



PRELIMINARY DRAFT ALTERNATIVES MINERALS AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY RESOURCES

Fluid Minerals

All permit approvals would require compliance with Onshore Oil and Gas Regulations (43 CFR 3162.5).

No Action Alternative

Management practices for mineral and energy operations in Jack Morrow Hills would be implemented consistent with the planning requirements of the Green River Resource Management Plan (GRRMP).

- Leasing:
 - Suspended leases in the planning area would be reinstated.
 - The core area would be closed to new leasing.
 - New leases would be issued outside the core area with lease stipulations consistent with the GRRMP.
- Lease Stipulations:
 - Stipulations would be specified in new leases outside the core area needed to protect other resources and land uses consistent with the GRRMP.
 - Areas with no surface occupancy (NSO) requirement would be the same as those specified in the GRRMP.
 - Seasonal restrictions would be required for new leases that include wildlife protection requirements in GRRMP.
- Permitting:
 - Operating requirements and mitigation for Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) would be specified on existing leases consistent with lease stipulations that do not prevent “due and necessary” impacts.
 - For leases that contain wildlife protection stipulations, waivers would be allowed where site-specific assessments do not identify wildlife habitat, and the avoidance distances needed to protect identified habitat would be required, consistent with the GRRMP.
 - Permits would be issued for wells on leases without stipulations to implement resource protection requirements consistent with the GRRMP, as long as surface occupancy and adequate time for development activity are provided.

Alternative 1

Mineral development leases would be offered and permits issued for development to the degree possible consistent with existing regulatory requirements and statutory withdrawals and closures.

- Leasing:

- Suspended leases in the planning area would be reinstated.
- Lease sales in areas where land is available for leasing and development would be offered, based on industry interest.
- Lease Stipulations:
 - Stipulations would be specified in new leases as required to implement legally mandated resource protection requirements, including the Endangered Species Act and Wilderness Study Area protection requirements.
- Permitting:
 - Standard operating and mitigation requirements would be required for APDs on existing leases without stipulations that do not prevent “due and necessary” impacts.
 - For leases that contain wildlife protection stipulations, waivers would be allowed where site-specific assessments do not identify wildlife habitat, and specify the minimum avoidance distances needed to protect identified habitat.
 - The Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission requirements for oil and gas resource protection would be the only restriction on well spacing.
 - Mitigation or timing restrictions would be required as needed to meet non-discretionary resource protection requirements.

Alternative 2

Existing leases would be bought out or exchanged with willing lessees in sensitive areas where development activity may have irreversible adverse effects. Consider allowing extraction of viable resources on leases held by production until economic reserves are recovered.

Development would be allowed in other areas in compliance with the GRRMP.

- Leasing:
 - Suspended leases in the planning area would be reinstated.
 - Negotiations would be pursued and funding would be obtained for the purchase or exchange of existing leases from willing lessees in areas closed to leasing to protect sensitive resources.
 - Development would be allowed where lessees hold valid existing rights, and expiring leases in the sensitive areas would be excluded from subsequent offerings.
 - New leases would be offered outside the closed areas consistent with the GRRMP, with lease stipulations to avoid or mitigate unacceptable impacts.
- Lease Stipulations:
 - Stipulations in new leases would be specified as needed to protect other resources and land uses consistent with the GRRMP
 - Stipulations may include controlled use prescriptions such as no surface occupancy, timing limitations, avoidance of sensitive resources, and case-by-case mitigation requirements.
- Permitting:
 - For exchanged leases, reclamation of existing facilities to return sensitive areas to the predevelopment state would be required, to the degree practicable.
 - Standard operating practices and mitigation requirements for APDs would be required on existing leases without stipulations that do not prevent “due and necessary” impacts.
 - For leases that contain wildlife protection stipulations, allow waivers where site-specific assessments do not identify wildlife habitat, and activities would be permitted consistent with timing and surface disturbance avoidance requirements.

Alternative 3

Development would be allowed as long as sensitive resource values are protected from unacceptable impacts. This would be implemented through adoption of adaptive management strategies, including monitoring and ongoing assessment of sensitive resources.

- Leasing:
 - Suspended leases in the planning area would be reinstated.
 - Development activity would be controlled by scheduling new lease offerings based on development of existing leases.
 - New leases would be offered with stipulations on the timing of development activities.
- Lease Stipulations:
 - For new leases, stipulations would require BLM approval to control the overall development activity level.
 - Activity levels would be based on monitoring of sensitive resource indicators, such as wildlife population trends, reproduction rates, observed ranges and habitat integrity.
 - New lease stipulations would also require avoidance and mitigation actions to prevent unacceptable impacts.
 - An interdisciplinary team would perform assessment of monitoring data and development of response actions.
- Permitting:
 - For new leases, Conditions of Approval (COA) would be required on APDs to implement lease stipulation requirements.
 - Timing restrictions in COAs would be based on monitoring of sensitive resources and the levels of permitted activities on other leases to ensure surface disturbances and activity levels do not have unacceptable impacts.
 - Operational requirements may include use of remote control for well operations, noise mitigation, and modification of structures for wildlife protection.
 - COAs would be issued for existing leases to protect sensitive resources consistent with “due and necessary” impact limitations.

