

# Hamilton Dome Flowline Replacement, Sundry Notice DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0052-EA

April 2011



The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

**DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0052-EA**

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**DECISION RECORD**  
**for DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0052-EA**  
**Hamilton Dome Flowline Replacement, Sundry Notice**

**I. DECISION**

It is my decision to approve the associated Sundry Notice as described as Alternative 2 of Environmental Assessment No. DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0052-EA, and to include those measures proposed by Merit Energy Co.'s Sundry Notice application.

This Authorization will be granted subject to the Conditions of Approval as attached.

**II. PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY:**

The proposed action conforms to the Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan for the Grass Creek Resource Area dated September 1998, which is under revision and consolidation into the Bighorn Basin Resource Management Plan (expected completion in 2012.) The decisions in the Grass Creek Resource Management Plan provide general management direction and allocation of uses and resources on the public lands in the area. The proposed action falls within alternatives analyzed in the Draft Bighorn Basin RMP revision.

**III. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Project considered three alternatives.

Alternative 1 -- The "Proposed Action" alternative, assessed and disclosed the projected effects of the operator's proposal as detailed in the "Proposed Action" portion of the environmental assessment.

Alternative 2 -- The "Proposed Action with BLM implemented Design Features" alternative assessed the proposed action and BLM staff specialists input. It was felt that certain mitigation measures were necessary and proper to provide adequate protection of the surface and subsurface. For the purpose of analysis, the Conditions of Approval are part of this alternative.

Alternative 3 -- The "No Action" alternative assessed the effects of not implementing any portion of the proposal. Under the No Action Alternative, the WFO analyzed the effects of a denial of any further development associated with this project. This alternative provides a benchmark, enabling the decision-maker to compare the magnitude of the environmental effects of the alternatives.

**IV. RATIONALE FOR DECISION**

Alternative 2 was chosen as being the most environmentally sound alternative.

This decision is in conformance with the Grass Creek Management Plan.

Conditions of Approval necessary for this action are attached and are considered a part of this approval.

**V. APPEALS**

Under BLM regulations, this decision is subject to administrative review in accordance with 43 CFR 3165. Any request for administrative review of this decision must include information required under 43 CFR 3165.3(b) (State Director Review), including all supporting documentation. Such a request must be filed in writing with the State Director, Bureau of Land Management, P.O.

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Box 1828, Cheyenne, Wyoming 82003, no later than 20 business days after this Decision Record is received or considered to have been received.

Any party who is adversely affected by the State Director's decision may appeal that decision to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, as provided in 43 CFR 3165.4

/s/Don Krump  
Authorized Officer

04/26/2011  
Date

Attachments --  
EA: DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0052-EA; Conditions of Approval

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# Hamilton Dome Flowline Replacement, Sundry Notice DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0052-EA

**BLM**

Worland Field Office, Wind River/Bighorn Basin District, Wyoming

April 2011



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**DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0052-EA**

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***FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT***  
**for DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0052-EA**  
**Hamilton Dome Flowline Replacement, Sundry Notice**

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the environmental assessment DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0052-EA, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the selected action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

/s/Don Krump  
Authorized Officer

04/26/2011  
Date

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April 2011



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**DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0052-EA**

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# Hamilton Dome Flowline Replacement DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0052-EA

**Type of Project:**  
*Sundry Notice*

**General Location of Proposed Action:**  
*1/4 1/4; sec 13, 14; T.44N., R.98W.*

**Name and Location of Preparing Office:**  
*Worland Field Office  
101 S. 23<sup>rd</sup> St.  
Worland, WY 82401*

**Lease/Serial/Case File Number:**  
*WYC044140,*

**Applicant Name:**  
*Merit Energy Co.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action**

The purpose of this action is to allow the operator to complete work on their Oil & Gas leases for further recovery of mineral resources. This would result in maintaining the goals and objectives of the operators lease rights and are in compliance with Section 6 of their Lease Terms.

The need for the action is established by the BLM's responsibility under FLPMA to respond to this type of request.

### **Conformance**

The proposed action conforms to the Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan for the Grass Creek Resource Area dated September 1998, which is under revision and consolidation into the Bighorn Basin Resource Management Plan (expected completion in 2012.) The decisions in the Grass Creek Resource Management Plan provide general management direction and allocation of uses and resources on the public lands in the area. The proposed action falls within alternatives analyzed in the Draft Bighorn Basin RMP revision.

