

**PUBLIC SCOPING NOTICE
BEAVER CREEK
COAL BED NATURAL GAS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
LANDER FIELD OFFICE
LANDER, WYOMING**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In September 2007, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lander Field Office (LFO) issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Decision Record for the Beaver Creek Coal Bed Natural Gas Pilot Project Environmental Assessment (WY-050-EA07-131) (Pilot Project), which approved the construction, drilling, completing, and producing of 20 pilot CBNG wells in the Beaver Creek Project Area, along with the construction of 4 miles of access roads, 10 miles of pipelines, production facilities, 8 miles of electric transmission lines, and an evaporation pond. Based on the initial results of the pilot project, Devon determined that commercial quantities of CBNG are present in the Beaver Creek Unit (BCU). Therefore, Devon has notified the BLM Lander Field Office that the company is proposing to develop additional Coal Bed Natural Gas (CBNG) and conventional natural gas wells within the administrative boundaries of the LFO.

The proposed Beaver Creek Coal Bed Natural Gas Development Project consists of drilling 208 CBNG wells and 20 conventional gas wells within Devon's existing Beaver Creek Unit (BCU), located in Township 33 North, Range 96 West, all or portions of Sections 1-4, 9-16, 21-24, and 28-29; Township 34, Range 96 West, all or portions of Sections 20-28 and 33-36; 6th Principal Meridian, Fremont County, Wyoming (Figure 1-map). The Project Area is roughly nine air miles southeast from Riverton, Wyoming, and encompasses approximately 16,518 acres (by GIS). Within the Project Area the majority of the surface lands are administered by the BLM, some areas are owned by the State of Wyoming, Fremont County, or are private property. The majority of the subsurface minerals are administered by the BLM, with some owned by the State of Wyoming, and a small portion privately owned. Access to the Project Area from the town of Riverton is by US 26 South to WY136 East and to WY135 South.

The Proposed Action entails construction, drilling, completing, and producing up to 208 CBNG and 20 conventional natural gas wells in the Project Area and the construction of associated access roads, subsurface pipelines, overhead electric transmission lines, evaporation ponds, water disposal injection wells, equipment storage areas, and production facilities. The Proposed Action is in addition to the existing oil, natural gas, and CBNG development in the Project Area. Existing facilities would be used whenever practical in order to minimize surface disturbance from the proposed development. It is anticipated that initial construction and drilling operations for the 228 proposed wells would begin as soon as possible after issuance of the Record of Decision (ROD) and approval of the Application of Permits to Drill (APDs). The estimated start date for Devon's exploration and development project is Spring 2010.

CBNG wells would be constructed at a density of one well per 40 acres. Production operations would require the use and maintenance of roads on a year-round basis. The wells would be drilled vertically (both CBNG and conventional) from individual well pads. Construction and drilling of the proposed wells is expected to be completed within 5-10 years after project approval by the BLM. The life of the project is anticipated to be 20-40 years. The actual number of wells may be less than the total wells approved, due to factors beyond the Devon's control, such as geologic characteristics and commodity prices.

The approximate pad size for the CBNG wells is 390 x 270 feet and 430 x 300 feet for conventional wells resulting in short-term disturbance of 2.43 acres and 2.99 acres, respectively. After interim reclamation, the well pad would be partially reclaimed, resulting in a long-term disturbance of 1.7 acres for both CBNG and conventional gas wells. During drilling operations a lined reserve pit would be excavated to temporarily store drilling fluids and cuttings. The reserve pit would be reclaimed in accordance with the requirements of the APDs.

Approximately 24.4 miles of new roads would be built to access the 228 new well locations. Most new access roads would be constructed as laterals off existing roads in order to keep new disturbance to a minimum. The average new access road length is estimated at 0.11 miles. All roads associated with this project would be constructed or upgraded to BLM standards for resource roads (BLM Gold Book 2007).

No surface discharge of produced water is proposed. Produced water from the wells would be disposed into four proposed water disposal wells (injection wells) and two proposed evaporation ponds. The injection wells would serve as the primary method of produced water disposal. The disturbance from construction of each disposal well would be 2.99 acres, and 13.73 acres from each evaporation pond.

