

6.0 SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The Final SEIS (BLM, 2008) analyzed five alternatives. They were:

1. Alternative A No Action Alternative
2. Alternative B Proposed Action Alternative
3. Alternative C
4. Alternative D Preferred Alternative
5. Alternative E Full Field Development with Seasonal Restrictions

6.1 ALTERNATIVE A

The No Action Alternative was based on elements authorized by the PAPA ROD in 2000 and contemplated additional development ending in or around 2011. This alternative would not have allowed for development of the recoverable natural gas resource.

6.2 ALTERNATIVE B PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action included year-round development (construction, drilling, completions, and production) within the PAPA. The Proposed Action Alternative was expected to result in 12,885 acres of new surface disturbance, including well pads, roads, pipelines, and other ancillary facilities within the PAPA. Year-round development would have occurred within a Core Area and there would have been three Concentrated Development Areas. Off-site mitigation was offered at a 3:1 ratio for impacts to wildlife habitats that could not be adequately mitigated.

6.3 ALTERNATIVE C

Alternative C was similar to Alternative B in that it included the same project components including up to 4,399 additional wells on up to 12,885 acres of surface disturbance; however, it was spatially different. Rather than only specifying certain areas of development where year-round development could have occurred, Alternative C specified areas where year-round development would not have occurred. It included a Core Area. The overall objective of Alternative C was to control spatial disturbance over time, maximizing development in some areas while minimizing development in other areas, especially in portions of big game crucial winter ranges. Alternative C included five development areas. Year-round development would have been allowed within DAs 1 through 4, but not in DA-5.

6.4 ALTERNATIVE D PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative D, the BLM Preferred Alternative, was the result of comments received on the Draft SEIS (BLM, 2006). This Alternative presented a spatially phased development approach, while adding additional measures, including federal suspended and term NSO leases (where no additional development will occur for at least the first 5 years) in the Flanks. Alternative D included additional air mitigation to further reduce visibility impacts at the nearby Bridger Wilderness Area. An adaptive management approach and a compensatory mitigation fund were elements of Alternative D.

6.5 ALTERNATIVE E

Alternative E, also the result of comments received on the Draft SEIS (BLM, 2006), analyzed seasonal habitat restrictions remaining in effect. This Alternative reflected a development approach similar to that considered in the PAPA ROD (BLM, 2000), while providing for full field development of the natural gas resource. Limits on active well pads and acres of surface disturbance were included.

6.6 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED ANALYSIS

Elements of Alternatives identified as not analyzed in detail in the Final SEIS (BLM, 2008) were the Conservation Alternative, the Maximum Development Alternative, and the Reduced Pace of Development Alternative. Rational for not analyzing these in detail is provided in the Final SEIS.

6.7 ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In accordance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1505.2(b)), the environmentally preferred alternative must be identified in the ROD.

BLM considers the environmentally preferred alternative to be Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, as analyzed with development ending in or around 2011. As analyzed, this alternative will result in the shortest length of development and the impacts associated with production are anticipated to be the least. However, the No Action Alternative will fail to effectively recover nearly 16 trillion cubic feet of natural gas resource and will not meet the purpose and need.