

SCOPING NOTICE
for
Richardson Operating Company
BISON BASIN 3-D SEISMIC GEOPHYSICAL OPERATIONS AND WEST BISON BASIN UNIT
SECONDARY OIL RECOVERY PROJECTS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

Bureau of Land Management
Lander Field Office
March 26, 2013

Background

Two proposals have been submitted to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lander Field Office for development in the Bison Basin. The first proposal is to conduct a 3-D seismic geophysical survey to examine sub-surface geologic structure in the Bison Basin. The second project proposal is to implement a nine-well steam injection program in the West Bison Basin Unit for secondary oil recovery (SOR) of an existing oil field. For the Bison Basin geophysical project, Dawson Geophysical Company (on behalf of Richardson Operating Company) proposes to deploy seismic vibrator trucks, utility terrain vehicles, ground crews, source points and receiver lines on 15.5 square miles/9920 acres on BLM surface. For the West Bison Basin Unit enhanced oil recovery project, Richardson proposes to inject steam into the oil bearing zones to increase the amount of recoverable oil and gas compared to the current primary recovery of this aging oil field. The SOR is expected to expand the field's oil recovery. This notice is to inform the public that the BLM Lander Field Office will prepare two Environmental Assessments (EAs) for these proposed projects. The purposes of the Environmental Assessments are to determine whether Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) will be necessary.

The proposed project areas are located approximately 20 miles south of Sweetwater Station in eastern Fremont County, Wyoming, and are within the administrative boundary of the BLM Lander Field Office.

Description of Proposed Projects

1. Dawson Geophysical Company (on behalf of Richardson Operating Company) filed a Notice of Intent with the BLM Lander Field Office on January 28, 2013. The specific proposal is to conduct a 3-D Seismic Geophysical Survey to examine sub-surface geologic structure below 15.5 square miles (9920 acres) of BLM Surface in Sections 1-5, 8-13, 15, 17, 20-24, Township 27 North, Range 95 West, and Sections 6-7, 18-19, Township 27 North, Range 94 West, 6th P.M., Fremont County, Wyoming, on BLM Federal Oil and Gas Lease WYW-168285. The project would be located within the Bison Basin, and would require surface disturbance and disruptive activities associated with seismic vibrator trucks, utility terrain vehicles, staging areas, source lines, source points, receiver lines and receiver stations. The proposed project is located completely within BLM Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area. Dawson's proposed 3-D Seismic Geophysical Survey project consists of the following operational activities:

- 48 source lines consisting of 2968 source points for a total length of 83 miles on BLM Surface
- 29 receiver lines consisting of 4640 receiver stations for a total length of 129 miles on BLM Surface
- Eight seismic vibrator trucks measuring 13 feet high, 36 feet long, 12 feet wide, and weighing 62,000 pounds travelling cross-country along the lines with vibrator pads
- 14 semi-trailer loads to transport the seismic vibrator trucks and equipment to the project area

- Support vehicles including one 1-ton recording truck, one vibrator mechanic truck and trailer, six UTVs, five 1-ton equipment trucks, two crew transport vans, and ten miscellaneous trucks for crew support
- Staging area for vehicle parking, equipment, water and fuel storage

2. Richardson Operating Company (Richardson) filed nine Applications for Permit to Drill (APD) with the Bureau of Land Management, Lander Field Office. APD documents were filed on December 26, 2012 for the West Bison Basin Unit Fathead Nos. 12 to 15 and 17 to 20 wells; and on February 22, 2013 for the Fathead No. 16 well. The specific proposal is to drill nine oil wells from nine locations on BLM Surface into Federal Mineral Estate in Section 18, Township 27 North, Range 95 West, 6th P.M., Fremont County Wyoming, on BLM Federal oil and Gas Lease WYW-174072. The project would be located within the West Bison Basin Unit, and would require new surface disturbance associated with construction of the well pads, access roads and pipelines. The proposed project is located within BLM Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area. Richardson's proposed steam injection Secondary Oil Recovery (SOR) project consists of the following operations and maintenance activities:

- Drill nine new oil production wells in the West Bison Basin Unit
- Utilize an existing steam facility in the West Bison Basin Unit to accommodate the installation of a secondary oil recovery steam injection program
- Install new underground oil and water pipelines
- Upgrade and construct new access roads
- Increase truck traffic and equipment operations associated with construction and drilling activities

The proposed number, spacing, and arrangement of the wells are designed to provide maximum recovery of oil remaining in place in the unit. New wells will be permitted through the Application for Permit to Drill (APD) process under BLM regulations. Richardson obtained an aquifer exemption on October 26, 2011 for the West Bison Basin Unit Nugget Formation from the State of Wyoming.

The production infrastructure will include a combination of entrenched water distribution, crude oil gathering and pipe lines running either adjacent to project roads or the most direct cross country route. Centralized gathering, production, metering and compression facilities will be located at the site of the existing unit production facilities. The project activities would begin with constructing new access roads, installing pipelines, building well pads, drilling new wells, and implementing the secondary recovery steam injection program.

It is estimated that the nine new well pads and associated access roads, pipelines and all other new project disturbance would result in a potential maximum initial surface disturbance of approximately 20 acres. Short-term impacts to surface resources from the proposed project are expected to last three to five years. All areas of new disturbance not needed for the duration of project operations will be reclaimed per BLM specifications. Long-term surface disturbance resulting from the proposed project is estimated to be approximately ten acres. The anticipated duration of the proposed project is approximately 20 years.

Identified Resource Management Issues and Concerns

The following issues and concerns for both projects have been identified. This list is not meant to be an all-inclusive list, but rather a starting point for further public input and a means of identifying the resource disciplines needed to conduct the analysis.

- Potential impacts to Wyoming greater sage-grouse habitat

- Potential impacts to wildlife habitat within the analysis area, including raptors, migratory birds and BLM Sensitive Species.
- Potential impacts to surface and groundwater resources
- Potential impacts to air quality due to increased traffic, emissions, construction and production activities
- Potential impacts to vegetation
- Potential impacts to visual resources
- Reclamation of disturbed areas and control of noxious weeds
- Potential cumulative impacts to resources from the proposed project when combined with ongoing oil and gas development in the area

Public Involvement

Public input is important in establishing the level and scope of the analysis. The public is encouraged to participate throughout the Environmental Assessment process to help in identifying the level of analysis needed, alternatives to the proposed action, other issues or concerns that should be analyzed or mitigated, and any other comments or ideas to help ensure the completeness of the analysis process.

The BLM can best utilize comments and resource information if submitted before the close of the public scoping period (March 26, 2013 – April 25, 2013). Please submit written comments to:

Bureau of Land Management
Lander Field Office (c/o Andrew Gibbs)
1335 Main Street
Lander, WY 82520

Comments may also be submitted electronically to: lander_wymail@blm.gov.

Please note that comments, names, e-mail addresses, and street addresses of the respondents, will be available for public review and disclosure at the above address during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name, phone number, e-mail address, or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this plainly at the beginning of your 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.

If additional information regarding this project is required, please contact Andrew Gibbs at the above e-mail, street address or phone 307-332-8487.