

Decision Record

Jim Bridger Power Plant 3-D Seismic and Electromagnetic Surveys

WYW167761

WY-040-EA10-111



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BLM/WY/PL0-10/043+1990

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DECISION RECORD
for
Jim Bridger Power Plant 3-D Seismic
Case #: WYW167761
EA #: WY-040-EA10-111

Summary

The proposed action is to conduct three-dimensional (3-D) and electromagnetic (EM) geophysical exploration in Sweetwater County, Wyoming. The project, hereafter referred to as the Proposed Action, would be near Point of Rocks in Townships 20 and 21 North and Ranges 100 and 101 West. The project area covers approximately 39,588 acres of federal, state, and private land. The Proposed Action is needed to effectively evaluate hydrocarbon reserves underlying the project area for potential further development of oil and gas resources.

Decision

Based upon the analysis of the potential environmental impacts described in the *Jim Bridger Power Plant 3-D Seismic Environmental Assessment* and supporting documents in the case file, it is my decision to approve the Proposed Action to conduct 3-D and EM geophysical exploration in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, near Point of Rocks in Townships 20 and 21 North and Ranges 100 and 101 West.

1. **Compliance with applicable laws:** The 3-D Seismic application was submitted and evaluated under the following authorities: Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 as amended; National Environmental Policy Act; Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976; Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987; Clean Air Act; Clean Water Act; National Historic Preservation Act; and Endangered Species Act. The decision is consistent with all federal, state, and county authorizing actions required for implementing the Proposed Action. All pertinent statutory requirements applicable to this proposal were considered for the proposed action alternative.
2. **Selected Alternative:** The proposed alternative is to conduct a 3-D and EM geophysical exploration project on federal, state, and private lands in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, near Point of Rocks, Wyoming. Acquisition of seismic exploration data involves the synthetic generation of seismic waves and their subsequent detection after passing through or reflecting off the region of interest (i.e., the "target"). A seismic survey typically involves generating hundreds to tens of thousands of seismic source events at established locations in the survey area. The seismic energy generated at each source is detected and recorded at a variety of distances from the source location. To effectively generate 3-D seismic data, receiver points are placed in a grid pattern with multiple source points. Force waves are generated by explosive charges or specially designed "thumper" vehicles and are collected by the receivers and used to generate models of the subsurface geological structures.
3. **FONSI:** I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the approved land use plan. I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the

analysis of potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that the proposed action with the mitigation measures (Attachment 1) as identified in the EA will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. It is my decision to implement the proposed action.

4. **Public Involvement.** No public scoping was performed. Comments were collected internally and incorporated into the EA document in the appropriate sections.

5. **Rationale for Alternative Selected.** The Proposed Action with the mitigation measures as described in the EA was selected because it is in compliance with the Green River RMP and the BLM has determined it will not have any significant impacts on the human environment.

6. **Appeal Procedures.**

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR 4. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in this office (at the above address) within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21 (58 FR 4939, January 19, 1993) or 43 CFR 2804.1 for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
2. The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
3. The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
4. Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.


Lance Porter, Field Manager
Rock Springs Field Office

September 23, 2010
Date

Attachment 1 – Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures will be employed to avoid or reduce potentially significant effects. Monitoring would be required to ensure the implementation of these measures.

Vegetation and Noxious Weeds

- Reclaim all surface disturbances using a BLM-approved seed mixture.
- Ensure vehicles and equipment are cleaned, power-washed, and free of soil and vegetation debris prior to entry and use of access roads to prevent transporting weed seeds.
- Ensure all seed mixtures, erosion control materials, and reclamation materials are certified weed free.

Water Resources

- Reclaim all surface disturbances within the Town of Superior aquifer recharge zone.
- Seed disturbed areas in the Town of Superior aquifer recharge zone for the 17 EM points.
- Limit vegetation removal, OHV usage, and surface disturbances to the smallest area necessary to conduct work within the Superior aquifer recharge area.
- If avoiding wetland areas is not possible, allow vibroseis buggies to pass only one way in wetland areas to avoid rutting and unnecessary surface disturbances of vegetation and the upper soil layer in wetlands and riparian areas.
- Conduct work during drier months and low-flow conditions in perennial and intermittent streams.

Wildlife and Sensitive Species

- Avoid active prairie dog burrows and active pygmy rabbit burrows by 50 feet.
- Project activities are scheduled to avoid wildlife conflicts; however, if the schedule changes, the following seasonal restrictions would be enforced:
 - Avoid pronghorn and mule deer crucial range November 15 through April 30.
 - Avoid greater sage-grouse nesting areas March 15 through July 15.
 - Avoid areas of high probability for mountain plover habitat or conduct nest survey and avoid active nesting April 10 through July 10.
 - Survey for burrowing owls if project activities occur between April 1 and September 10.
 - Avoid all active raptor nests by 0.5 mile (1.0 mile for ferruginous hawk) February 1 through July 31.

Noise and Safety

- The Operator should keep all noise levels at a minimum where vehicles are not used extensively for unnecessary travel or near the town of Point of Rocks, especially between 9:00 PM and 8:00 AM.
- No firearms would be allowed in the project area at anytime.
- No smoking would be allowed outside of vehicles to reduce fire hazards.
- An emergency response plan would be in place to address fire, injuries, and other potential hazards.

Hazardous or Solid Wastes

- After seismic activities cease, the Operator would collect and properly dispose of all waste generated by this project at an approved waste disposal site.
- The Operator would submit its Spill Prevention Containment and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan to the authorized officer prior to scheduled start-up. If the Operator encounters any waste dump sites on or adjacent to the project area, they must be reported to the BLM.
- All refueling would occur on existing roads and absorbent pads would be used while refueling to prevent a potential fuel spill. In the event of a spill of lubricants, hydraulic fluid, or any other hydrocarbon during seismic activities, the Operator would immediately cease activities within the area and contain and clean up the affected area immediately. Any contaminated vegetation and soil would be removed and disposed of in an approved waste disposal facility. The Operator would have absorbent onsite for spill containment. After cleanup is complete, the spilt substance(s) and materials used for cleanup would be removed from the project area and disposed of at an approved disposal facility. All spills would be immediately reported to the BLM.