



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Rock Springs Field Office
280 Highway 191 North
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901



Scoping Notice Desolation Road Exploratory Gas Wells Proposal

1.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW

Samson Resources Company (Samson) has notified the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rock Springs Field Office (RSFO) regarding a proposal to conduct exploration and development operations underlying oil and gas leases owned by Samson within the Desolation Road Unit (DRU), Sweetwater County, Wyoming. Samson proposes to drill, complete, produce, and eventually reclaim 2 exploratory wells to the Fort Union Formation. Samson proposes to drill DRU Well #31-28 on Federal land and DRU Well #34-21 on fee (private) land with the associated infrastructure that includes an access road and gathering lines for the construction, delivery, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project. The BLM is the agency responsible for the authorizing action for the DRU Well #31-28 because the proposed project would occur on federal land with federal mineral rights. The Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission has primary authority for the DRU Well #34-21 because the Proposed Project would occur on private land with private mineral rights.

The productive life of each well is estimated to be approximately 40 years. Although actual operations are subject to change as conditions warrant, Samson's plan of development is to drill two wells within a year.

1.1 Project Location

The Proposed Project consists of approximately 18.5 acres including the pad and the access road located in the Haystack Wash area within the Monument Valley Special Management Area (SMA), and is about 30 miles southwest of Wamsutter, Wyoming, and 60 miles southeast of Rock Springs, Wyoming. All or parts of the Public Land Survey System sections listed in Table 1 are included in the Proposed Project Area and shown in Figure 1. Land ownership is characterized as checkerboard, where a large swath is intermixed between BLM-administered and private lands (Figure 1).

Ninety percent of the land within the DRU (T. 16 N., Rs. 95-97 W.) has been leased for oil and gas exploration and development and the Federal land encompasses 54% of the DRU, with minerals administered by the BLM RSFO.

Table 1: Approximate Project Location in Public Land Survey System

Township	Range	Sections
16 North	96 West	28, 27, 26, 25 Federal
16 North	96 West	21 Fee/Private

1.2 Existing Oil and Gas Development

As of May 2009, the closest well is 6 miles east of the Project Area, located in T. 16 N., R. 95 W. and is operated by Questar as the Mulligan Draw No. 4.

2.0 PROPOSED PROJECT OPERATIONS

2.1 Access Roads

Access to the Project Area is generally from the north along Interstate 80 (I-80) to the intersection of Creston Junction, then south for 29 miles on Wyoming State Highway 789 (SH 789) to Dad, Wyoming. About 25 miles of existing graveled and improved secondary roads beginning at the Barrel Springs Road would serve as the primary access to the Project Area, generally traveling northwesterly from Dad.

Access within the Project Area would be via the existing road network to a reclaimed road. Samson proposes to construct a total of about 3.8 miles of new access road from the reclaimed road to the federal well (DRU #31-28) on BLM-administered land and about 0.3 miles to DRU Well #34-21 on private land from the DRU Well #31-28. An additional 1.1 miles of existing road would also be upgraded. Samson would develop a transportation plan to minimize surface disturbance from new and improved road construction and ensure safe traffic movement. The road width would be 18 feet with a maximum disturbance of 35 feet. The road and pipeline will be co-located.

2.2 Well Pads

The one well pad on federal land would be constructed from the native surface materials present onsite and leveled by balancing cut-and-fill areas where appropriate. Topsoil and native vegetation would be removed and stockpiled for use in the reclamation process, including the re-establishment of vegetation. Typically, an access road and well pad would generally be constructed in about 3 to 10 days, depending on terrain and site limitations.

A typical pad for a single vertical well would average approximately 4.5 acres. After interim reclamation, long-term surface disturbance associated with a typical single well pad would be approximately 1.5 acres.

A fenced, lined, and padded reserve pit, approximately 10 to 12 feet deep, would be excavated within the pad to temporarily store drilling fluids, cuttings, and water produced during drilling operations.

2.3 Drilling

Samson primarily uses vertical well bores to produce from the Fort Union Formation. Wells would typically be drilled utilizing a conventional, mechanically powered mobile drilling rig. Duration of drilling operations on a given well can vary greatly depending on depth and conditions encountered while drilling, ranging from approximately 10 to 20 days for a vertical Fort Union well.