### **Decision to be Made:**

The BLM will decide whether or not to approve the application submitted by the operator, and if so, what conditions of approval would apply.

### **Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses**

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA) and complies with applicable regulations and laws passed subsequent to the Act. In addition, this EA is prepared utilizing the stipulations and format outlined in the BLM NEPA Handbook H-1790-1 (BLM 1988). The Proposed Action and alternatives will comply with relevant federal, state, and local regulations, plans, and policies.

This action would allow the lessee to exercise their legal right to drill, explore, and produce hydrocarbons from the lease under regulations and policy derived from the Mineral Leasing Act. The Secretary of the Interior has entered into a lease agreement with the proponent that gives them the “exclusive right to drill for, mine, extract, remove and dispose of the oil and gas resources within the lease area.” The applicant has submitted a proposed action to the BLM to at least partially exercise their rights under this agreement, in accordance with 43 CFR 3162.3-1 and Onshore Oil and Gas Order No. 1.

This project does not fit any of the specified criteria allowing for Categorical Exclusion from NEPA analysis under Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and is therefore being analyzed herein.

The area was assessed as per the Wyoming Instruction Memorandum (IM) WY-IM-2010-012 (Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Management Policy on Wyoming Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Administered Lands including the Federal Mineral Estate). The IM directs the BLM to analyze Greater Sage-grouse habitat out to a minimum of four miles from the project location. This analysis is to occur both within and outside of the Greater Sage-grouse core areas (core areas as designated by the Wyoming Governor’s Executive Order EO 2010-4). This project does not fall within a Greater Sage-grouse core area and conforms to the guidance above.

The BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H.1601-1) states that the BLM must consider the management of lands with wilderness characteristics during the land use planning process. The criteria used to identify these lands are essentially the same criteria used for determining wilderness characteristics for wilderness study areas (WSA). However, the authority set forth in Section 603(a) of FLPMA to complete the three part wilderness review process (inventory, study, and report to Congress) expired on October 21, 1993; therefore, FLPMA does not apply to new WSA proposals and consideration of new WSA proposals on BLM-administered public lands is no longer valid. As required by FLPMA, Section 201, as well as consistent with Secretarial Order 3310, the alternatives were evaluated and screened in accordance with the SO 3310 and the Draft Manuals.

### **Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues**

The proposed action was reviewed by an interdisciplinary team. Based on the size and routine nature of the proposed project, it was determined that external scoping was not necessary.

## **PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

### **Project Description**

Merit Energy Company requests permission to install 352' of 3" steel flowline from the Placer 139-2 to intersect the Placer 106 flowline to Battery 4. The flowline would be buried 3-4 feet deep. After installation the ditch would be backfilled and the right-of-way would be reclaimed and seeded.

Merit Energy Company requests permission to replace 1021' of 3" iron flowline with 3" Fiberspars's poly fiberglass pipe to address numerous leaks on this line. The flowline would be buried 3-4 feet deep from the U-76-13-1 to the H<sub>2</sub>S Gas Injection Plant using the existing right-of-way. After installation the old flowline would be removed and the ditch would be backfilled and the right-of-way would be reclaimed and seeded.

Merit Energy Company requests permission to install 566' of 2.5" poly, fiberglass flowline from the Placer/Rathvon #4 water injection well to the Placer 82. The flowline would be buried 3-4 feet deep using existing roads as the right-of-way. After installation the roads would be backfilled.

### **Alternatives Considered**

#### **Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) --**

This alternative would permit the action as proposed by the operator and discussed in the Project Description.

#### **Alternative 2- (Proposed Action with incorporated Design Features)—**

Based on BLM staff specialists input and the observations made at the joint field inspection, it was felt that additional measures were necessary and proper to provide adequate protection of the surface and subsurface.

The BLM can set forth design features that are necessary for the protection of the surface resources, uses and the environment; and for the reclamation of the disturbed lands. Design features are those specific means, measures, or practices that make up the proposed action and alternatives. Additional design features are added as needed to the proposed action or alternatives. Regulations, standard operating procedures, stipulations, and operator committed measures, and best management practices are usually considered design features. Design features are incorporated into the Proposed Action or alternatives to reduce or avoid adverse effects.

This alternative analyzes the proposed action with BLM imposed design features. These features include:

#### **Land Use—**

No surface disturbance or construction activity shall occur outside the existing disturbed surface (approximately 15' from center). All vehicle traffic shall be kept within the approved right-of-way.

Upon installation of the new flowlines, any existing lines not needed for production operations shall be removed and hauled to an approved disposal facility. Or shall be properly purged and capped and left in place.

