

FINAL
Environmental Impact Statement for the
West Antelope II Coal Lease Application
WYW163340

Volume 1 of 2
Chapters 1 – 8



December 2008



MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.



United States Department of the Interior



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DEC 08 2008

Dear Reader:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared this Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to document and disclose the results of an environmental analysis of an application received by BLM to lease a tract of Federal coal, the West Antelope II Tract, to the Antelope Mine in the Wyoming Powder River Basin. A copy of this document is provided for your review. The Final EIS may also be reviewed on the BLM Wyoming website at: http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/cfodocs/West_Antelope_II.html.

Copies of the Final EIS are also available for public inspection at the following BLM offices:

Bureau of Land Management
Wyoming State Office
5353 Yellowstone Road
Cheyenne, WY 82009

Bureau of Land Management
Casper Field Office
2987 Prospector Drive
Casper, Wyoming 82604

The Draft EIS was published in February 2008 and the 60-day comment period on the draft document ended on April 8, 2008. A formal public hearing on this application to lease Federal coal was held at 7 p.m. on March 24, 2008, at the Best Western Douglas Inn, 1450 Riverbend Drive, Douglas, Wyoming. The purpose of the hearing was to receive comments on the proposed coal lease sale, on the fair market value, and on the maximum economic recovery of the Federal coal resources included in the tract. Four individuals presented statements at the formal hearing and 14 comment letters were received by the BLM on the Draft EIS during the 60-day public review period. A summary of the statements presented at the formal public hearing and the comment letters received on the Draft EIS during the 60-day public review period have been published as part of the Final EIS.

A 30-day review period on this Final EIS will commence on the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. The BLM will also publish a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. Press releases will be submitted to local and state media outlets once the notice is published to notify the public of the final date that comments will be accepted. All comments received will be considered in preparation of the Record of Decision (ROD) for this EIS.

If you wish to comment on the Final EIS, your comments should relate directly to the document. We request that you make your comments as specific as possible and that you cite the location or locations in the EIS on which you are commenting. The agencies involved in preparing this

Final EIS are required to respond in the ROD to all substantive comments submitted on the Final EIS. Substantive comments should: (1) give any new information that could alter conclusions; (2) show why or how analysis or assumptions in the Final EIS are flawed; (3) show errors in data, sources, or methods; or (4) request clarifications that bear on conclusions. Opinions or preferences will not receive a formal response. However, they will be considered and included as part of the BLM decisionmaking process.

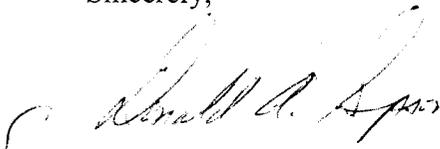
This Final EIS was prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and applicable regulations, and other applicable statutes, to address possible environmental and socioeconomic impacts that could result from this project. This Final EIS is not a decision document. Its purpose is to inform the public and the agency decisionmakers of the impacts of leasing the West Antelope II Tract of Federal coal to the existing Antelope Mine in the Wyoming Powder River Basin and to evaluate alternatives to leasing the Federal coal included in the tract as applied for.

Comments, including names, street addresses, and e-mail addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the BLM office address listed below during regular business hours (7:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and will be published as part of the Final EIS. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or 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.

Please send written comments to: Bureau of Land Management, Casper Field Office, Attn: Sarah Bucklin, 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, WY 82604. Written comments may also be e-mailed to the attention of Sarah Bucklin at "casper_wymail@blm.gov." E-mailed comments must include the name and mailing address of the commentor to receive consideration. Written comments may also be faxed to (307) 261-7587.

If you have any questions or would like to obtain additional copies of this Final EIS, please contact Sarah Bucklin at (307) 261-7541, or at the above address.

Sincerely,


fe7 Robert A. Bennett
State Director

**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
WEST ANTELOPE II COAL LEASE APPLICATION
CONVERSE AND CAMPBELL COUNTIES, WYOMING
ABSTRACT**

Lead Agency: USDI Bureau of Land Management Casper Field Office
Casper, Wyoming

Cooperating Agencies: USDI Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement
Western Region, Denver, Colorado

USDA Forest Service Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and
Thunder Basin National Grassland, Douglas, Wyoming

Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
Land Quality Division and Air Quality Division
Cheyenne, Wyoming

Converse County Board of Commissioners, Douglas, Wyoming

For Further Information, Contact: Sarah Bucklin
Bureau of Land Management, Casper Field Office
2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, WY 82604
(307) 261-7541

Abstract: This Final Environment Impact Statement (EIS) assesses the environmental consequences of decisions to hold a competitive, sealed-bid sale and issue a lease for a tract of federal coal located adjacent to an existing surface coal mine in Converse and Campbell Counties, Wyoming, subject to standard and special lease stipulations. The West Antelope II Lease by Application (LBA) tract, as applied for by Antelope Coal Company, includes approximately 4,108.6 acres containing approximately 429.7 million tons of in-place federal coal. Antelope Coal Company, the operator of the adjacent Antelope Mine, proposes to mine the tract as a maintenance lease for the existing mine, if a lease sale is held and they acquire the lease.

This Final EIS describes the physical, biological, cultural, historic, and socioeconomic resources in and around the existing mine and the LBA tract. The alternatives in the Final EIS consider the impacts of leasing the tract as it was applied for, leasing a reconfigured tract in order to avoid bypassing federal coal or to increase competitive interest in the tract, and not leasing the tract. The focus for the impact analysis was based upon resource issues and concerns identified during previous coal leasing analyses and public scoping conducted for this lease application. Potential concerns related to development include impacts to groundwater, air quality, wildlife, cultural resources, climate change, and cumulative impacts related to ongoing surface coal mining and other proposed development in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming.

This Final EIS, in compliance with Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (as amended), identifies any endangered or threatened species which are likely to be affected by the Proposed Action.

The Final EIS is open for a 30-day review period beginning on the date that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. Comments that are postmarked or received on or before the end of the 30-day review period will be considered in the preparation of the Record of Decision.

**WEST ANTELOPE II COAL LEASE APPLICATION
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

Prepared by

**EDE Consultants
Sheridan, Wyoming**

Under the Direction of

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Casper Field Office
Casper, Wyoming**

and

Cooperating Agencies

**U.S. Department of Interior
Office of Surface Mining
Reclamation and Enforcement
Western Region
Denver, Colorado**

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and
Thunder Basin National Grassland
Douglas, Wyoming**

**Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
Land Quality Division and Air Quality Division
Cheyenne, Wyoming**

**Converse County Board of Commissioners
Douglas, Wyoming**

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