

Scoping Notice

OCI Sodium Lease Modification–WYW079420 OCI Wyoming L.P.

Description of Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rock Springs Field Office (RSFO) has been notified by OCI Wyoming L.P. (OCI) that it is seeking to modify Sodium Lease WYW079420 to support expansion of its mining operations. The lease area is part of OCI's Big Island Mine complex, which consists of an underground trona mine and associated soda ash refinery.

The company is proposing a lease modification affecting lands adjacent to the current lease located north of Interstate 80, approximately 15 miles northwest of Green River, Wyoming in Sweetwater County. If modified, the lease would be expanded to include all of Section 34, Township 20 North, Range 109 West. The lease modification would add approximately 640 acres to the existing federal lease.

The company plans to continue to conduct underground trona mining operations on adjacent private lands. The private lease holdings are north, east and west of the proposed lease modification. The lands south of the lease modification are unleased at this time. The attached map shows the OCI trona leases from the BLM, Anadarko Petroleum and private lease holders, as well as the surface ownership in the project area.

OCI owns and operates the Big Island Mine complex. The mining process involves two trona seams, Bed 24 and Bed 25, nominally at 850 feet and 900 feet deep. The Big Island Mine was started in 1962 by the Stauffer Chemical Company and has been in operation continuously since. OCI Chemical L. P. acquired the property in 1996.

The underground mining operation uses continuous miners mining in a modified room and pillar method employing a no surface subsidence mine design due to its proximity to the Green River. During the 50-year life of the property, no surface subsidence has been measured. Future mining will continue to maintain a no subsidence mine design.

The OCI refinery purifies the trona ore into soda ash. Soda ash is an essential raw material in glass making, chemicals, detergents, and other industrial products. OCI sells the soda ash domestically and internationally. Soda ash production from the Green River basin contributes substantially to the gross domestic economy due to its diverse uses.

If approved, the lease modification project would serve the growing need for soda ash, while providing jobs and tax revenues for Sweetwater County.

Relationship to Land Use Plans

The Green River Resource Management Plan (GRRMP) and Record of Decision, effective 1997, allow for sodium leasing and development. The GRRMP provides land use guidance for sodium leasing within the project area.

Compliance with National Environmental Policy Act

The sodium lease modification is subject to the appropriate level of environmental analysis. To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, and the Council of Environmental Quality regulations, which implement NEPA, the BLM is required to conduct an environmental analysis.

Land and Resource Management Issues and Concerns

A BLM interdisciplinary team of resource specialists will be involved in the analysis of the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives. Land and resource issues tentatively identified as potentially affected by this proposed action include: cultural resources, oil and gas, other leases, visual resource management, climate change, socioeconomics, and air quality.

Public input is important in establishing the level and scope of the analysis. The BLM is requesting the public's help in identifying the level of analysis needed, alternatives for analysis, other issues or concerns that should be analyzed, mitigation opportunities, and any other comments or ideas to help ensure the completeness of the analysis process.

Written substantive scoping comments should be received by June 24, and may be submitted via facsimile, email, mail, or hand-delivery during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.) to:

Jeff Clawson, Mining Engineer
OCI Sodium Lease Modification - WYW079420
BLM Rock Springs Field Office
280 Highway 191 North
Rock Springs, WY 82901
Facsimile: 307-352-0218
Email: BLM_WY_OCI_Sodium_Lease_WYW079420@blm.gov
Please list "OCI Sodium Lease Modification - WYW079420" in the subject line.