

open house from 4 to 6 p.m., also on December 12, 1996, at the Gillette Holiday Inn, to answer questions about the North Rochelle coal lease application, as well as other pending coal lease applications, other mineral development issues in the Powder River Basin, the coal leasing process, the coal unsuitability screening process, and any other issues that may be of concern related to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) mineral activities in the Powder River Basin.

The DEIS is scheduled to be available to the public on November 8, 1996. In order to assure that comments are considered in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, they should be received no later than close of business on January 10, 1997.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments, concerns, and requests for copies of the DEIS (or an Executive Summary of the DEIS) should be addressed to Casper District Office, Bureau of Land Management, Attn: Nancy Doelger, 1701 East "E" Street, Casper, Wyoming 82601. Comments can also be faxed to 307-234-1525, Attn: Nancy Doelger.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Nancy Doelger or Mike Karbs (307-261-7600), or contact the fax or address listed above.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This coal lease application was made to the BLM pursuant to provisions of 43 CFR 3425.1 as a lease by application. On July 22, 1992, Bluegrass Coal Development Company (formerly SMC Mining Company) applied for a coal lease for approximately 1,439 acres (approximately 144 million tons of coal) in an area adjacent to the North Rochelle Mine in Campbell County, Wyoming. The (BLM) has recommended that approximately 81 additional acres containing approximately 9 million tons of coal be included in the tract to avoid a potential bypass situation in the future, and that approximately 39 acres containing approximately 4 million tons of coal be excluded from the tract to enhance the value of the remaining unleased coal in the area. The application was for the following lands:

- T. 42 N., R. 70 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming
    - Sec. 4: Lots 5 thru 16, 19, and 20;
    - Sec. 5: Lots 5 thru 16;
    - Sec. 9: Lot 1;
  - T. 43 N., R. 70 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming
    - Sec. 32: Lots 9 thru 11, 14 thru 16;
    - Sec. 33: Lots 11 thru 14;
- Containing 1439.92 acres, more or less.

The BLM has recommended that the following lands be excluded from the application:

- T. 42 N., R. 70 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming
  - Sec. 9: Lot 1;

**Bureau of Land Management**

[WY-060-01-1320-01; WYW127221]

**Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Notice of Public Hearing**

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

**SUMMARY:** This Notice announces the Availability of a DEIS pursuant to 40 CFR 1500-1508 for the North Rochelle Coal Lease Application (WYW127221) in the Wyoming Powder River Basin, and announces the scheduled date and place for a public hearing pursuant to 43 CFR 3425.4. The purpose of the hearing is to receive comments on the DEIS, and on the fair market value, the maximum economic recovery, and the proposed competitive sale of coal from the North Rochelle tract (originally called the North Roundup tract). The tract is being considered for sale as a result of a maintenance coal lease application filed by Bluegrass Coal Development Company (formerly SMC Mining Company) for Federal coal located adjacent to the North Rochelle Mine in Campbell County, Wyoming. The DEIS evaluates the impacts of holding a competitive coal lease sale and issuing a lease if there is a successful bidder. The North Rochelle Mine is a producing coal mine; however, there are currently no mining facilities at the mine, which is located approximately 50 miles south of Gillette, Wyoming.

**DATES:** A public hearing will be held at 7 p.m. on December 12, 1996, at the Holiday Inn, 2009 S. Douglas Highway, Gillette, Wyoming. There will be an

Containing 39.15 acres, more or less.

Dated: November 1, 1996.

The BLM has recommended that the following additional lands containing an additional estimated 9 million tons of coal reserves be included in the application:

Alan R. Pierson,  
State Director.  
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T. 43 N., R. 70 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming  
Sec. 32: Lots 12 and 13.

Containing 81.16 acres, more or less.

The tract as amended by the BLM contains a total of 1481.93 acres and approximately 149 million tons of coal.

The lease application area is west of and contiguous with SMC Mining Company's existing North Rochelle Mine and with Thunder Basin Coal Company's Black Thunder Mine. The North Rochelle Mine began producing coal in 1990. There are no existing mine facilities or rail facilities at the North Rochelle Mine; however, these facilities are currently being permitted. Coal is produced from an existing Federal lease (WYW71692) by truck and shovel and the produced coal is hauled by truck from the mine site to a contracted buyer. Production from the existing lease is scheduled to meet the diligence requirements of Section 2(a)(2)(A) of the Mineral Leasing Act in late 1996. The company has applied to lease the proposed North Rochelle Tract (initially called the North Roundup Tract) as a maintenance tract for the North Rochelle Mine.

The DEIS analyzes three alternatives. The Proposed Action is to lease the tract as applied for to the successful bidder. Alternative A is to lease the tract as modified by the BLM to the successful bidder. This is the Preferred Alternative of the BLM. The third alternative is the No Action Alternative, which assumes that the lease is not issued.

The North Rochelle tract does not contain enough coal to open a new mine. It would be logically mined by either the existing North Rochelle Mine or the existing Black Thunder Mine.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is a cooperating agency in the preparation of the EIS because the surface of some of the lands included in the tract is owned by the Federal Government and administered by the USFS as part of the Thunder Basin National Grasslands. The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement is also a cooperating agency in the preparation of the EIS, because it is the Federal agency that administers surface coal mining operations under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977.

[REDACTED]