

The purpose of the hearing is to receive comments on the DEIS, the fair market value, the maximum economic recovery, and the proposed competitive sale of the coal included in the proposed Horse Creek Federal coal tract. The Horse Creek tract is being considered for sale as a result of a coal lease application received from Antelope Coal Company (ACC) on February 14, 1997. The tract includes approximately 2,838 acres containing approximately 356.5 million tons of geologically in-place Federal coal reserves in Campbell and Converse Counties, Wyoming. It was applied for as a maintenance tract for ACC's adjacent Antelope Mine located in northern Converse County, Wyoming. ACC is a subsidiary of Kennecott Energy Company.

**DATES:** A public hearing will be held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, December 8, 1999, at the Holiday Inn, 2009 S. Douglas Highway, Gillette, Wyoming. An open house will start at 6:30 p.m., prior to the hearing, to answer questions related to the Federal coal leasing process and this coal lease application. Written comments on the DEIS will be accepted for 60 days following the date that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes their notice of availability of the DEIS in the **Federal Register**. We expect that the EPA will publish that notice on November 12, 1999.

**ADDRESSES:** Please address written comments or requests for copies of the DEIS to the Casper District Office, Bureau of Land Management, Attn: Nancy Doelger, 1701 East E Street, Casper, Wyoming 82601, fax them to (307) 234-1525, or e-mail them to casper\_wymail@blm.gov (Attn: Nancy Doelger).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Nancy Doelger or Mike Karbs at the above address, or phone: 307-261-7600.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The application for the Horse Creek Federal coal tract was filed as a maintenance tract lease-by-application (LBA) under the provisions of 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 3425.1.

On February 14, 1998, ACC filed coal lease application WYW141435 for the Horse Creek Federal coal tract with the BLM. On May 1, 1998, ACC modified the Horse Creek application. The modified Horse Creek Federal coal tract includes the following lands:

- T. 41 N., R. 71 W., Sixth Principal Meridian Sec. 14, lots 5 to 7, inclusive, and 10 to 15, inclusive;
- Sec. 15, lots 6 to 11, inclusive, and 14 to 16, inclusive;
- Sec. 22, lots 1, 3 to 6, inclusive, and 9 to 13, inclusive;

- Sec. 23, lots 2 to 7, inclusive, and 10 to 16, inclusive;
- Sec. 25, lots 11 and 12(S $\frac{1}{2}$ );
- Sec. 26, lots 1 to 8, inclusive, 12 and 13;
- Sec. 27, lots 1 to 3, inclusive, 5, 12 to 14, inclusive, and 16;
- Sec. 34, lots 1, 7, 8 to 10, inclusive, and 16;
- Sec. 35, lots 8 to 10 inclusive.

Containing 2,837.91 acres more or less with an estimated 356.5 million tons of geologically in-place coal.

The Antelope Mine, which is adjacent to the lease application area, has an approved mining and reclamation plan from the Land Quality Division of the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality and an approved air quality permit from the Air Quality Division of the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality to mine up to 30 million tons of coal per year. According to the application filed for the Horse Creek Federal coal tract, the maintenance tract would be mined to extend the life of the existing mine.

The Powder River Regional Coal Team (RCT) reviewed the Horse Creek Federal coal lease application at their meeting on April 23, 1997, in Casper, Wyoming, and recommended that it be processed. The RCT was notified in writing of the modified tract configuration.

Using the LBA process, ACC acquired maintenance coal lease WYW128322 containing approximately 617 acres and 60 million tons of coal adjacent to the Antelope Mine effective 2/1/97.

The DEIS analyzes three alternatives. The Proposed Action is to hold a competitive sealed-bid sale and issue a lease for the tract as applied for to the successful qualified bidder if the bid meets or exceeds the fair market value of the tract as determined by the BLM. The second alternative, Alternative 1, is the No Action Alternative which assumes that the tract will not be leased. The third alternative, Alternative 2, is to hold a competitive sealed-bid sale and issue a lease for the tract as modified by BLM to the successful qualified bidder if the bid meets or exceeds the fair market value of the tract as determined by the BLM.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement is a cooperating agency in the preparation of the EIS because it is the Federal agency that would review the mining plans for the tract if it is leased and recommend approval or disapproval of the mining plans to the Secretary of the Interior.

The lease application area is within the boundaries of the Thunder Basin National Grasslands and some of the surface lands in the area were formerly under the jurisdiction of the United

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[WY-060-1320-EL, WYW141435]

### Horse Creek Federal Coal Lease Application

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and notice of public hearing on the Horse Creek Federal Coal Lease Application in the decertified Powder River Federal Coal Production Region, Wyoming.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and implementing regulations and other applicable statutes, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces the availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Horse Creek Federal Coal Lease Application, BLM Serial Number WYW 141435, in the Wyoming Powder River Basin, and announces the scheduled date and place for a public hearing pursuant to 43 CFR 3425.4. The DEIS analyzes the impacts of issuing a Federal coal lease for the proposed Horse Creek Federal coal tract.

States and were administered by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) as part of the Thunder Basin National Grasslands. As a result of recent land exchanges between the USFS and local landowners, however, there are no longer any surface lands within the lease application area that are under the jurisdiction of the USFS. Therefore, the USFS is not a cooperating agency in the preparation of the EIS.

During the scoping process, the issues that were identified related to this lease application included: the potential impacts to wetlands, aquifers, agricultural producers, wildlife, wildlife habitat, wildlife-based recreation, cultural resources, and access to public lands that may occur if a lease is issued for this tract; and the potential for conflict with development of existing oil and gas leases in this area, including coalbed methane. There are no existing oil and gas wells on the lease application area.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Bureau of Land Management, Casper Field Office, 1701 East E Street, Casper, Wyoming, during regular business hours (8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the final EIS. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives of officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Dated, November 4, 1999.

**Alan R. Pierson,**  
State Director.

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