS) concerns over air quality, night-skies, soundscape and NPS visual resources. There is a high interest in the potash which is reflected in the large amount of Prospecting Permit Applications (PPA) received by the BLM. This area overlaps high potash reserves. Because of its depth, potash is developed very similarly to oil and gas in this region. Potash drilling activities have evaporation ponds, etc. therefore the infrastructure is comparable to that of oil and gas. The Moab RMP may require additional analysis for future oil and gas decisions. Combined with the increased interest in potash within the same area, it would be appropriate to analyze them together in the same document. The northeastern boundary of the proposal follows the current PPA's. If the analysis of potash must be carried out in a separate but overlapping NEPA document, the border in that area of the MLP may need to be adjusted.

3. How does the current Plan address these issues?

All of the resource issues/values identified were addressed during the recent planning process.

While BLM does not regulate air quality, the RMP did identify goals and objectives. The BLM commits to complying with and supporting applicable local, state, federal laws and regulations and implementation plans. Focus is given to the protection of Class I airsheds around National Parks, meeting PDS Class II standards, maintenance of attainment areas and making appropriate measures to ensure compliance with authorized activities (RMP, pages 52-53).

BLM also commits to management that protects scenic qualities and to preserve important vistas. As such, specific visual resource management decision can be found in the RMP (Pages 134-135). Scenic driving corridors and areas within National Park viewsheds are given specific priority.

Recent inquiries by industry regarding potential potash development will need to be considered in conjunction with a MLP. Because of similar environmental impacts (direct, indirect and cumulative), a combined approach is prudent. Shared costs associated with preparing documents including adequately informing the public and managing the projects (meetings, public notification requirements etc) would be an overall benefit to informed decision making.

If MLP analysis is warranted, describe how and when MLP analysis will likely occur:

The area will be undertaken as a "stand-alone" MLP effort since there is not a plan amendment or plan revision currently taking place in this area.

Describe the process used for review:

For this proposal, an interdisciplinary team looked at a range of GIS layers to determine if the proposal area fit the four criteria listed to require a MLP. The following GIS layers were reviewed as part of the interdisciplinary review process: existing leases, wells (active and plugged-and-abandoned), land ownership, deferred parcels, unissued leases with pending protests, leases which are under suspension due to court decisions, Stiles parcels, and expressions of interest (EOI) - all overlaid with resource data. The resource data included WSA's, citizen proposed wilderness areas (Red Rocks), ACEC's, Wild and Scenic Rivers, BLM

natural areas, management decisions regarding oil and gas leasing surface disturbance stipulations and especially sensitive wildlife habitat data like sage grouse and white tailed prairie dog. Mineral potential used for the Moab RMP was also considered when the area was reviewed.

Describe how and why each of the following criteria are met or not met:

1. A substantial portion of the area to be analyzed in the MLP is not currently leased.

MET = Internal Proposal – 64% BLM unleased.

2. There is a majority Federal mineral interest.

MET = Internal Proposal – 83% Federal.

3. The oil and gas industry has expressed a specific interest in leasing, and there is a moderate or high potential for oil and gas confirmed by the discovery of oil and gas in the general area.

This criterion has been met because there are existing leases in the proposal area and there have been expressions of interest within recent years. There are many Stiles parcels (parcels from the December 2008 sale that were withdrawn) throughout the area along with other deferred lands. Active leases and producing gas and oil wells are concentrated in a few areas within the proposal, along with accompanying infrastructure. However, there are plugged and abandoned wells throughout the proposal area and surrounding the active oil and gas wells. Other portions of the area have fewer active leases and little production and many plugged and abandoned wells are scattered throughout the proposal.

4. Additional analysis or information is needed to address likely resource or cumulative impacts if oil and gas development were to occur where there are:

This criterion has been met because there may be multiple-use conflicts and a need for coordination with the National Park Service throughout this area (see below for specifics).

• **multiple-use or natural/cultural resource conflicts;**

This area is subject to multiple-use conflicts in coordination with the NPS. The main resources at issue include night-skies, soundscape concerns and visual resources. There are also multiple-use issues with potash and existing PPA's. Exploration and development activities for potash is conducted in much in the same way as oil and gas, therefore these resources should be addressed simultaneously.