#### Cultural--

The operator is responsible for informing all persons in the area who are associated with this project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during construction, the operator is to immediately stop work that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary); and,
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800.11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction measures.

#### Paleontology –

The operator is responsible for informing all persons in the area who are associated with this project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing paleontological localities, or for collecting vertebrate fossils. If paleontological materials are uncovered during operations, the operator is to immediately stop work that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO).

Within five (5) working days the AO will evaluate the discoveries and take necessary actions to protect or remove the resource. Decisions regarding the appropriate measures to mitigate effects to such resources will be made in consultation with the operator.

#### Vegetation (Invasive Species) –

Regular monitoring of the site will be necessary to detect the presence of noxious weeds before they can become established and spread. If noxious weeds are detected, the operator will be responsible for treatment in accordance with BLM policy.

#### Vegetation (Native Species)—

The disturbed area would be reseeded with a native seed mix prescribed for the Hamilton Dome Oil Field.

#### Soils –

Construction activity will not be conducted using frozen or saturated soil material or during periods when watershed damage or excessive rutting is likely to occur.

No construction or routine maintenance activities shall be performed during periods when the soil is too wet to adequately support construction equipment. If such equipment creates ruts in excess of 4 inches deep, the soil shall be deemed too wet to adequately support construction equipment.

Topsoil shall be removed at a depth of 4-6inches from all areas of surface disturbance. Topsoil shall be clearly segregated from spoil material.

Following construction all disturbed areas shall be restored, topsoil replaced and areas reseeded as prescribed. To prevent erosion, waterbars, mulching, or other protective measures may be required. Backfill shall be thoroughly compacted. Topsoil shall be spread evenly over all areas to be reclaimed.

No mounding shall be permitted.

Trenches shall be routinely inspected and maintained to ensure proper settling, stabilization and reclamation.

Operators are required to obtain a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Storm Water Permit from the Wyoming DEQ for any projects that disturb one acre or more. This general construction storm water permit must be obtained from the WDEQ prior to any surface disturbing activities and can be obtained by following direction on the WDEQ website at <http://deq.state.wy.us>. Further information can be obtained by contacting the NPDES coordinator at (307) 775-7570.

The Operator shall ensure all appropriate measures are taken to control erosion. Upon completion of construction the operator shall initiate the approved Storm Water Discharge Plans on the location and associated access.

#### Hazardous Materials--

The Operator and their contractors shall comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations as they relate to hazardous materials. Hazardous materials being those chemicals listed in Title III List of Lists, EPA's Consolidated List of Chemicals Subject to Emergency Planning and the Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA) and Section 112(r) of the Clean Air Act, as amended, or the 40CFR 302.4 Table-List of Hazardous Substances and Reportable Quantities, as amended. In the event any hazardous materials are used, they would be handled in an appropriate manner to prevent environmental contamination. Any release of hazardous materials of reportable quantities, would be reported both to the National Response Center (NRC), as required in the National Oil and Hazardous Materials Contingency Plan (40 CFR 300), and the Worland Field Office, as per the Hazardous Materials Contingency Plan.

All Undesirable Events shall be reported in compliance with NTL-3A. If during any phase of the construction, drilling, production, or reclamation of the approved actions any oil or other pollutant should be discharged from the approved area, containers or vehicles impacting Federal lands, the control and total removal, disposal, and cleanup of such oil or other pollutant, wherever found, shall be the responsibility of the operator, regardless of fault. Upon failure of the operator to control, cleanup, or dispose of such discharge on or affecting Federal lands, or to repair all damages to Federal lands resulting therefrom, the authorized officer may take such measures as he deems necessary to control and cleanup the discharge and restore the area, including, where appropriate, the aquatic environment and fish and wildlife habitats, at the full expense of the operator. Such action by the authorized officer shall not relieve the operator of any liability or responsibility.

Construction sites shall be maintained in a sanitary condition at all times; waste materials at those sites shall be disposed of promptly at an appropriate waste disposal site. "Waste" means all discarded matter including, but not limited to, human waste, trash, garbage, refuse, oil drums, petroleum products, ashes, and equipment.

**Alternative 3(No Action)**

The proposed action would not be approved. Other uses within the field would continue as authorized.

## **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

Resources and features not present, and not discussed in this EA, include: Environmental Justice, Prime or Unique Farmlands, Flood Plains, Native American Religious Concerns, riparian areas, Class I visual management areas, Class I Airsheds, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wetlands, Wilderness Values or Inventoried Lands with Wilderness Characteristics.

