

Coatesville, PA, Co: Chester, Zip: 19320-

ADDRESSES: Please address questions, comments, or requests for copies of the FEIS to the Casper District Office, Bureau of Land Management, Attn: Nancy Doelger, 1701 East E Street, Casper, Wyoming 82601, or fax them to 307-234-1525.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Both applications were filed as maintenance tract lease-by-applications (LBAs) under the provisions of 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 3425.1.

On March 23, 1995, Powder River Coal Company filed a coal lease application with the BLM for a maintenance tract LBA for the following lands, which contain an estimated 515 million tons of Federal coal:

- T. 41 N., R. 70 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming,
Sec. 6, lots 10 thru 13, and 18 thru 21;
Sec. 7, lots 6, 11, 14, and 19;
Sec. 18, lots 5, 12, 13, and 20;
T. 42 N., R. 70 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming,
Sec. 31, lots 5 thru 20;
Sec. 32, lots 1 thru 16;
Sec. 33, lots 1 thru 16;
Sec. 34, lots 1 thru 16;
Sec. 35, lots 1 thru 16;
T. 41 N., R. 71 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming,
Sec. 1, lots 5, 6, 11, and 12.

The area described contains 4,023.460 acres more or less.

The BLM has recommended that the following lands be excluded from the tract to enhance the value of remaining unleased Federal coal in the area:

- T. 41 N., R. 71 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming,
Sec. 1, lots 5, 6, 11, and 12.

The area described contains 161.24 acres more or less.

The BLM further recommended that the following lands be included in the tract to avoid a potential bypass situation in the future:

- T. 41 N., R. 71 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming,
Sec. 19, lot 5, and lot 12 (N¹/₂);
Sec. 20, lots 1 thru 4, lot 5 (N¹/₂), lot 6 (N¹/₂), lot 7 (N¹/₂), and lot 8 (N¹/₂);
Sec. 21, lot 4, and lot 5 (N¹/₂).

The area described contains 362.005 acres more or less.

The tract as amended by the BLM contains a total of 4,224.225 acres, more or less, and approximately 534 million tons of Federal coal and includes the following lands:

- T. 41 N., R. 70 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming,
Sec. 6, lots 10 thru 13 and 18 thru 21;
Sec. 7, lots 6, 11, 14, and 19;
Sec. 18, lots 5, 12, 13, and 20;
Sec. 19, lot 5, and lot 12 (N¹/₂);
Sec. 20, lots 1 thru 4, lot 5 (N¹/₂), lot 6 (N¹/₂), lot 7 (N¹/₂), and lot 8 (N¹/₂);
Sec. 21, lot 4, and lot 5 (N¹/₂);
T. 42 N., R. 70 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming,

- Sec. 31, lots 5 thru 20;
Sec. 32, lots 1 thru 16;
Sec. 33, lots 1 thru 16;
Sec. 34, lots 1 thru 16;
Sec. 35, lots 1 thru 16.

The North Antelope and Rochelle Mines are contiguous mines which are both adjacent to the lease application area. Both mines have approved mining and reclamation plans. The Rochelle Mine has an air quality permit approved by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, Air Quality Division (WDEQ/AQD) to mine up to 30 million tons of coal per year. The North Antelope Mine has an air quality permit approved by the WDEQ/AQD to mine up to 35 million tons of coal per year. According to the application, Powder River Coal Company plans no production increase at either mine solely from the acquisition of the proposed lease; the additional tonnage would extend the life of both mines.

In 1992, Powder River Coal Company was the successful bidder on a maintenance coal lease (WYW119554) containing approximately 3,493 acres adjacent to the North Antelope and Rochelle Mines using the LBA process.

On April 14, 1995, Kerr-McGee Coal Corporation filed a coal lease application with the BLM for a maintenance tract LBA for the following lands, which contain an estimated 427 million tons of Federal coal:

- T. 43 N., R. 70 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming,
Sec. 4, lots 8, 9, and 15 thru 18;
Sec. 5, lots 5 thru 20;
Sec. 6, lots 8 thru 23;
Sec. 7, lots 5 thru 7, lot 8 (N¹/₂), lots 9 thru 12, lot 13 (N¹/₂ and SE¹/₄), and lot 19 (NE¹/₄);
Sec. 8, lots 1 thru 16;
Sec. 9, lots 3 thru 6 and 11 thru 14;
T. 43 N., R. 71 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming,
Sec. 1, lots 5 thru 15, 19, and SE¹/₄NE¹/₄.

The area described contains 3,395.917 acres more or less.