[Page intentionally left blank Figure 1
Insert map]

Fresh water used for drilling purposes would be consistent with water appropriation permits obtained from the Wyoming State Engineer's Office, and would be obtained from commercial or privately owned water source wells. Water may be recycled for use in drilling, completion, workover, well abandonment, and hydrostatic pipeline testing operations.

2.4 Completion and Testing

Completion and testing operations would require approximately 3 to 10 days to perform. In general, the completion of the well would consist of perforating the production casing; productivity and/or formation pressure testing, if deemed necessary; stimulation of the formation(s) utilizing hydraulic fracturing technology (fracing); flow back of fracturing fluids; flow testing to determine post fracture productivity; and installation of production equipment to facilitate hydrocarbon sales. Fresh water used for fracing and flow testing purposes would be consistent with water appropriation permits obtained from the Wyoming State Engineer's Office, and would be obtained from commercial or privately owned water source wells. Water may also be recycled from drilling.

Hydrocarbons and water are typically quantified and flared during testing operations, which are conducted on an as-needed basis. Following the initial flow period, the well would be shut in until facilities are in place to allow the well to produce.

2.5 Production

Gathering lines made of steel or other durable materials to transport the produced gas from the new wells to the pipeline system would typically be buried. Samson, in consultation with BLM, would consider installing surface pipelines, where practical, to minimize erosion. Surface lines may be installed while Samson tests the exploratory wells to determine whether they will produce in economically recoverable quantities.

Produced water is typically minimal and would be stored on the well pad and transported by truck to a permitted disposal well. Produced water storage tanks would be emptied approximately once every two months, resulting in minimal project-related truck traffic.

2.6 Interim Reclamation

Samson would comply with Onshore Oil and Gas Order Number 1 to perform interim reclamation. The reserve pit, the portion of the well location and access road not needed for production operations, and pipeline corridors would be rehabilitated according to the requirements specified in the BLM-approved Application for Permit to Drill (APD) and Conditions of Approval (COAs).

2.7 Final Reclamation

Abandonment of the well and its facilities would occur at the end of the productive life of a well and would comply with applicable federal and state regulations as well as the APD to the COAs. Once surface equipment is removed from the site, the area would be recontoured to its original appearance, to the extent possible. Topsoil that was stockpiled during well pad and facility construction would be distributed on the surface and all disturbed areas would be planted with a seed mixture of species specified by the BLM.

3.0 APPLICANT-COMMITTED ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION MEASURES

Samson will comply with all applicable federal, state, local, and agency rules and regulations, and has committed to the following environmental protection measures within the Project Area. Additional applicant-committed environmental protection measures and COAs necessary to protect resources in the Project Area will be developed pending the outcome of the impact analysis in the Environmental Consequences section of the EA.

3.1 Cultural and Wildlife Resources

- Samson will conduct site-specific surveys for cultural resources and protected wildlife and plants prior to surface-disturbing activities, as applicable. The cultural and wildlife resources reports will be provided to the BLM for review.
- Samson will avoid or mitigate impacts to these resources in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations.
- A BLM approved monitor will be present for surface-disturbing activities.

3.2 Surface Disturbance and Transportation Planning

- Samson will develop a transportation plan and utilize transportation planning to minimize impacts from project development, providing the BLM with a description of its construction procedures.
- Samson will construct a new road and well site to the standards described in the BLM publication Surface Operating Standards for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development, 4th Edition (Gold Book) (BLM and USFS, Revised 2007) and in BLM Manual 9113.
- Samson will design and construct all new roads to a safe and appropriate standard to accommodate their intended use.
- Samson will surface access roads with gravel or other appropriate material as directed by the BLM if the well is put into production.
- Samson will install 210 to 400-bbl (billion barrel) tanks on the pads of producing wells to minimize collection and transport of produced water to its disposal site.
- Samson anticipates that water hauling trucks will need to visit well locations on the average of only once every two months, thereby minimizing impacts from well-associated truck traffic.
- Appropriate mitigation measures for surface disturbing activities, including avoidance of 25% slopes or greater and erosive soils, will be applied.
- Samson will install surface pipelines temporarily until the well produces adequately.