### **Land Use**

The proposed project is within the Hamilton Dome Oil Field and adjacent to the main office on existing disturbed area. The Hamilton Dome Oil Field was discovered in 1918. The field is on lands managed by the BLM and currently includes approximately 300 active wells. This project is within the lease and unit boundaries and would not require a right-of-way.

### **Cultural Resources, Traditional Cultural Properties, Native American Religious Concerns**

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The project is located within the Hamilton Dome Oil Field (48HO643), this cultural property was previously determined not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. A Class III Cultural Inventory was not necessary on the project location. It was determined that human activity within the last 50 years has created a new land surface to such an extent as to eradicate the potential for additional cultural properties and the project area was previously inventoried at the Class III level (BLM Project #1677003Y).

### **Vegetation**

#### **Native Vegetation**

The Hamilton Dome Oil Field primarily consists of shallow loamy, saline uplands, shallow sandy and loamy range sites however there are some rock outcrops that also occur. Vegetation documented includes needle-and-thread grass (*Stipa comata*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum*), sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*), sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), pricklypear cactus (*Opuntia* spp.), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), rubber rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), indian ricegrass (*Oryzopsis hymenoides*), bottlebrush squirreltail (*Sitanion hystrix*), greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*), saltbush (*Atriplex gardneri*), sedges (*Carex* spp.), cottonwoods (*Populus* spp.), rushes (*Juncus* spp.), and juniper (*Juniperus* spp.).

#### **Invasive, Non Native Species Noxious Weeds**

Numerous noxious weed species occur in the Hamilton Dome oil field, especially in disturbed areas and around ditches. Salt cedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*), russian knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*) and canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) are noxious weeds that have been identified and treated in the past.

### **Livestock Grazing**

Hamilton Dome 00504, See Affected Environment

The affected environment as it pertains to grazing falls within the Hamilton Dome Allotment No. 00504. It is a common use allotment that is utilized by two (2) different permittees. The allotment is comprised of 11,125 public land acres and 1,156 private and state land acres for a total of 12,281 acres. The nearest BLM maintained rain gauges indicate that the area receives approximately 8-9 inches of precipitation per year which defines the allotment as being at the upper end of the 5-9 inch precipitation zone. The elevation ranges from approximately 5,700 feet

at the southwestern area of the allotment to 5,000 feet in the northeastern area of the allotment. There are no natural live water sources on the allotment however produced water from the oil production facilities of the Hamilton Dome Oil Field is discharged down several small ditches or drainages that are tributaries of Cottonwood Creek. The landform varies from rolling topography dissected by multiple dry drainages to steep ridges and cliffs.

In 1999, the Wyoming Rangeland Standards-Conformance Review Summary was completed for the allotment. In the review, the BLM determined the resource conditions in the allotment were meeting standards for healthy rangelands. Recent field observations support this determination.

Currently the allotment is utilized nearly yearlong by horses and cattle with vast majority of the grazing occurring during the non-growing season or dormant season. As currently permitted the stocking rate on the allotment is 13.9 acres per animal unit month (A/AUM).

### **Paleontology**

The surface formation is Frontier Formation and Mowry/Thermopolis Shales which have a PFYC (Potential Fossil Yield Classification) rating of 3 or moderate. This means the formation has a moderate sensitivity for paleontological resources. Typical fossils found within these formations include marine reptiles and fish. A paleontological inventory was not necessary for the project location. Existing disturbance has eradicated the potential for intact significant localities.

### **Recreation and Visual Resource Management; Special Designations Including ACECs, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**

#### Recreation

The project area is located within the extensive recreation management area (ERMA), which recreation management is custodial and addresses resource protection, use and user conflicts, and public health and safety. The project area is located within an area where recreational opportunities are very limited due to the heavy industrialized settings. Recreational opportunities exist in other areas, such as the Absaroka Mountain Foothills beyond the project area. Travel and Transportation management limits motorized use to existing roads and trails.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

As mandated by FLPMA, Section 201, the BLM is required to maintain an inventory of BLM-administered public lands to determine whether they possess wilderness characteristics. Recent inventories have found the immediate project area and surrounding areas absent of wilderness characteristics.

#### VRM

Although the project area is located on the fringes of the Absaroka foothills, the immediate area is managed as visual resource management (VRM) class IV. The objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modifications of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements. Currently, there is a significant amount of industrial facilities present which distract the casual observer from the natural elements of form, line, color, and texture.