Approximately 66 miles of pipelines and overhead power lines would be required, which would equal approximately 0.27 miles per well. Each producing well would require a water discharge pipeline and a gas gathering pipeline. The two pipelines may occupy the same trench. The pipelines would connect to one of four proposed central production facilities within the Project Area. The pipelines containing produced water would transfer the water to the water disposal wells and evaporation ponds. New and existing pipelines would be used to carry the natural gas from the central production facilities to the existing BCU Gas Plant for processing and distribution to an existing sales pipeline.

The proposed pipelines and overhead power lines would be constructed adjacent to existing access roads, wherever feasible. The construction corridors for the proposed pipelines and power lines would range from 35 feet to 100 feet in width, depending on the number and dimensions of the pipelines. The pipeline and powerline corridor would be reclaimed after construction.

Short and long term disturbance estimates from the proposed CBNG and conventional natural gas development are provided below. The total short-term disturbance is estimated to be 1,281 acres, which is 7.8% percent of the Project Area. The total amount of disturbance at any one time is expected to be less than 1,281 acres because of ongoing interim reclamation activities occurring over the 5-10 year development

period. The total long-term disturbance is estimated to be 549 acres, which is approximately 3.3% of the proposed Project Area.

Table 1. Estimated New Disturbance from the Devon’s Proposed Action.

PROPOSED FACILITY	NUMBER	SHORT-TERM DISTURBANCE (AC)	LONG-TERM DISTURBANCE (AC)
CBNG Well (2.43 ST; 1.7 LT)	208	505.4	353.6
Conventional Gas Well (2.99 ST; 1.7 LT)	20	59.8	34.0
Access Roads (24.4 mi)	40' (width)	118.3	118.3
Pipelines & Powerlines (66 mi)	68.5' (width)	548.0	0
Central Production Facility (2.71 ST; 2.21 LT)	4	10.84	8.84
Water Disposal Well (2.99 ST; 1.7 LT)	4	11.96	6.8
Evaporation Ponds	2	27.46	27.46
TOTAL DISTURBANCE		1,281	549

¹ST=short term; LT=long term.

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

The resource management plan that directs the management of the BLM Lander Field Office (LFO) Resource Area is the *Final Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for the Lander Resource Area, Lander, Wyoming* (BLM 1986). Additional guiding documents include: *Grazing Supplement to the Final Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for the Lander Resource Area, Lander, Wyoming* (BLM 1986); and *Record of Decision for the Lander Resource Management Plan* (BLM 1987).

The Lander Resource Management Plan (RMP) states that “*public lands will be made available for oil and gas leasing and development to the maximum extent possible, while giving due consideration to the protection of other significant resource values.*” The proposed project area is in a portion of the Beaver Creek Management Unit (BCMU) that is open for oil and gas leasing in conformance with the RMP (Map 17 RMP). The Beaver Creek Coal Bed Natural Gas Development Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will incorporate the appropriate decisions, terms, and conditions of use described in the RMP. Use authorizations [i.e., rights-of-way (ROWs), permits] for well pads, roads, pipelines, and associated facilities will be processed through the BLM Application for Permit to Drill (APD) and Sundry Notice process.

Oil and gas drilling on private and State lands is under the management of the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (WYOGCC).

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT COMPLIANCE

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations on implementing NEPA, the BLM has determined that permitting this proposed project constitutes a federal action that may affect the quality of the human environment. The BLM has advised the project proponent that an EIS must be prepared to analyze the effects of the proposed development in the Project Area. The BLM will prepare a NEPA-compliant EIS that describes and evaluates the potential impacts of the Proposed Action and a range of alternatives including a No Action Alternative. The purpose of this EIS is to inform the public and decision-makers about the environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and to identify and develop appropriate mitigation measures to minimize environmental impacts.

The EIS will reference and incorporate NEPA documents that were previously developed within and near the Beaver Creek Project Area. The EIS will utilize the information in the Beaver Creek Coal Bed Natural Gas Pilot Project Environmental Assessment (WY-050-EA07-131), as appropriate.

