

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

Finding of No Significant Impact

November 2010 Lease Parcel Review

July 2010

PREPARING OFFICE

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Bureau of Land Management
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Finding of No Significant Impact DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2010-0012-EA

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental analysis, DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2010-0012-EA, for a proposed action to address lease parcels nominated in the Worland Field Office area in Hot Springs County. The project would be a recommendation to the State Director to issue eleven leases for oil and gas development containing approximately 2240 acres of federal minerals administered by the Worland Field Office. Standard terms and conditions as well as special stipulations would apply. Lease stipulations (as required by Title 43 Code of Federal Registration 3131.3) were added to each parcel as identified by the Worland Field Office to address site specific concerns or new information not identified in the land use planning process.

Additionally, there would be a recommendation to the State Director to defer the issuance of two parcels nominated containing approximately 1782.94 acres until management direction could be instituted in the RMP Record of Decision.

The underlying need for the proposal would be met while accomplishing the following objectives:

1. Issuing parcels through competitive oil and gas leasing sales to allow private individuals or companies to explore for and develop oil and gas resources on public markets

The Lease Parcel Review EA (DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2010-0012-EA) is attached. A No Action alternative and Full Lease Issuance alternative were analyzed in the EA in addition to the Proposed Action.

Finding of No Significant Impact

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2010-0012-EA, dated July 2010. After consideration of the environmental effects as described in the EA, and incorporated herein, I have determined that the proposed action, Alternative 2, identified in the EA will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required to be prepared.

I have the proposed action is in conformance with the approved Grass Creek Resource Management Plan, and is consistent with applicable plans and policies of county, state, tribal and Federal agencies. This finding and conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Context:

The Action would occur within the Worland Field Office boundaries and would have local impacts on the resources similar to and within the scope of those described and considered within the Grass Creek Resource Management Plan and the respective FEIS/Record of Decision. The project is a site-specific action directly involving approximately 2240 acres of BLM administered mineral estate that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity:

The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into resources and issues considered (includes supplemental authorities Appendix 1 H-1790-1) and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders.

The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The Action/Alternatives would affect resources as described in the EA. Mitigating measures to reduce impacts to the various resources were incorporated in the design of the action alternatives. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the Grass Creek Resource Management Plan and their respective FEIS/Record of Decision.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The proposed action is designed to propose to the State Director recommendations of stipulations for lease parcels nominated for sale in the Nov. 2010 auction. No aspect of the Action/Alternatives would have an effect on public health and safety. If the leases enter into a development stage, public health or safety would be further addressed through site specific NEPA.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The only unique characteristics present within the project area are historic and cultural resources. These characteristics have been deemed to be not affected by the Action/Alternatives with mitigating measures as attached to the lease parcels. The proposed action is designed to propose to the State Director recommendations of stipulations for lease parcels nominated for sale in the Nov. 2010 auction. No aspect of the Action/Alternatives would have an effect on cultural resources at the leasing phase. If the leases enter into a development stage, cultural resources would be further addressed through site specific NEPA.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be controversial.

Controversy in this context is considered to be in terms of disagreement about the nature of the effects— not political controversy or expressions of opposition to the action or preference among the alternatives analyzed within the EA. Although sale of the parcels have been protested, BLM considers that the EA has addressed disagreements about the nature of the effects.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The project is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas. The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in

the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

This project neither establishes a precedent nor represents a decision in principle about future actions. The actions considered in the selected alternative were considered by the interdisciplinary team within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The environmental analysis did not reveal any cumulative effects beyond those already analyzed in the Grass Creek RMP/FEIS. The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

Two of the sites, including one historic trail, are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. In accordance with the Wyoming State Protocol Appendix B.2, issuance of leases is exempt from class III inventory. Prior to conducting surface disturbance on these parcels a Class III cultural resource inventory would be completed.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.

Mitigating measures to reduce impacts to plants, wildlife, and fisheries have been incorporated into the design of the action alternatives. Although listed species may occupy habitat within the project boundary, it has been determined that they will not be affected because surface use restrictions, including timing limitation stipulations (TLS), NSO stipulations, and controlled surface use (CSU) stipulations, as well as unavailable for leasing designations, have been applied to the lease parcels. Furthermore, post-lease actions/authorizations (e.g., APDs, road/pipeline ROWs), could be encumbered by TLS and CSU restrictions on a case-by-case basis, as required through project-specific NEPA analysis or other environmental review.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The project does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. In addition, the project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.

Signed:

Karla Bird
Authorized Officer

Karla Bird
Signature

7/22/2010
Date