## **Soils**

The proposed flow line from Placer 139-2 is in soil map unit 111 Rock Outcrop-Shingle-Tassle Complex. The rock outcrop consists of shale and sandstone. The Shingle soil series is a shallow (10-20 inches), well drained soil formed over shale bed rock. The Shingle soil series could be difficult to reclaim due to pH values that approach 9.0. Even though this soil is shallow to bedrock, it has few limitations for excavation since the bedrock consists of soft shale. The Tassle soil series is also shallow (10-20 inches) and well drained, however it formed over sandstone bedrock; as such, excavation could be difficult. This soil has better reclamation potential since pH values generally are lower than 8.4. Both of these soils support a Shallow Loamy 10-14 in. pz. ecological site. Based on topographic map interpretation, slopes along this proposed pipeline are 12 to 15 percent. The erosion potential, calculated as K value times slope, is moderate.

The proposed flow line from Placer 139 and the H2S disposal flow line from Placer 76 are in soil map unit 749 Renohill-Worfka Complex. The Renohill soil series is moderately deep (20-40 inches) and well drained. The Renohill series supports a Clayey 10-14 in. pz or Loamy 10-14 in. pz ecological site. It poses few excavation problems and has good reclamation potential. The Worfka soil series well drained and shallow (10-20 inches) having formed over shale and sandstone bedrock. It could pose some excavation problems should sandstone be encountered. Based on topographic map interpretation, slopes along this proposed pipeline are 2 to 4 percent. These soils support a Shallow Loamy 10-14 in. pz. and Shallow Clayey 10-14 in. pz ecological sites. In addition, pH values can approach 9.0 which could limit reclamation potential. The erosion potential calculated as K value times slope is slight.

## **Hydrology (Water Quality and Prime or Sole Source of Drinking Water, Wetlands and Riparian Zones)**

Minimal surface disturbing activity to occur in the watershed. The watershed is highly impacted by the presence of oil field related facilities in the area.

## **Wildlife**

Wildlife - Affected Environment:

The wildlife habitat within the proposed project area consists of rolling hills and incised drainages with the vegetative community dominated by Wyoming sagebrush and perennial grasses and various forbs. The area is characterized by numerous facilities, structures, and considerable surface disturbance because of past development and current oil and gas production activity associated with the Hamilton Dome Oil Field. The area does provide habitat for numerous wildlife species, some seasonally and some yearlong. The Northwestern portion of the Hamilton Dome oilfield is mapped as crucial winter range for mule deer and the Southwestern corner is crucial winter range for antelope, and smaller numbers of these big game species could be expected throughout the area year around. The closest active sage-grouse lek is approximately 1 mile south of the Hamilton Dome Oil Field. Sage-grouse habitats within the proposed project area do not appear to be suitable for nesting and brood rearing, primarily because of oilfield disturbance. There are also numerous other small mammals, predators, passerines, and raptors that use this area, some yearlong. No known threatened or endangered animal species are known to inhabit this area.

## **Hazardous or Solid Wastes**

There were no hazardous or solid wastes identified with this proposal.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

### **Land Use**

Alternative 1: There would be an additional .669 acres of disturbance to the Hamilton Dome Oil Field. Under the proposed action the operator does not address reclamation of the disturbed areas.

Alternative 2: Under this alternative design features would be incorporated into the proposed action to address reclaiming disturbed areas to meet predisturbance land uses. Impacts would not be significant

Alternative 3: Under this alternative the sundry notices would not be approved. No resulting effects on current land uses would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

### **Cultural Resources, Traditional Cultural Properties, Native American Religious Concerns**

Alternative 1: Heavy previous surface disturbance has removed the potential for intact cultural properties and the project area was previously inventoried at the Class III level. No additional consequences would be expected under this alternative.

Alternative 2: No additional consequences would be expected under this alternative. The project authorization is recommended with standard stipulations included in the conditions of approval. Impacts would not be significant

Alternative 3: Under the No Action Alternative, the development of the proposed Action would not occur. No resulting effects on cultural resources would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

### **Vegetation**

#### **Native Vegetation**

Alternative 1: There would be approximately .669 acres affected by the proposed action, including the area available for vehicle travel. The operator does not make provisions for reclamation of disturbed areas in the proposed action.