The Record of Decision (ROD), which is the final step in the EIS process, will identify the decision of the BLM LFO, describe the alternatives considered, specify the preferred alternative; summarize the alternatives considered, but eliminated from detailed analysis; and identify mitigation measures that will be implemented under the Preferred Alternative.

The initial step of the NEPA process is “scoping.” Public scoping is initiated early in the NEPA process to:

- Identify reasonable development alternatives to be evaluated in the EIS.
- Identify environmental and socioeconomic issues of concern related to the proposed project.
- Determine the depth of the analysis for the issues to be addressed in the EIS.

In Addition, NEPA requires that a “No Action Alternative” be considered, which compares the economic and environmental consequences of the Proposed Action with no further development (i.e., existing environmental conditions). Under the No Action alternative, the development project proposed by Devon on lands administered by the BLM would be denied, and natural gas development would only occur on State lands and private lands within the Project Area.

This scoping document has been prepared to enable government agencies, the public, and other interested parties to participate in and contribute to the environmental analysis process under NEPA. Public input is important in establishing the scope of analysis for any NEPA document, and the BLM LFO encourages public participation. The comments received from the public on the scoping notice will assist in the identification of key issues of concern that need to be addressed in this EIS.

IDENTIFIED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The following issues and concerns have been identified to-date. This list is not all-inclusive, but rather serves as a starting point for public input. Once public scoping has been completed, the BLM will analyze the identified issues and concerns.

- Potential effects on cultural resources.
- Possible effects on game species and their habitats.
- Potential impacts to BLM sensitive plants and animals.
- Potential impacts to sage grouse breeding grounds.
- Potential water quality impacts from CBNG and conventional gas exploration and production.
- Potential air quality impacts from construction, drilling, and production activities.
- Potential Impacts to vegetation and soils.
- Potential spread of noxious weeds resulting from vegetation and soil disturbance.
- Potential impacts from groundwater depletion.
- Increased traffic and associated impacts on County, State, and BLM roads and highways.
- Concern about reclamation success within the Project Area.
- Cumulative impacts of CBNG activities, when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities.

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM

- Archaeologist
- NEPA Specialist
- Petroleum Engineer
- Air Quality Specialist
- Wildlife Biologist
- Hydro-geologist
- Soil Scientist
- Range Management Specialist
- Recreation and Visual Resource Specialist
- Paleontologist.

TIMING NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS

Government agencies, the public, and other interested parties are encouraged to participate throughout the environmental analysis process to assist in identifying the level of analysis needed in this EIS, alternatives to be considered, issues and concerns to be assessed, and suggested mitigation measures to help ensure that the analysis process is comprehensive and in compliance with NEPA.

Written comments will be accepted by the BLM during the 30-day public scoping period, which ends on September 2, 2008. Please specify "*Beaver Creek Coal Bed Natural Gas and Conventional Gas Development Project*" when submitting comments. Comments on this scoping notice should be submitted to:

Curtis Bryan
 BLM Project Manager
 Bureau of Land Management
 Lander Field Office
 1335 Main Street
 Lander, Wyoming 82520

307-332-8400

Public meetings will be held on the following dates, times, and locations.

August 20, 2008, Riverton, WY, Holiday Inn, 900 E. Sunset Dr.; 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

August 21, 2008, Lander, WY, Community Center, 950 Buena Vista Dr.; 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

REFERENCES CITED

Bureau of Land Management. 1986. Final Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for the Lander Resource Area, Lander, Wyoming. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Lander, Wyoming.

Bureau of Land Management. 1987. Record of Decision for the Lander Resource Management Plan. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Lander Resource Area, Lander, Wyoming.

Bureau of Land Management. 1986. Grazing Supplement to the Final Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for the Lander Resource Area, Lander, Wyoming.

Bureau of Land Management. 2007. Beaver Creek Coal Bed Natural Gas Pilot Project Environmental Assessment (WY-050-EA07-131), Lander, Wyoming.