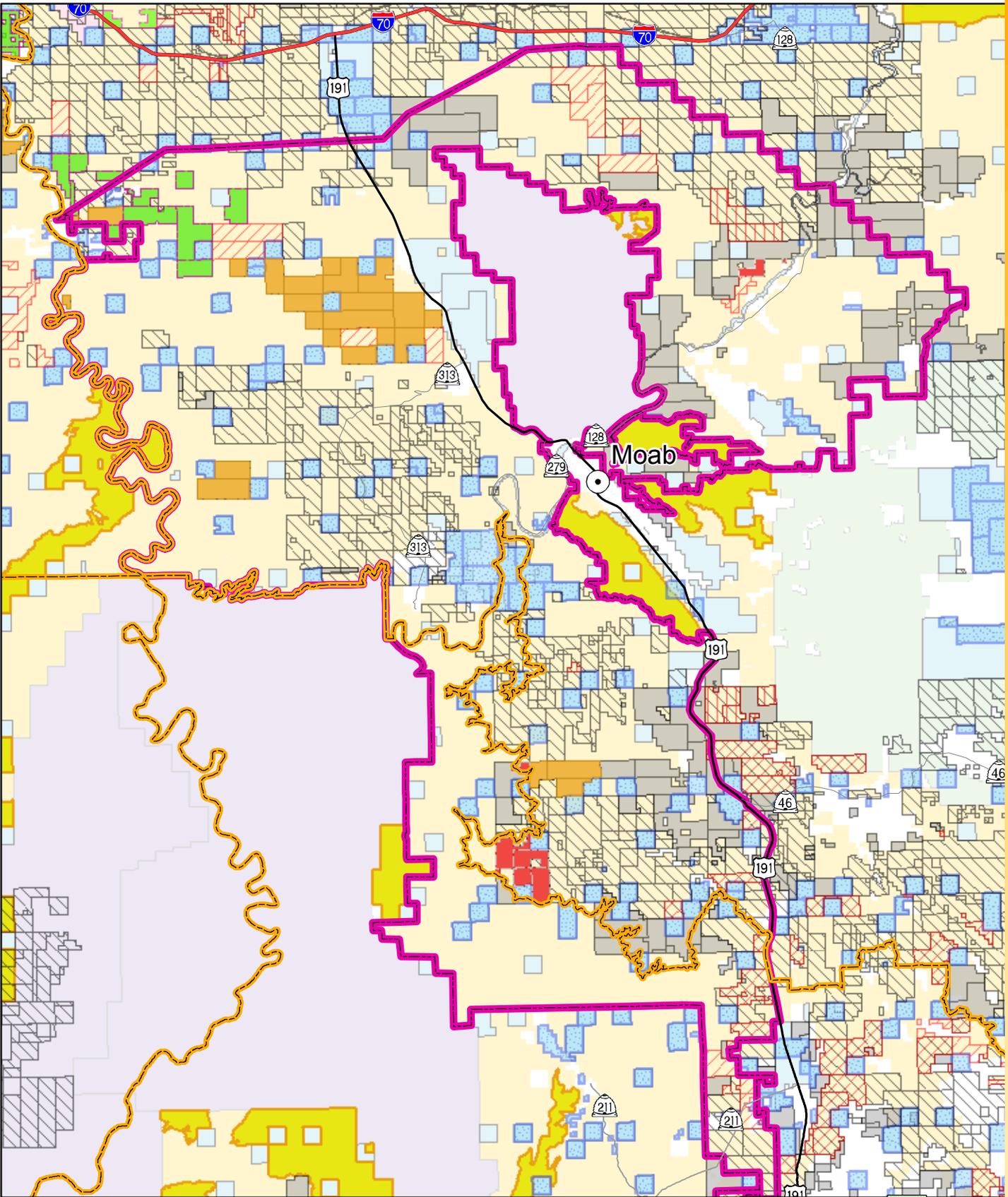
• **impacts to air quality;**

There has been new information and an enhanced coordination effort between the NPS and the BLM about air quality. However, further coordination for this resource needs to be completed.

• **impacts on the resources or values of any unit of the National Park System, national wildlife refuge, or National Forest wilderness area, as determined after consultation or coordination with the NPS, the FWS, or the FS; or impacts.**

The proposal area surrounds Arches National Park and is contiguous with the northern and eastern boundaries of Canyonlands National Park. The area is also adjacent to the

Manti-LaSal National Forest but would not affect any designated forest wilderness area. The Utah BLM will coordinate with the NPS and the US Forest Service when conducting the analysis for this area to ensure a thorough review and incorporation of all resources. When conducting the analysis for this area the BLM will also conduct the coordination with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the State of Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration.