Alternative 2: Design features would be implemented under this alternative. The standard Hamilton Dome seed mix would be prescribed and once installation of the flowlines is complete seeding would occur. Impacts would not be significant

Alternative 3: Under the No Action Alternative, the development of the proposed Action would not occur. No resulting effects on vegetation would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

#### **Invasive, Non Native Species Noxious Weeds**

Alternative 1: New disturbance will increase risk for noxious weeds to infest the site.

Alternative 2: Infestation risk could be reduced by following identified design features. Impacts would not be significant

Alternative 3: No action would maintain current level of risk for noxious weed infestation.

## **Livestock Grazing**

Alternative 1: Under alternative 1 approximately .70 acres of surface disturbance would occur by installing new lines or replacing old lines. This disturbance would displace livestock from the area of work however the displacement would be temporary and livestock would again return to the area. Given that the allotment is stocked at 13.9 A/AUM and only .70 acres would be disturbed there would be a temporary loss of less than 1 Animal Unit Month (AUM). Because reclamation would occur in the areas the loss of less than 1AUM on a temporary basis is negligible and would not require a change to the grazing management of the allotment.

Alternative 2: Same as Alternative 1. NO COA's recommended. Impacts would not be significant

Alternative 3: If no action is taken grazing would occur just as it has in the past and no AUMs would be displaced.

## **Paleontology**

Alternative 1: The surface formations are Frontier Formation and Mowry/Thermopolis Shales which have a moderate sensitivity for paleontological resources. Existing disturbance has eradicated the potential for intact significant localities. No additional consequences would be expected under this alternative.

Alternative 2: No additional consequences would be expected under this alternative. The project authorization is recommended with standard stipulations included in the conditions of approval. Impacts would not be significant

Alternative 3: Under the No Action Alternative, the development of the proposed Action would not occur. No resulting effects on paleontological resources would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

## **Recreation and Visual Resource Management; Special Designations Including ACECs, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**

Alternative 1:

Recreation

The proposed project will further alter the recreational physical settings to industrialized settings by increasing the amount of surface disturbance and the additional presence of a corridor. The project location is within a heavy industrialized area which is primarily absent of recreational opportunities or experiences. The proposed project will have no impacts to recreation.

Wilderness Characteristics

The project area is absent of all wilderness characteristics. Further alteration of the naturalness within the area will not impact these characteristics.

VRM

The proposed project will introduce minimal amount of contrasting elements of form, line, color, and texture against the surrounding natural elements. The natural scenic quality within the area has been compromised due to the industrialized activities. The project is well within Class IV objectives, and will have no impact on VRM.

Alternative 2:

Recreation

Impacts to recreation will be the same as Alternative 1. Impacts would not be significant

Wilderness Characteristics

Impacts to wilderness characteristics will be the same as Alternative 1. Impacts would not be significant

VRM

Impacts to VRM will be the same as Alternative 1. Impacts would not be significant

Alternative 3:

Recreation

Under the No Action Alternative, the development of the proposed Action would not occur. No resulting effects on recreation would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

Wilderness Characteristics

Under the No Action Alternative, the development of the proposed Action would not occur. No resulting effects on wilderness characteristics would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

VRM

Under the No Action Alternative, the development of the proposed Action would not occur. No resulting effects on VRM would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

## **Soils**

Alternative 1: Under the proposed action, few impacts to the soil resource are anticipated. Despite the potential to encounter pH values close to 9.0, the seed mix required by BLM has species capable of establishing under these conditions. Disturbed areas should be fully reclaimed in 3 to 5 years, at which time the plant community would be adequate to protect the soil from the erosive forces of overland flow and rain drop impacts.

The soils would be susceptible to runoff and erosion during the time that they are bare. This is particularly true for the Placer 139-2 flow line where the slopes are steeper. Based on calculations generated by the U.S. Forest Service web-based Water Erosion Prediction Project (WEPP), Disturbed WEPP model, erosion rates at this location could average 2 tons per acre per year when the soils are bare. In the unlikely event of a 50-year storm cycle, erosion rates could be as high as 11 tons per acre per year. This would not be a wide spread phenomena given the limited area of surface disturbance.

Erosion rates predicted by WEPP would be appreciable less for the Placer 139 and the H2S disposal flow line from Placer 76. At these locations, WEPP predicted average erosion rates of only 0.3 tons per acre per year for bare soils and in the event of a 50-year storm cycle WEPP predicts erosion rates of 2.5 tons per acre per year.

