

Scoping Notice

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Pinedale Field Office (PFO) is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) to disclose the potential effects of allowing QEP Energy (QEP) to construct the Stewart Point 7-28 well pad and drill two natural gas delineation wells this summer. The wells would be located in Sec. 28, T. 33 N., R. 109 W., approximately 4.5 miles south of Pinedale, Wyo. in the Mesa Breaks of the Pinedale Anticline Project Area (PAPA). No wildlife restrictions would be in effect during development, drilling, or completion operations.

This proposal modifies a 2006 QEP proposal which originally sited the project area .25 mile east of the currently proposed location. The 2006 proposal garnered comments from 26 members of the public regarding mule deer and pronghorn crucial winter range and migration corridors, visual impacts, the cultural significance of the Ruby Butte area, air quality, surface water and groundwater protection, and erosion and environmental degradation. Many of these comments were addressed in the PAPA Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) Record of Decision (ROD) signed on Sept. 12, 2008.

The general importance of this area for mule deer has been known for some time; however, since the signing of the ROD, the BLM has received additional information from a Western Ecosystems Technology, Inc. report, confirming that the proposed action is located within an identified mule deer migration corridor. The report (available at <http://www.wy.blm.gov/jio-papo/papo/index.htm>) allows the BLM to quantify habitat use, which will enable a more precise determination of impacts and responses. Mule deer populations have declined below the population threshold outlined in the 2008 ROD Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Matrix and a management response is required; as such, the protection of migration corridor connectivity to mule deer crucial winter range on the eastern portion of the Mesa is of primary concern.

The initial public comment period for this proposal will close on March 11, 2011. Mail or deliver written comments to: Janet Bellis, BLM Pinedale Field Office, 1625 W. Pine St., P.O. Box 768, Pinedale, WY 82941. Comments can also be e-mailed to wypfogen@blm.gov with “Stewart Point 7-28” in the subject line.

The draft EA will be made available for additional comment at a future date.

For more information, please contact Janet Bellis at 307-367-5316 or jbellis@blm.gov or visit the BLM Pinedale Field Office at 1625 W. Pine St., Pinedale, Wyo.