

Environmental Impact Statement for the Westside Land Conveyance Project

Wind River/Bighorn Basin District, Worland Field Office

January 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.

BLM/WY/PL-11/009+5440

WY010-EIS05-086



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Wind River/Bighorn Basin District
P.O. Box 119
Worland, WY 82401-0119

In Reply Refer To:
2710 (LLWYR00000)
WYW150992

January 25, 2011

Dear Reader:

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Westside Land Conveyance Project is submitted for your review. It has been prepared to analyze the potential impacts of a Congressionally-mandated conveyance of approximately 16,500 acres of public land to the Westside Irrigation District. The project area is located in Big Horn and Washakie Counties, Wyoming.

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

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

Bureau of Land Management
Worland Field Office
101 S. 23rd Street
Worland, Wyoming 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 portion of public land in Big Horn County and Washakie County, Wyoming to the Westside Irrigation District (Irrigation District), and to perform an environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The FEIS considers the environmental consequences of four alternatives: the legislated proposed action conveying the maximum acres authorized by law; an alternative under which only those lands suitable for irrigation and those needed for project infrastructure would be conveyed, approximately 11,576 acres; the preferred alternative (based on comments received on the Draft EIS), under which conveyed acreage would be reduced to 9,740 to avoid numerous cultural sites and to open a wildlife migration corridor; and the no action alternative. After the sale and conveyance of the land, it is anticipated that the Westside Irrigation District would offer the land for sale for agricultural purposes. P.L. 106-485 places no restrictions on the eventual disposal or uses of the land conveyed and the BLM would exercise no regulatory control after the conveyance.

This FEIS 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 FEIS is not a decision document. Its purpose is to inform the public and interested agencies of impacts associated with the conveyance of public land to the irrigation district, and to evaluate alternatives to the proposal.

A copy of the FEIS has been sent to affected Federal, State, and local government agencies, and to those persons who have indicated an interest.

Sincerely,

/s/

Eddie Bateson
District Manager

1 Attachment
1 – Final EIS

WESTSIDE LAND CONVEYANCE PROJECT
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

January 2011

Co-Lead Agencies: U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management, Worland Field Office
Worland, Wyoming

And

Wyoming Water Development Office
6920 Yellowtail Road
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002

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Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002
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ABSTRACT— Public Law 106-485 mandates the conveyance of approximately 16,500 acres of public land to the Westside Irrigation District. It is anticipated that the conveyed land would be re-sold to individuals in 160-acre tracts and placed in agricultural use. Four alternatives were evaluated: conveying the maximum number of acres authorized by law; conveying only those lands actually suitable for irrigation or needed for infrastructure (approximately 11,576 acres); conveying a reduced amount of irrigable lands to minimize impacts on natural and cultural resources (approximately 9,740 acres); and No Action, under which the lands would not be conveyed. The No Action alternative would not be in compliance with P. L. 106-485, which mandates the conveyance, but was included for the purpose of establishing a baseline condition for the effects analysis. The Environmental Impact Statement discloses potential environmental impacts from the implementation of the alternatives. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was made available to the public in January, 2008 with a 60 day comment period ending on March 11, 2008.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) provides additional information along with the analysis of the reduced irrigable acreage alternative; changes and corrections; comment letters received; and responses of the BLM and the WWDC to the comments received. Therefore, the FEIS analyzes the affected environment, potential environmental consequences, and proposed mitigation measures for all of the alternatives considered.

A complete copy of the FEIS can be obtained from the Worland Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management. Following a 30 day review period, the BLM and the WWDC will prepare a Record of Decision (ROD).