

**WRIGHT AREA COAL LEASE APPLICATIONS  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)  
PROJECT SUMMARY**

Background

Between October 2005 and September 2006, four individual Leases by Application (LBAs) for proposed Federal coal lease tracts were filed by the operators of three producing coal mines located in the Wright area of the Powder River Basin. The applications and respective mines were Hilight Field (Black Thunder Mine), West Hilight Field (Black Thunder Mine), West Jacobs Ranch (Jacobs Ranch Mine), and Porcupine (North Antelope Rochelle Mine). The proposed maintenance coal tracts were applied for in order to potentially lease Federal coal reserves which would allow the mines to continue production. The Powder River Basin Regional Coal Team reviewed these applications at public meetings held between April 2006 and January 2007 and recommended the applications be processed. BLM analyzed these applications in one EIS because of the close geographic proximity of the proposed Federal coal tracts to each other. BLM also split the original Hilight Field and Porcupine applications each into two separate tracts and processed each tract separately (North Hilight Field, South Hilight Field, North Porcupine, and South Porcupine tracts).

Current Status

The South Hilight Field Record of Decision (ROD) was issued March 4, 2011. This decision is subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) as provided in 43 CFR 4 within 30 days from the date of publication of the notice of availability in the *Federal Register*. The ROD contains instructions for filing an appeal with the IBLA.

Past Actions

BLM issued a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS on the Wright Area LBAs – June 2007  
BLM conducted scoping and held a public meeting in Gillette – July 2007  
BLM split the Hilight Field and Porcupine tracts – March 2008  
Draft EIS was issued for public comment – June 2009  
Public hearing was held in Gillette – August 2009  
Final EIS was issued for public comment – July 2010  
Responses to comments on the Final EIS were issued – March 2011  
South Hilight Field ROD was issued – March 2011

Future Actions

BLM will complete RODs on five remaining Wright Area LBAs.  
BLM will complete pre-sale fair market value (FMV) LBA analyses.  
Competitive sales could be scheduled, announced, and held after FMV analyses are complete.  
If high bids at the sale meet or exceed FMV, a lease could be issued to the high bidder.  
If a lease is issued, the lessee would need to obtain a mining permit for that lease through the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement before any surface disturbance could occur within the lease area.