The BLM has recommended that the following acreage be included in the tract to avoid a potential bypass situation in the future:

- T. 43 N., R. 71 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming
Sec. 1, lot 16 (N¹/₂), lots 17 and 18;
Sec. 12, lot 1, and lot 2 (NE¹/₄).

The area described contains 149.588 acres more or less.

The tract as amended by the BLM contains a total of 3,545.503 acres, more or less, and approximately 450 million tons of Federal coal and includes the following lands:

- T. 43 N., R. 70 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming,
Sec. 4, lots 8, 9, and 15 thru 18;
Sec. 5, lots 5 thru 20;
Sec. 6, lots 8 thru 23;

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[WY-060-1620-01, WYW136142, WYW136458]

Notice of Availability of a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on Two Separate Coal Lease Applications for Federal Coal in the Decertified Powder River Federal Coal Production Region, WY

SUMMARY: This notice announces the Availability of a FEIS pursuant to 40 CFR parts 1500-1508 for the Powder River (WYW136142) and Thundercloud (WYW136458) Coal Lease Applications in the Wyoming Powder River Basin. The Powder River tract is being considered for sale as a result of a coal lease application received from Powder River Coal Company (WYW136142) for Federal coal in an area adjacent to the company's North Antelope and Rochelle Mines. The Thundercloud tract is being considered for sale as a result of a coal lease application received from Kerr-McGee Coal Corporation (WYW136458), for Federal coal in an area adjacent to the company's Jacobs Ranch Mine. The two application areas are located about 9 miles apart in southeastern Campbell County, Wyoming.

DATES: The FEIS is scheduled to be available to the public on February 13, 1998. Two separate Records of Decision (one for each application) will be signed after the 30 day availability period ends on March 16, 1998.

Sec. 7, lots 5 thru 7, lot 8 (N½), lots 9 thru 12, lot 13 (N½ and SE¼), and lot 19 (NE¼);

Sec. 8, lots 1 thru 16;

Sec. 9, lots 3 thru 6 and 11 thru 14;

T. 43 N., R. 71 W., 6th P.M., Wyoming,

Sec. 1, lots 5 thru 15, lot 16(N½), lots 17 thru 19, and SE¼NE¼;

Sec. 12, lot 1, and lot 2 (NE¼).

The acreage applied for in Kerr McGee's application is known as the Thundercloud tract. It is part of the Thundercloud tract described in a 1983 BLM document entitled "Powder River Coal Region Tract Summaries," which was prepared in anticipation of a Federal coal sale proposed for 1984 that did not take place.

The Jacobs Ranch Mine has an air quality permit approved by the WDEQ/AQD to mine up to 35 million tons of coal per year. According to Kerr-McGee, the additional coal reserves would extend the life of the current mining operations at the Jacobs Ranch Mine.

Kerr-McGee was previously the successful bidder on a maintenance coal lease (WYW117924, issued effective October 1, 1992) containing approximately 1,709 acres adjacent to the Jacobs Ranch Mine using the LBA process.

The Powder River Regional Coal Team reviewed both competitive lease applications at their meeting on April 23, 1996, in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and recommended that both be processed.

The FEIS analyzes three alternatives. Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would hold a separate competitive sale for each tract as applied for, and issue a lease for each tract to the successful high bidder at each sale whose bid meets or exceeds the fair market value of the Federal coal as determined by BLM. The second alternative, Alternative 1 is the No Action Alternative, which assumes that neither maintenance tract would be leased, but that existing operations at the three mines adjacent to the LBA tracts would proceed as currently permitted. Under the third alternative, Alternative 2, BLM would hold a separate competitive sale for each tract as modified by the BLM, and issue a lease for each tract to the successful high bidder at each sale whose bid meets or exceeds the fair market value of the Federal coal as determined by BLM. Alternative 2 is the preferred alternative of the BLM.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is a cooperating agency in the preparation of the EIS because the surface of some of the land included in both tracts 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 would review the mining plans for the two tracts if they are leased, and recommend approval or disapproval of the mining plans to the Secretary of the Interior.

The DEIS was mailed to the public in August 1997, and the DEIS comment period extended though October 28, 1997. A public hearing was held on October 8, 1997, at the Holiday Inn in Gillette, Wyoming, pursuant to 43 CFR 3425.4. The purpose of the hearing was to receive comments on the DEIS, and on the fair market value, the maximum economic recovery, and the proposed separate competitive sales of coal from the two tracts. The ten comment letters that were received on the DEIS are included, with responses, in the FEIS.

Dated: February 5, 1998.

Alan L. Kesterke,

Associate State Director.

[FR Doc. 98-3684 Filed 2-12-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-22-P

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