

coal tract. The purpose of the hearing is to solicit public comments on the DEIS, the fair market value, the maximum economic recovery, and the proposed competitive sale of the coal included in the proposed North Jacobs Ranch Federal coal tract. The North Jacobs Ranch tract is being considered for sale as a result of a coal lease application received from Jacobs Ranch Coal Company (JRCC) on October 2, 1998. JRCC is a subsidiary of Kennecott Energy Company. The tract as applied for includes about 4,821.19 acres containing approximately 519 million tons of Federal coal reserves in Campbell County, Wyoming.

**DATES:** A public hearing will be held at 7 p.m. MDT, on January 17, 2001, at the Clarion Western Plaza Motel, 2009 S. Douglas Highway, Gillette, WY. An open house will start at 6:30 p.m., prior to the hearing, to answer questions related to the 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 December 15, 2000.

**ADDRESSES:** Please address questions, comments or requests for copies of the Draft EIS to the Casper Field Office, BLM, Attn: Nancy Doelger, 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, Wyoming 82601; or you may e-mail them to the attention of Nancy Doelger at [casper\\_wymail@blm.gov](mailto:casper_wymail@blm.gov); or fax them to 307-261-7587.

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

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The application for the North Jacobs Ranch tract was filed as a maintenance tract coal lease-by-application (LBA) under the provisions of 43 CFR 3425.1

On October 2, 1998, JRCC filed coal lease application WYW146744 for the North Jacobs Ranch Federal coal tract with the BLM for the following lands:

*T. 44 N., R. 70 W., 6th P.M., Campbell County, Wyoming*

- Sec. 26: Lots 9 and 10;
- Sec. 27: Lots 1-16;
- Sec. 28: Lots 1-16;
- Sec. 29: Lots 1-16;
- Sec. 30: Lots 5-20;
- Sec. 31: Lots 5-20;
- Sec. 32: Lots 1-16;
- Sec. 33: Lots 4, 5, 12, 13.

*T. 44 N., R. 71 W., 6th P.M., Campbell County, Wyoming*

- Sec. 25: Lots 1-16.
- Total surface area applied for: 4,821.19 acres.

The Powder River Regional Coal Team (RCT) reviewed this competitive lease application at public meetings held on February 23, 1999, in Billings, Montana; October 27, 1999, in Gillette, Wyoming; and October 25, 2000, in Cheyenne, Wyoming. At these meetings, the RCT recommended that BLM process this LBA, pending resolution of the conflicts between proposed coal mining and existing and proposed oil and gas development, including proposed coalbed methane (CBM) development on the tract.

The Jacobs Ranch 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 (DEQ) and an approved air quality permit from the Air Quality Division of the Wyoming DEQ to mine up to 38 million tons of coal per year through 2001, and 50 million tons of coal per year to be mined in 2002 through 2004. According to the application filed for the North Jacobs Ranch tract, the maintenance tract would be mined to extend the life of the existing mine. JRCC estimates that, under the current mine plan, the existing recoverable reserves at the Jacobs Ranch Mine will be mined out in about 7 years at an average production rate of 30 million tons per year. The Black Thunder Mine is also contiguous to the lease application area.

JRCC previously acquired a maintenance coal lease (serial number WYW117924, issued effective October 1, 1992), containing approximately 1,709 acres adjacent to the Jacobs Ranch Mine using the LBA process.

The DEIS analyzes four alternatives. The Proposed Action is to lease the North Jacobs Ranch tract as applied for to the successful bidder at a competitive sealed bid sale. The second alternative, Alternative 1, is the No Action Alternative, which assumes that the application for the North Jacobs Ranch tract is rejected. The third and fourth alternatives evaluate issuing a lease for a tract that has been modified to avoid bypassing coal in the future and/or to reduce multiple mineral development conflicts with existing oil and gas development.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement is a cooperating agency in the preparation of this EIS because it is the Federal agency that would recommend approval or disapproval of the mining plan for the North Jacobs Ranch LBA tract to the Secretary of the Interior, if a lease is issued for the tract.

During the scoping process, the issues that were identified related to this lease

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[WY-920-1320-EL, WYW146744]

#### Federal Coal Lease Application

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

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) and notice of public hearing on the north Jacobs ranch 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 a DEIS for the North Jacobs Ranch Coal Lease Application, BLM serial number WYW146744, in the Wyoming Powder River Basin, and announces the scheduled date and place for a public hearing pursuant to 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 3425.4. The DEIS analyzes the impacts of issuing a Federal coal lease for the proposed North Jacobs Ranch Federal

application included: potential conflicts with existing conventional oil and gas development and proposed CBM development; potential cumulative impacts of increasing mineral development in the Powder River Basin; validity and currency of resource data; public access; potential impacts to threatened and endangered species and other species of concern; potential cumulative air quality impacts; potential impacts of nitrogen oxide emissions resulting from blasting of coal and overburden; and cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable actions such as the construction and operation of the DM&E railroad in the cumulative analysis.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the BLM, Casper Field Office, 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, WY, 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: December 8, 2000.

**Lynn E. Rust,**  
*Acting Deputy State Director, Minerals and Lands.*

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