

place coal in Campbell County, WY, adjacent to the existing Belle Ayr Mine. This tract is referred to as the Belle Ayr Tract. On October 2, 1998, BLM received an application from Jacobs Ranch Coal Company for a tract of Federal coal that includes about 4,821 acres and approximately 519 million tons of in-place coal in Campbell County, WY, adjacent to the existing Jacobs Ranch Mine. This tract is referred to as the North Jacobs Ranch Tract. Both tracts were applied for as maintenance lease-by-applications (LBAs), under the provisions of 43 CFR 3425.1.

The Powder River Regional Coal Team (RCT) reviewed the Belle Ayr coal lease application at their meeting on April 23, 1997, in Casper, WY, and recommended that the BLM process it. The RCT reviewed the North Jacobs Ranch coal lease application at their meeting on February 23, 1999, in Billings, MT, and recommended that BLM process it and that BLM and the State of Wyoming work with the oil and gas and coal operators to resolve conflicts with existing and proposed oil and gas development in the area of the tract.

As part of the LBA process, BLM will complete an environmental analysis, develop possible stipulations regarding mining operations, determine the fair market value (FMV) of the tract, and evaluate maximum economic recovery (MER), of the coal in the proposed tract.

BLM is considering preparing a separate environmental impact statement (EIS) for each application to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). An EIS is being considered for the Belle Ayr tract because of the proximity of the tract to existing coalbed methane development and because of the potential for cumulative environmental impacts. An EIS is also being considered for the North Jacobs Ranch tract. Seven new Federal coal leases have been issued to the five mines south and east of Wright, WY, (including the Jacobs Ranch Mine) since decertification of the Powder River Federal Coal Region. Proposed coalbed methane development, existing oil and gas development on the tract, and the potential for cumulative impacts are other major reasons for considering an EIS.

DATES: As part of the public scoping process, a public scoping meeting is scheduled at 7 p.m., on October 19, 1999, at the Tower West Lodge, 109 North US Highway 14-16, Gillette, WY. If you have concerns or issues that you believe the BLM should address in processing these lease applications, you

can express them verbally at the scoping meeting; or you can mail, e-mail, or fax written comments to BLM at the address given below by October 30, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Please address written questions, comments or concerns to Casper Field Office, Bureau of Land Management, Attn: Nancy Doelger, 1701 East E Street, Casper, WY 82601. Address e-mail to Nancy__Doelger@blm.gov, or fax comments to 307-234-1525, Attn: Nancy Doelger.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On March 20, 1997, AMAX Land Company (now RAG Wyoming Land Co.) filed a coal lease application with the BLM for a maintenance tract LBA for the following lands:

T. 48 N., R. 71 W., 6th PM, Wyoming
 Section 18: Lots 17 thru 19;
 Section 19: Lots 5 thru 19;
 Section 20: Lots 3(SW4), 4(W2,SE4), 5, 6,
 7(S2), 9(S2), 10 thru 16;
 Section 21: Lots 13,14;
 Section 28: Lots 3, 6;
 Section 29: Lots 1, 6;

T. 48 N., R. 72 W., 6th PM, Wyoming
 Section 24: Lots 1,8

The tract includes 1,578.741 acres more or less, with an estimated 200 million tons of coal in place.

The Belle Ayr Mine is adjacent to the lease application area. The Belle Ayr Mine has an approved mining and reclamation plan, and an approved air quality permit from the Air Quality Division of the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to mine up to 25 million tons of coal per year. According to the application filed for the Belle Ayr Tract, it is a maintenance tract that would be mined to extend the life of the existing mine.

On October 2, 1998, Jacobs Ranch Coal Company filed a coal lease application with the BLM for a maintenance tract LBA for the following lands:

T. 44 N., R. 70 W., 6th PM, Wyoming
 Section 26: Lots 9, 10;
 Section 27: Lots 1 thru 16;
 Section 28: Lots 1 thru 16;
 Section 29: Lots 1 thru 16;
 Section 30: Lots 5 thru 20;
 Section 31: Lots 5 thru 20;
 Section 32: Lots 5 thru 20;
 Section 33: Lots 4, 5, 12, 13;

T. 44 N., R. 71 W., 6th PM, Wyoming
 Section 25: Lots 1 thru 16

The tract includes 4,821 acres more or less with an estimated 519 million tons of coal in place.

The Jacobs Ranch Mine is adjacent to the lease application area. The Jacobs

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[WY-060-1620-01; WYW141568,
 WYW146744]

Scoping Meeting on the Belle Ayr and North Jacobs Ranch Coal Lease Applications

AGENCY: Department of the Interior, Wyoming.

ACTION: Notice of Scoping Meeting on the Belle Ayr and North Jacobs Ranch coal lease applications in response to applications received from AMAX Land Co. (now RAG Wyoming Land Co.) and Jacobs Ranch Coal Co. for Federal coal in Campbell County, WY, in the decertified Powder River Federal Coal Production Region.

SUMMARY: BLM received an application from AMAX Land Co. (now RAG Wyoming Land Co.) on March 20, 1997 (WYW141568), for a tract of Federal coal that includes about 1,579 acres and approximately 200 million tons of in-

Ranch Mine has an approved mining and reclamation plan, and an approved air quality permit from the Air Quality Division of the Wyoming DEQ to mine up to 35 million tons of coal per year. According to the application filed for the North Jacobs Ranch Tract, it is a maintenance tract that would be mined to extend the life of the existing mine. The Jacobs Ranch Mine was issued a lease for a maintenance tract of Federal coal adjacent to the Jacobs Ranch Mine in 1992.

BLM has received 13 applications to lease Federal coal in the Wyoming portion of the Powder River Basin since 1990, when the Powder River Federal Coal Region was decertified. Nine new Federal coal leases have been issued, one application was rejected, and three applications, including the Belle Ayr and North Jacobs Ranch applications, are pending. Seven of the nine new leases were issued to mines in the group of five surface coal mines located immediately east and southeast of Wright, WY, in southeastern Campbell and northern Converse Counties, WY. This southern group of mines includes the Jacobs Ranch, Black Thunder, North Rochelle, Rochelle, North Antelope, and Antelope mines.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) will be a cooperating agency in the preparation of the environmental analysis because it is the Federal agency that is responsible for recommending approval, approval with conditions, or disapproval of the mining plan to the Office of the Secretary of the Interior. If this maintenance tract is leased to the applicant, the new lease must be incorporated into the existing mining plans for the adjacent mine. The Secretary of the Interior must approve those mining plans before the coal in the tract can be mined.

The major issues that have been identified to date are related to the extension of ongoing site-specific and cumulative impacts to air quality, groundwater, and wildlife if these leases are issued and the potential conflicts between overlapping proposed future coal mining and existing and proposed oil and gas development in this area. If you have specific concerns about these issues, or have other concerns or issues that BLM should consider in processing one or both of these applications to lease Federal coal, please address them in writing to the above individuals or state them verbally at the October 19, 1999, public scoping meeting at the location shown above. BLM will accept written comments at the address shown above through October 30, 1999.

Freedom of Information

Scoping comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the address listed below during regular business hours (7:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. 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 or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Dated: October 1, 1999.

Robert P. Henry,

Acting State Director.

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