United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Wyoming State Office
P.O. Box 1828
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82003-1828

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In Reply Refer To:
2710 (921Gertsch)
WYW 150992

DEC 13 2007

Dear Reader:

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Westside Land Conveyance Project is submitted for your review and comment. This DEIS has been prepared to analyze the potential impacts of a Congressionally-mandated transfer of approximately 16,000 acres of public land to the Westside Irrigation District. The project area is located in Big Horn and Washakie Counties, Wyoming.

The DEIS will be available for review at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) offices listed below. All of these documents may be viewed or downloaded from the BLM website at http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/wfodocs/westside.html.

Bureau of Land Management
Wyoming State Office
5353 Yellowstone Road
Cheyenne, WY 82009

Bureau of Land Management
Worland Field Office
101 South 23rd Street
P.O. Box 119
Worland, WY 82401

Public Law 106-485 (Nov. 9, 2000; 114 Stat. 2199) directs the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Bureau of Land Management, to convey a parcel of public land in Big Horn County and Washakie County, Wyoming to the Westside Irrigation District (Irrigation District). Public Law 106-485 also directs the BLM to complete an environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The DEIS considers the environmental consequences of three alternatives: the legislated proposed action transferring 16,500 acres; an alternative under which only those lands actually suitable for irrigation and those needed for project infrastructure, approximately 11,500 acres, would be transferred; and the no action alternative. The irrigable-lands-only alternative is BLM's Preferred Alternative. After the sale and conveyance of the land, it is anticipated that the Irrigation District would offer the land for sale in parcels of no less than 160 acres per individual, to be used for agricultural purposes. The Irrigation District would select qualified individuals through a lottery. Successful individuals would then be required to be members of and their lands included in the Irrigation District. However, this is merely an anticipated scenario based on the current plans of the Irrigation District. It is possible these plans could change. P.L. 106-485 places no restrictions on the eventual disposal or uses of the land transferred and the BLM would exercise no regulatory control post-transfer.

This DEIS was prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and other regulations and statutes to address the environmental and socio-economic impacts which could result from the project. This DEIS is not a decision document. Its purpose is to inform the public and interested Agencies of impacts associated with the transfer of public land to the Irrigation District, to evaluate alternatives to the proposal, and to solicit comments.

If you wish to submit comments on the DEIS, we request that you make them as specific as possible. Comments are more helpful if they include suggested changes, sources, or methodologies. Comments that contain only opinions or preferences will not receive a formal response from the BLM. However, they will be considered and included as part of the BLM decision-making process. The BLM can best use your comments if they are submitted within 60 days after the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes its Notice of Availability in the Federal Register.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Worland Field Office (address listed above), during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and will be published as part of the final EIS. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Please send written comments to the Bureau of Land Management, Worland Field Office, Attn: Don Ogaard, Project Manager, P.O. Box 119, Worland, WY 82401. Written comments may also be e-mailed to the attention of Don Ogaard at "*wymail_westside@blm.gov*". E-mail comments must include the name and mailing address of the commentor to receive consideration. Written comments may also be faxed to (307) 347-5228.

A copy of the DEIS has been sent to affected Federal, State, and local government agencies, and to those persons who have indicated they wished to receive a copy of the DEIS. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Don Ogaard, Project Manager, at the Worland Field Office, address shown above, or by phone (307) 347-5160.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Bennett
State Director

1 Attachment
1 – Draft EIS