



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Pinedale Field Office
P.O. Box 768
Pinedale, Wyoming 82941-0768

In Reply Refer To:
1310 (100)
WY-100-EA05-345

September 28, 2005

Dear Reader:

This Environmental Assessment (EA), Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and Decision Record (DR) on the Jonah Field Experimental Well Pad Development Techniques Project are provided for your information. The DR identifies the BLM decision, explains the rationale for reaching the decision, and identifies measures to protect the environment. The decision is based on the analysis in the EA and other multiple-use resource objectives or programs that apply to the project.

The EA was prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other regulations and statutes, to fully disclose potential impacts of the Experimental Well Pad Development Techniques and alternative actions to resources in EnCana's leaseholds within the Jonah Field Natural Gas Development Project. Per NEPA regulations, the No Action is included as a baseline for comparison.

The BLM appreciates the individuals, organizations and Federal, State, and Local Governments who participated in the process. Your input is essential in assuring that all issues important to you were considered.

Sincerely,

Priscilla E. Mecham
Pinedale Field Manager

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI) and DECISION RECORD (DR)
FOR
Jonah Experimental Well Pad Development Techniques
EA #WY-100-EA05-345**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

As discussed in this EA, the direct and indirect incremental change to the environment due to implementing the Proposed Action will result in no significant environmental impacts that have not been previously analyzed. BLM believes that potential adverse impacts could be minimized by aspects of the Proposed Action by reducing surface and vegetative disturbance.

Potential residual adverse impacts have been further minimized or offset by applicant-committed drilling techniques such that the net change in cumulative impacts on the human environment introduced by the project—in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions—are expected to be within the scope of the Jonah Field II Natural Gas Development Project Environmental Impact Statement (J2EIS), (April 1998), and Environmental Assessment for the Modified Jonah Field II Natural Gas Project (MJ2EA), March 2000. Therefore, a new or supplemental EIS is not required.

DECISION

It is my decision to approve the proposal to allow research and monitoring on Pad Development Techniques in the Jonah Field. Implementation of this Proposed Action will allow EnCana to research and monitor drilling techniques outlined in the Proposed Action on 43 pad locations. Researching this type of development in Jonah Field could lead to reductions in impacts associated with natural gas development.

Approval allows the following:

- 1) Approval of drilling operations on 43 locations with 45 wells
- 2) The experimental use of wooden mats for drilling pad locations
- 3) Implementing soils and vegetation treatments (see attachment 2)
- 4) Research and monitoring on the Proposed Action techniques (see attachment 1)

My decision is conditional upon and subject to the following requirements:

- EnCana will research and monitor the Proposed Action as described in attachment 1 and provide appropriate technical reports to the BLM.
- EnCana will be required to fully implement the performance-based development and production objective, Conditions of Approval, mitigation, monitoring, and Best Management Practices listed in the J2EIS and MJ2EA.
- No well location shall be constructed within 300 feet of the edge of Sand Draw in consistency with the Record of Decision for Jonah Field II Natural Gas Development Project Environmental Impact Statement.

- Site-specific Conditions of Approval will be applied to each Application for Permit to Drill.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION and MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATION

This decision is approved in order to research new means of reducing surface and vegetation disturbance associated with natural gas development.

The decision to approve the Proposed Action is based on the following factors:

- 1) **Consistency with Land Use and Resource Management Plans.** The decision to approve the Proposed Action is in conformance with the overall planning direction for the area. The Pinedale RMP states that public land in the area of the proposal is “open to consideration for exploration, leasing, and development for all leaseable minerals.” Standard and special protective measures, identified and incorporated in this Decision, including research and monitoring committed by EnCana, will help meet other resource objectives in the RMP.
- 2) **Finding of No Significant Impact.** As discussed in the EA, the direct and indirect incremental change to the environment introduced by implementation of the Proposed Action will result in no significant impacts that have not been analyzed. BLM and the cooperating agency (State of Wyoming) believe the adverse impacts have been mitigated such that the net change in cumulative impacts introduced by the project – in combination with past mitigation, present actions, adjustments proposed by EnCana, and future monitoring and assessment – are not expected to be significant.
- 3) **Relevant Resource and Economic Considerations.** Environmental impacts identified in the EA are within the scope of the J2EIS and MJ2EA. The research proposed by EnCana is expected to lead to lower-impact techniques. It is anticipated that implementation of the Proposed Action will reduce impacts for most resources to levels below those analyzed in the J2EIS and MJ2EA. The economic benefit of allowing the project is important to EnCana, the local community, and local and Federal governments.
- 4) **Agency Statutory Requirements.** All pertinent statutory requirements applicable to this proposal were considered.
- 5) **National Policy.** Exploration and development of Federal oil and gas leases is an integral part of the BLM oil and gas leasing program under authority of the *Mineral Leasing Act of 1920* and the *Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976*, and the *National Energy Policy*. The United States continues to rely heavily on foreign energy sources. Oil and gas leasing is needed to encourage development of domestic oil and gas reserves to reduce the United State’s dependence on foreign energy supplies. Therefore, the decision is consistent with national policy.
- 6) **Measures to Avoid or Minimize Environmental Harm.** The adoption of the Proposed Action will represent practical and effective means to avoid or minimize environmental harm.

- 7) **Public Comments.** Ten comment letters were received on the scope of the EA during the 15-day scoping period that ended August 25, 2005. Public comments were analyzed and incorporated into this project where applicable.

The decision to approve the Proposed Action takes into account important management considerations, Federal agency missions, and the public's need for oil and gas. The decision balances these considerations with the degree of adverse impact to the environment and the Proposed Action's benefits. The development effort will help meet public needs for oil and gas while at the same time allowing humans to coexist with nature in a way that allows the least degree of irreversible, irretrievable commitment of resources. The long-term productivity of the area would neither be lost nor substantially reduced as a result of approving the Proposed Action.

COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING

Qualified personnel from EnCana will be available during and following construction to ensure compliance with construction, reclamation, and other requirements and provisions of this Decision Record. EnCana will be required to conduct monitoring of the project in coordination with BLM and other State and Federal agencies. Appropriate remedial action will be required by the BLM or the State of Wyoming in the event unacceptable impacts are identified.

EnCana will comply with all appropriate Federal, State and local laws and regulations.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative were considered and analyzed in detail in the EA.

Proposed Action.

The Proposed Action would involve drilling 45 wells on 43 matted locations, and using existing well pads for completion and production of the 45 wells.

No Action. Under this alternative, BLM would prohibit the drilling, use of wooden mats, and treatment variables on the 43 drilling locations in the three pilot areas. Current land and resource uses would continue as approved by the ROD for the J2EIS and DR for the MJ2EA.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES

Other alternatives were not considered for this project because the intent is to research new development techniques and analyze impacts of the Proposed Action.

APPEAL

This decision is subject to appeal. Under BLM regulation, this decision is subject to administrative review in accordance with 43 *Code of Federal Regulation (C.F.R.)* 3165. Any request for administrative review of this decision must include the information required under 43 C.F.R. 3165.3(b) (State Director Review), including all supporting documentation. Such request must be filed in writing with the State Director, Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 1828, Cheyenne, WY, 82003, within 20 business days of the date such notice of decision was received or considered to have been received.

SIGNATURE

 9/28/05
Priscilla Meham, Pinedale Field Manager Date