Leasable Solid Minerals

No Action Alternative

- Exploration:
 - Federal coal lands within the Coal Occurrence and Development Potential Area would be open to further consideration for coal leasing and development with the necessary resource protection requirements.
 - Coal exploration licenses would be granted consistent with the requirements of GRRMP.
- Leasing:
 - Areas closed to leasing would include the western portion of Greater Sand Dunes ACEC, Wilderness Study Areas.
 - Areas available for coal leasing with no surface occupancy requirements would include Boars Tusk, Crookston Ranch, and special status plant species areas.
 - Areas where coal leasing would be allowed with subsurface mining and surface controls would include Steamboat Mountain ACEC, eastern portion of Greater Sand Dunes ACEC.
 - Leasing in sensitive resource areas would be offered based on acceptability of impacts.

- Surface avoidance areas for coal mining would include active sage grouse leks, grouse nesting areas, wetland and riparian areas.

Alternative 1

- Exploration:
 - Federal coal lands within the Coal Occurrence and Development Potential Area would be open to further consideration for coal leasing and development.
 - Areas closed to leasing due to non-discretionary closure requirements would include areas designated as critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act and Wilderness Study Areas.
- Leasing:
 - No surface occupancy requirements or subsurface mining with limited surface facilities would be allowed consistent with the resource protection requirements of ACECs and special status plant species areas.

Alternative 2

- Exploration:
 - Federal coal lands within the Coal Occurrence and Development Potential Area would be withdrawn from consideration for coal leasing to protect other resource values in the planning area.
 - Areas closed to leasing due to non-discretionary closure requirements would include areas designated as critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act and Wilderness Study Areas.
- Leasing:
 - No coal leases would be offered.

Alternative 3

- Exploration:
 - Same as No Action for coal exploration.
- Leasing:
 - Acceptability of mining activity would be determined prior to offering any leases in areas with sensitive resources.
 - Leases would include wildlife protection requirements, including criteria for acceptable populations and habitat conditions and monitoring requirements would be established prior to any leasing.

Locatable Minerals

No Action Alternative

- With the exception of withdrawn areas, the planning area would be open to filing mineral claims, exploration and development of locatable minerals.
- Withdrawals to be pursued under the GRRMP include Crookston Ranch, Greater Sand Dunes ACEC, South Pass Historic Landscape, and special status plant species areas, Tri-Territory Marker site.
- Surface disturbing activities on mining claims require submitting a notice to BLM for cumulative surface disturbance of 5 acres or less and a plan of operations for disturbances of more than 5 acres.

- In ACECs, WSAs, and in areas closed to ORV use, a plan of operations would be required for any surface disturbing activities.

Alternative 1

- With the exception of withdrawn areas, the planning area would be open to filing mineral claims, exploration and development of locatable minerals.
- No additional withdrawals would be pursued.

Alternative 2

- The planning area would be withdrawn from filing of mineral claims and exploration and development activities, except where valid existing rights are present.

Alternative 3

- Same as No Action alternative.
- In addition, withdrawal of a portion of Federal locatable minerals at Steamboat Mountain ACEC and two elk calving areas near Dickie Springs would be pursued .

Saleable Minerals

No Action Alternative and Alternative 1

- The planning area would be open to consideration of mineral material sales and activity except where such activity would cause unacceptable impacts
- Areas closed to mineral material sales include Boars Tusk, Crookston Ranch, Native American sites, Oregon Buttes ACEC, Rock Art (Petroglyph) sites, Sand Dues ACEC, South Pass Historic Landscape and Vista, special status plant species sites.
- Adequate mining and reclamation plans would be required for use areas, and use and management would be in conformance with other resource objectives.

Alternative 2

- The planning area would be closed to mineral material sales, except where required to meet other planning objectives, such as maintenance of existing roads in the approved transportation plan.
- Mining and reclamation plans would be required for each use of saleable mineral materials.

Alternative 3

- Areas closed to development are the same as in the No Action Alternative.
- In addition, volcanic rock portion of Steamboat Mountain would be closed to development.
- Development of mineral materials in other areas would only occur as an activity in support of other development within the planning area.