Alternative 2: Implementation of design features would reduce impacts to soil resources. Proper compaction and successful reclamation would decrease erosion potential over time. Impacts would not be significant

Alternative 3: Under the No Action Alternative, the pipeline installation and reclamation activities proposed would not occur. No resulting effects on soil resources would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

### **Hydrology (Water Quality and Prime or Sole Source of Drinking Water, Wetlands and Riparian Zones)**

Alternative 1: Minor disturbance to the watershed would occur around the disturbed area. Possible increased erosion of surface material around the disturbed area could possibly occur. Potential compaction of soil from equipment around the disturbed area is likely to occur.

Alternative 2: Implementation of design features would reduce impacts to water resources. Proper compaction and successful reclamation would decrease erosion potential over time. Impacts would not be significant

Alternative 3: Under the No Action Alternative, the pipeline installation and reclamation activities proposed would not occur. No resulting effects on hydrologic resources would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

### **Wildlife**

Alternative 1: Very little disturbance and/or displacement of wildlife, already acclimated to this oil field, is anticipated in association with this proposed pipeline installation and reclamation. The amount of disturbance from this proposal will not significantly differ from the preexisting and ongoing oil field disturbance. The application of the big game crucial winter range seasonal stipulation for wintering mule deer and antelope is not recommended in this situation, primarily because the existing infield industrial activities and use of access roads is such that seasonally stipulating activities associated with this project would have little or no effect on reducing disturbance to wintering big game.

Alternative 2: Same as Alternative 1. Impacts would not be significant

Alternative 3: Under the No Action Alternative, the pipeline installation and reclamation activities proposed would not occur. No resulting effects on wildlife resources would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

### **Hazardous or Solid Wastes**

Alternative 1: Should hazardous materials be used in an improper manner, there could be environmental impacts resulting from an accidental spill or an inappropriate discharge. This could result in impacts to the soil, water, air, wildlife, and cultural resources, in addition to impacts to human health and safety.

Alternative 2: Proper containment of fuels, oil and other hazardous materials in appropriately designed and maintained storage facilities and an immediate response in the event of a release would greatly reduce any potential impacts. The operator is required to report all undesirable events under NTL3-A.

The Operator and their contractors would comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations as they relate to hazardous materials. Hazardous materials being those chemicals listed in Title III List of Lists, EPA's Consolidated List of Chemicals Subject to Emergency Planning and the Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA) and Section 112(r) of the Clean Air Act, as amended, or the 40CFR 302.4 Table-List of Hazardous Substances and Reportable Quantities, as amended. In the event any hazardous materials are used, they would be handled in an appropriate manner to prevent environmental contamination. Any release of hazardous materials of reportable quantities, would be reported both to the National Response Center (NRC), as required in the National Oil and Hazardous Materials Contingency Plan (40 CFR 300), and the Worland Field Office, as per the Hazardous Materials Contingency Plan.

Alternative 3: Under the No Action Alternative, the development of the proposed Action would not occur. No resulting effects on public health or safety would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

### **Cumulative Effects**

Cumulative effects would result in the initial loss of vegetation that would add to the overall disturbed area in the Hamilton Dome Oil Field. This would be a short term effect that would be reduced upon successful implementation of the design features.

## TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, or AGENCIES CONSULTED

Person Consulted	Agency/Tribe/Organization
<i>Roger Hart</i>	<i>Merit Energy</i>

## LIST OF PREPARERS

The following Worland Field Office personnel reviewed or have been contacted with regard to this EA.

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### List of Reviewers

Name	Title
Marit Bovee	Archaeologist
Tim Stephens	Wildlife Biologist
Paul Rau	Recreation/Visual Specialist
John Elliott	Range Management Specialist
Karen A. Hepp	Range Management Specialist (T&E/Sensitive Plants)
Wade Wittkop	Civil Engineer
Stephen Kiracofe	Soils Scientist
CJ Grimes	NRS/Weeds
Jared Dalebout	Hydrologist