3.3 Soils and Sedimentation

- Samson will implement best management practices as described in its Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and will consult with the AO to determine procedures and construction techniques to prevent bank erosion from construction and use, erosion, and sedimentation.
- Samson will utilize best management practices and materials, such as riprap, to minimize erosion from low water crossings and other drainages.

3.4 Water Resources

- Samson will line all reserve pits and pad them as necessary to prevent tearing or puncturing of the liner and fluid migration to the subsurface.
- The appropriate mitigation will be addressed for the drainages in the Project Area.

3.5 Visual Resources

- The entire Project Area will be managed consistent with the Class II visual resource management goals. Samson, in consultation with BLM, will develop mitigation measures to reduce visual intrusion of project infrastructure including the well and road on the landscape.
- Samson will perform final reclamation recontouring and revegetation of all disturbed areas, including access roads, to the original contour or a contour that blends with the surrounding topography.

3.6 Vegetation

- Samson will control weeds on disturbed areas within the exterior limits of the access roads, well pads, and pipeline routes in accordance with approval from the AO.
- Surveys for federally threatened and endangered and BLM Sensitive plant species will be conducted prior to surface disturbing activities.

3.7 Paleontology

- A paleontological field survey will be conducted by a BLM-permitted paleontologist and a report submitted to BLM for review prior to surface-disturbing activities.

3.8 Other

- All garbage and non-flammable waste materials will be contained within a self-contained, portable dumpster or trash cage. As needed, the waste will be transported to an approved disposal facility.

4.0 RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

4.1 Green River Resource Management Plan

The approved Decision Record (1997) for the Green River Resource Management Plan (GRRMP) is the document that directs management of federal lands within the BLM RSFO. The objective for management of oil and gas resources, as stated in the GRRMP, is to provide for leasing, exploration, and development of oil and gas while protecting other resource values. In addition, the GRRMP states that public lands within the Monument Valley SMA, which encompasses the Project Area, are open to mineral leasing and development in order to promote mineral recovery on behalf of the United States, along with appropriate mitigation of disturbance on a case-by-case basis. The development of natural gas within the Desolation Road Unit Project Area is in conformance with the GRRMP. The environmental analysis that will be prepared for the proposed Desolation Road Unit Project Area will incorporate decisions, terms, and conditions of use as described in the GRRMP.

We will incorporate the extensive analysis of the Desolation Flats EIS into the Desolation Road EA. The EIS should give significant information and analysis regarding wildlife and other resources in the area.

5.0 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

The proposed project will be analyzed in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). To comply with NEPA and applicable Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations that implement NEPA, the BLM is required to prepare an environmental analysis. The environmental document, which is an environmental assessment (EA) for this project, will serve the following purposes:

- Provide the public and governmental agencies with information about the potential environmental consequences of the project and alternatives;
- Identify all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the project and alternatives; and
- Provide the responsible official with information upon which to make an informed decision regarding the project. One element of the NEPA process is "scoping." Scoping activities are initiated early in the process to:
 - Identify reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental analysis; and
 - Identify issues of environmental concern related to the Proposed Project.

To determine the depth of analysis for issues addressed in the EA, this Scoping Notice has been prepared to enable governmental agencies, the general public, and other interested parties to participate in and contribute to the analysis process. Public input is important in establishing the scope of analysis for any NEPA document, and the BLM encourages public participation.

6.0 PRELIMINARY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following issues and concerns have been identified by an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists. The issues identified below are not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather a starting point for public input.

- Potential increased traffic and associated impacts on existing county, state, and BLM roads.
- Potential socio-economic impacts to local communities.
- Potential impacts to surface and groundwater resources, including floodplains and increased surface disturbance and associated sedimentation and salinity to the Green River.
- Potential impacts from emissions resulting from additional drilling and production activities.
- Potential impacts related to reclamation of disturbed areas and control of invasive plants.
- Potential conflicts with livestock management operations in the Project Area.
- Potential impacts to cultural, historical, and paleontological resources within the Project Area.
- Potential impacts to wildlife habitats and populations within the Project Area, including big game and raptors.
- Potential impacts to threatened, endangered, or candidate plant and animal species, including potential Colorado River depletions and effects on downstream listed fish species.
- Potential conflicts between mineral development activities and recreational opportunities.
- Potential cumulative effects of drilling and development activities when combined with other ongoing and proposed developments on lands adjacent to the Desolation Road Unit Project Area.

