



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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IN REPLY REFER TO:
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Information Bulletin No. UT 2013-038

Expires: 09/30/2014

To: All District Managers

From: State Director

Subject: Guidance for Management of Oil and Gas Exploration and Production (E&P) Pits

Program Area: Fluid Minerals

Purpose: This Information Bulletin (IB) provides guidance for management (siting, construction and closure) of pits authorized by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for oil and gas exploration and production (E&P) activities, with the exception of coal bed methane produced water impoundments. The IB covers reserve, completion, produced water, flare, oil-based mud, emergency, work-over, earthen and production pits.

Policy/Action: The BLM has the authority to regulate environmental aspects of oil and gas activities associated with exploration, development and production of oil and gas from Federal leases (43 CFR §3160.0-1). This IB provides guidance for pit management and closure and is organized by phase of operations.

Pits associated with oil and gas activities have substantial variation in their purpose(s), contents, and potential environmental and health effects. Without site-specific information, E&P pits may be considered to contain potentially hazardous substances, which may be harmful to wildlife and/or human health.

In certain instances, operators may be required to obtain permits or approvals from the State of Utah and/or other federal and local agencies. It is the responsibility of the operator to ensure that all necessary permits/approvals are obtained.

The Field Office (FO) Authorized Officer (AO) and his/her staff may use the guidance in this IB, as described in Attachment 2, when approving actions on Federal leases that pertain to construction, use, maintenance, closure, and reclamation of oil and gas E&P pits. When considering an alternative or modification of a proponent's proposed action, FO oil and gas staff must ensure that alternatives and modifications are appropriately analyzed under the National

Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)¹. The BLM's authority to consider and/or apply restrictions to Federal lease operations is described in Washington Office Information Bulletin IB-2007-119².

Timeframe: Effective immediately.

Budget Impact: No overall budget impact.

Funding: None necessary.

Background: Current Code of Federal Regulations (CFRs), Onshore Orders, BLM handbooks, manuals, policy and guidance address the management of fluid minerals exploration and production pits in a general manner. The guidance in this IB is in compliance with all applicable pit requirements contained in 43 CFR §3160 - *Onshore Oil and Gas Operations*, as well as Onshore Orders No. 1, *Drilling Operations* and No.7, *Disposal of Produced Water*. This IB is based on the BLM Wyoming IM No. WY-2012-007 (reviewed and approved by WO-310) and has been developed in collaboration with the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (UDOGM). This IB provides risk-based guidelines for pit management and consistency in the pit closure process. This guidance would supplement existing policy and benefit the BLM, UDOGM and operators by utilization of common pit closure processes, without limiting the ability of FOs to tailor authorizations and decisions to unique circumstances or situations.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: None.

Coordination: This IB was coordinated with all District and Field Offices with oil and gas programs in Utah, as well as the UDOGM.

Contact: If you have questions concerning this IB, please contact Mike McKinley, Environmental Scientist/NRS, at (801) 539-4046 or mmckinle@blm.gov.

Signed by:
Jenna Whitlock
Acting State Director

Authenticated by:
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Records Manager

Attachments:

- 1 - Definitions
- 2 - Oil and Gas Pit Siting, Construction and Closure Guidance in Utah
- 3 - Examples of Conditions of Approval for Permit Authorizations
- 4 - Utah Pit Closure Sampling and Analytical Testing Procedures
- 5 - Utah Pit Design and Cleanup Criteria (UDOGM Env. Handbook)
- 6 - Utah Bioremediation, Landfarming, Stabilization, and Solidification Requirements
- 7 - Radioactive Wastes

The attachments are located at the following link:

<\\blm\dfs\ut\so\loc\minerals\SurfaceCompliance\Utah BLM-UDOGM Pit Closure Guidance>

² WO IB-2007-119 (“Existing Surface Management Authority for Oil and Gas Leases”)