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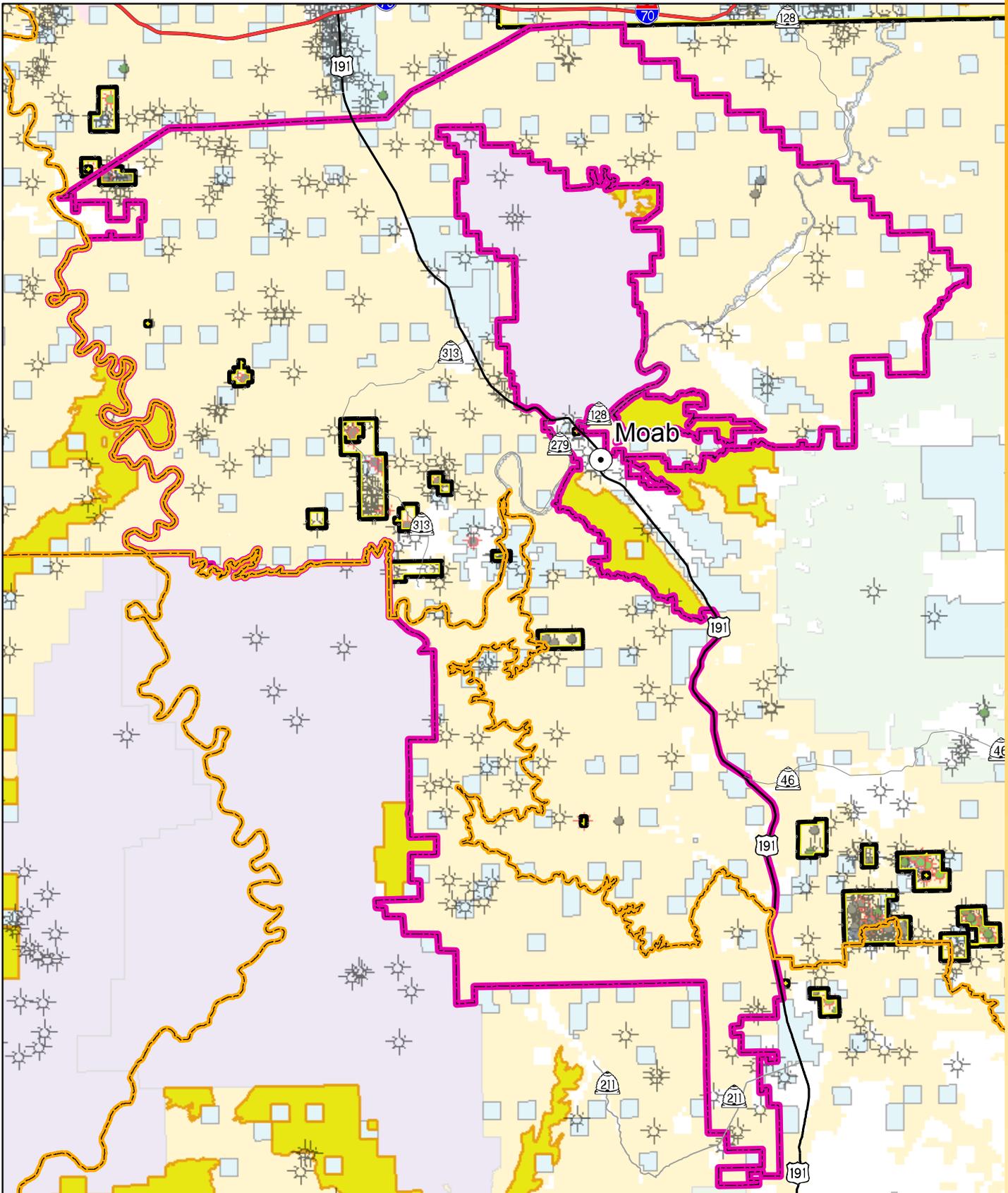


1:483,102 0 1.5 3 6 Miles

- Leases At Issue**
- Issued_Suspended
 - Sold_Not Issued
- Stiles Report Recommendations**
- Closed
 - Defer
 - Lease
- Other Symbols**
- Internal Analysis Area
 - External Analysis Area
 - Authorized Parcels
 - Deferred Parcels
 - SITLA Parcels

- BLM
- BLM Wilderness
- WSA
- USFS
- NPS
- N. A. Res.
- State
- Private
-





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1:483,102 0 1.5 3 6Miles

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|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------|--------------|
| ☆ Abandoned | Wells | ● Shut In Gas Well | ■ BLM | ■ USFS |
| ★ Producing Gas Well | ● Shut In Oil Well | ■ BLM Wilderness | ■ NPS | ■ N. A. Res. |
| ★ Producing Oil Well | ■ Oil and Gas Fields | ■ WSA | ■ State | ■ Private |
| ■ Internal Analysis Area | | | | |
| ■ External Analysis Area | | | | |