7.0 INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM

Based upon current understanding of issues, concerns, and opportunities, an interdisciplinary team (IDT) made up of resource specialists within the BLM Rock Springs Field Office has been identified. The following disciplines are represented on the IDT.

Interdisciplinary Team Leader/Environmental Scientist (Surface Protection)

Range Management Specialist

Archaeologist

Archaeologist

Geologist

Realty Specialist

Recreation Planner

Hydrologist

Petroleum Engineer

Wildlife Biologist

Wildlife Biologist

Public Affairs Specialist

Planning

7.2 Initial Mailing List

The initial mailing distribution for this Scoping Notice includes the following agencies, organizations, and media, in addition to leaseholders and individuals.

Local Government

City of Rock Springs

Sweetwater County

Sweetwater County Conservation District

Sweetwater County Extension

Sweetwater County Weed and Pest

Libraries, Educational Institutions

Sweetwater County Library System

University of Wyoming Library

University of Wyoming Natural Diversity
Database

Western Wyoming Community College

Wyoming Association of Professional
Archaeologists

Wyoming Association of Professional Historians

Environmental or Conservation Groups

American Lands Alliance

Animal Protection Institute of America

Biodiversity Conservation Alliance

Defenders of Wildlife

Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund

Environmental Defense Fund

Land and Water Fund for the Rockies

Mormon Trails Association

National Pony Express Association

National Wildlife Federation

People for the USA

People for Wyoming

Predator Project

Public Lands Foundation

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Sierra Club

Southwest Wyoming Mule Deer Foundation

The Alliance for Historic Wyoming

The Nature Conservancy

The Wilderness Society

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Trout Unlimited

Western Watersheds Project, Wyoming Office

Western Wyoming Mule Deer Foundation

Wyoming Advocates for Animals

Wyoming Outdoor Council

Wyoming Wilderness Association

Wyoming Wildlife Federation

Federal Agencies

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

U.S. Department of Energy
U.S. EPA, Region 8
U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. NRCS, Western Wyoming Resource
Conservation & Development
USDI Bureau of Reclamation
USDI Minerals Management Service
USDI National Park Service, Long Distance
Trail Office
USDI Office of Environmental Policy and
Compliance
USDI Office of Surface Mining

Federal Elected Officials

U.S. Representative Cynthia Lummis
U.S. Senator John Barrasso
U.S. Senator Mike Enzi

Media

Casper Star-Tribune
Green River Star
Rock Springs Daily Rocket-Miner

Miscellaneous Groups

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Bjork, Lindley, Little, P.C.
Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain
States
Natural Resources Defense Council
Oregon-California Trail Association
Petroleum Association of Wyoming
Public Lands Advocacy
Rock Springs Grazing Association
Southwest Wyoming Industrial Association
Wyoming Association of Municipalities
Wyoming Business Alliance
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming Mining Association

Wyoming Public Lands Council
Wyoming Sportsman's Association
Wyoming State Grazing Board
Wyoming Wool Growers Association

State Agencies/Boards

Department of Agriculture
Department of Environmental Quality
Department of Game and Fish
Department of Revenue
Department of Transportation
Geological Survey
Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
Planning Office
State Engineer's Office
State Historic Preservation Office
State Lands and Investments
Wyoming Business Council
Wyoming State Library

State Elected Officials

Governor Dave Freudenthal
Representative Allen Jaggi
Representative Bernadine Craft
Representative Bill Thompson
Representative Joe Barbuto
Representative Kathy Davison
Representative Stan Blake
Senator John Hastert
Senator Marty Martin
Senator Stan Cooper

Tribal Nations

Eastern Shoshone
Northern Arapaho
Northern Ute
Shoshone-Bannock