## **Conditions of Approval**

### Hamilton Dome Flowline Replacement, Sundry Notice

1. The operator shall contact the authorized officer a minimum of 5 days prior to beginning any construction activities.
2. No surface disturbance or construction activity shall occur outside the approved right-of-way (approximately 7.5' from center). All vehicle traffic shall be kept within the approved right-of-way.
3. Upon installation of the new flowlines, any existing lines not needed for production operations shall be removed and hauled to an approved disposal facility.
4. Construction activity will not be conducted using frozen or saturated soil material or during periods when watershed damage or excessive rutting is likely to occur.
5. No construction or routine maintenance activities shall be performed during periods when the soil is too wet to adequately support construction equipment. If such equipment creates ruts in excess of 4 inches deep, the soil shall be deemed too wet to adequately support construction equipment.
6. Topsoil shall be removed at a depth of 4-6 inches from all areas of surface disturbance. Topsoil shall be clearly segregated from spoil material.
7. Following construction all disturbed areas shall be restored, topsoil replaced and areas reseeded as prescribed. To prevent erosion, waterbars, mulching, or other protective measures may be required. Backfill shall be thoroughly compacted. Topsoil shall be spread evenly over all areas to be reclaimed.
8. No mounding shall be permitted.
9. Trenches shall be routinely inspected and maintained to ensure proper settling, stabilization and reclamation.
10. Construction holes left open for more than 24 hours shall be covered or left in a manner to allow for escape of any entrapped animal. Covers shall be secured in place and shall be strong enough to prevent livestock or wildlife from falling through and into a hole.
11. Operators are required to obtain a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Storm Water Permit from the Wyoming DEQ for any projects that disturb one acre or more. This general construction storm water permit must be obtained from the WDEQ prior to any surface disturbing activities and can be obtained by following direction on the WDEQ website at <http://deq.state.wy.us>. Further information can be obtained by contacting the NPDES coordinator at (307) 775-7570.

12. The Operator shall ensure all appropriate measures are taken to control erosion. Upon completion of construction the operator shall initiate the approved Storm Water Discharge Plans on the location and associated access.
13. The operator is responsible for informing all persons in the area who are associated with this project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during construction, the operator is to immediately stop work that might further disturb such materials and contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:
  - whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
  - the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary); and,
  - a time frame for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800.11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation costs. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.
14. The Operator is responsible for inspection of the construction area for the presence of both surface and subsurface utility facilities and shall notify the Wyoming One-Call System (1-800-849-2476, [www.onecallofwyoming.com](http://www.onecallofwyoming.com)) before construction activities begin. The Operator will use extra safety precautions when working near or around pipelines, power lines, underground cables, or other utility installations.
15. The Operator and their contractors shall comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations as they relate to hazardous materials. Hazardous materials being those chemicals listed in Title III List of Lists, EPA's Consolidated List of Chemicals Subject to Emergency Planning and the Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA) and Section 112(r) of the Clean Air Act, as amended, or the 40CFR 302.4 Table-List of Hazardous Substances and Reportable Quantities, as amended. In the event any hazardous materials are used, they would be handled in an appropriate manner to prevent environmental contamination. Any release of hazardous materials of reportable quantities, would be reported both to the National Response Center (NRC), as required in the National Oil and Hazardous Materials Contingency Plan (40 CFR 300), and the Worland Field Office, as per the Hazardous Materials Contingency Plan.
16. All Undesirable Events shall be reported in compliance with NTL-3A. If during any phase of the construction, drilling, production, or reclamation of the approved actions any oil or other pollutant should be discharged from the approved area, containers or vehicles impacting Federal lands, the control and total removal, disposal, and cleanup of such oil or other pollutant,

wherever found, shall be the responsibility of the operator, regardless of fault. Upon failure of the operator to control, cleanup, or dispose of such discharge on or affecting Federal lands, or to repair all damages to Federal lands resulting therefrom, the authorized officer may take such measures as he deems necessary to control and cleanup the discharge and restore the area, including, where appropriate, the aquatic environment and fish and wildlife habitats, at the full expense of the operator. Such action by the authorized officer shall not relieve the operator of any liability or responsibility.

17. Construction sites shall be maintained in a sanitary condition at all times; waste materials at those sites shall be disposed of promptly at an appropriate waste disposal site. "Waste" means all discarded matter including, but not limited to, human waste, trash, garbage, refuse, oil drums, petroleum products, ashes, and equipment.
18. All disturbed areas shall be drill seeded. Where drilling is impractical, seed shall be broadcast and the area raked or chained to cover seed. If broadcast seeding is used, the approved seed mix shall be doubled.
19. All disturbed areas shall be reseeded with the prescribed Hamilton Dome seed mixture of all Pure Live Seed. Fall seeding shall be completed after September 1, and prior to ground frost. Spring seeding shall be completed after the frost has left the ground and prior to May 15. Seeding shall be repeated if a satisfactory stand is not obtained.

The authorized Officer may add additional conditions of approval to protect the resources, if conditions require it. The operator shall comply with applicable laws and regulations.