

Dated: January 8, 1996.

Karen A. Purvis,

Solid Minerals Team, Resources Services.

[FR Doc. 96-471 Filed 1-18-96; 8:45 am]

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[WY-010-1050-00]

Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Environmental Assessment (EA) Titled, "Management for the Big Cedar Ridge Fossil Plant Area," for Public Review and Comment

SUMMARY: The EA for the management of the Big Cedar Ridge Fossil Plant Area documents the planning review and analysis of five alternatives for managing the area, including the Bureau of Land Management's preferred alternative. The planning review area is comprised of about 1,550 acres of BLM-administered public land in Washakie County, Wyoming, and in the Bighorn Basin Resource Area of the BLM's Worland District. Fossil concentration areas, including the discovery site, are found on about 260 acres within the review area.

The planning review is being conducted to evaluate the management needs and issues associated with the discovery of a complete and preserved in-place Cretaceous fossil plant community. The area was discovered in 1990 by Dr. Scott Wing of the Smithsonian Institution. The objective of this planning review is to establish appropriate management of the fossil resources including adequate protection and opportunities for scientific research and public education. This discovery created significant interest within the academic community. Worldwide discoveries of such well preserved fossil plants of this age are rare, and the fossils are considered to be of great scientific importance.

The discovery was made approximately 3 years after the approval of the Washakie Resource Management Plan (RMP). A review of the RMP is needed to evaluate the adequacy of the existing decisions for the protection of paleontological resources in the review area. Management actions include continuing existing management that is generally consistent with the Washakie RMP but with management emphasis on enhancing opportunities for scientific research, public education, recreation, hobby collection of fossils, and closing the 260-acres of known fossil concentration areas to mineral location and pursuing a mineral location withdrawal. Based on preliminary analysis, BLM has established a temporary closure to the staking of

mining claims in the planning review area. As part of the planning review, BLM has collected information and conducted analyses described in the environmental assessment to determine whether a long-term closure is necessary for protection of the paleontological resources. Based on the results, the Washakie RMP will be amended, if necessary.

DATES: Comments on the adequacy of the EA and on the finding of no significant impact (FONSI) must be received no later than February 20, 1996. Comments should be directed to Dave Baker, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Bighorn Basin Resource Area, or Bob Ross, Worland District Planner, at the address below.

During the same 30-day period, any protests on the proposed decision (the preferred alternative) and proposed amendment of the Washakie RMP may also be submitted (as provided in 43 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1610.5-2). All parts of the proposed decision may be protested. Protests should be sent to the Director, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, MS-302 LS, Washington, D.C. 20240. They should include:

- The name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest.
- A statement of the issue or issues being protested.
- A statement of the part or parts of the proposed decision being protested.
- Copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that were submitted during the planning review process by the protesting party, or an indication of the date the issue or issues were discussed for the record.
- A concise statement explaining why the proposed decision is believed to be wrong.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Dave Baker, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Bighorn Basin Resource Area, or Bob Ross, Worland District Planner at P. O. Box 119, Worland, Wyoming 82401-0119, phone 307-347-9871.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Following the discovery of the Big Cedar Ridge Fossil Plant Area, the BLM completed a temporary management plan for the lands in and around the fossil discovery area. Protective measures have been initiated and have been in effect pending completion of this planning review. This review includes opportunities for public participation.

The steps followed for this planning review are:

1. An interdisciplinary planning team describes and analyzes the existing

management in the planning review area and describes the affected environment.

2. A notice of intent to conduct the planning review is published in the Federal Register informing the public of known and anticipated issues and of opportunities for public participation and comment.

3. Public contacts and meetings are held for scoping and development of the preliminary issues and alternatives.

4. With the help of the public, management alternatives for the area are formulated and analyzed and the BLM's preferred alternative is identified.

5. The alternatives, including the BLM's preferred alternative, and their environmental consequences are described in the EA and the EA is issued for public review and comment. We are now at this step of the process. A 30-day period will be provided for reviewing and commenting on the EA and the FONSI and for submitting protests on any proposed decisions to be added to or changed in the Washakie RMP.

6. The EA will then be revised, if necessary, and a decision record will be issued. If necessary, the decision record will identify and include any needed amendment to the Washakie RMP.

Based on the public's input and analysis by the BLM interdisciplinary team, the following issues were identified:

1. Whether or not there is a need to protect the important paleontological resources in the review area from being damaged by surface-disturbing activities, and whether withdrawing the area from filing of mining claims and mining activity would be necessary.

2. Whether or not the area should be designated an area of critical environmental concern (ACEC).

3. Whether or not the area should be managed primarily for scientific research, public education, and recreation.

The five alternatives analyzed in the EA are:

1. No action (continuation of existing management).

2. Continue existing management and pursue a 260-acre mineral location withdrawal on the known fossil concentration areas.

3. Designate a 1,550-acre ACEC.

4. Designate a 1,550-acre ACEC and pursue a 260-acre mineral location withdrawal on the known fossil concentration areas.

5. Designate an ACEC, pursue a mineral location withdrawal on the 260-acre known fossil concentration areas, and dedicate the area to research and public education.

The various impacts that would be expected from implementing each of the alternatives are also presented in the EA. The BLM's preferred alternative is alternative 2. Continuing existing management on the planning review area and pursuing a mineral withdrawal under the 1872 Mining Law for the 260-acre known fossil concentration areas represents what the BLM believes to be the best balance between the public land and resource uses and environmental protection in the planning review area. Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA, it has been determined that anticipated impacts of the preferred alternative are not significant and an environmental impact statement is not needed.

At the end of the comment/protest period, the decisions based on the planning review will be issued in the Decision Record for the EA. Any necessary amendment to the Washakie RMP will be included in the Decision Record. The 30-day review/comment/protest period will begin the day following the date of publication of the NOA of this EA in the Federal Register. Comments on the alternatives, the adequacy of the environmental analyses, the FONSI, and any protests on the proposed decision will be fully considered and evaluated in development of the decision record. Any protests submitted will also be resolved before BLM issues the decision record for the EA, and the Washakie Resource Management Plan will be amended, if necessary.

Dated: January 10, 1996.

Alan R. Pierson,
State Director.

[FR Doc. 96-482 Filed 1-18-96; 8:45 am]

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[MT-027-1320-00, MTM 83859]

Notice of Intent to Plan; Montana

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Montana, Miles City District, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent to conduct scoping and prepare an environmental analysis on the proposed lease tracts.

SUMMARY: On November 9, 1995, Spring Creek Coal Company filed an amended lease application, MTM 83859, for federal coal resources within the Powder River Coal Region. The land included in the application is located in Big Horn County, Montana and is described as follows:

T. 8 S., R. 39 E., P.M.M.
Sec. 22: E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$;

Sec. 25: SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 26: S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$,
NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$,
SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$,
SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$,
NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$,
N $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$,
N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$,
N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 27: N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$,
N $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$,
S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$,
E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$,
SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$,
NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 8 S., R. 40 E., P.M.M.
Sec. 30: S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$,
S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$,
W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$.

The 320.00 acre tract contains an estimated 37.8 million tons of recoverable coal reserves.

An environmental analysis will be prepared to analyze the proposed lease of the federal coal resource and the reasonably foreseeable consequences of this action as well as the impacts of development of the coal.

This document will amend the Powder River Resource Area Resource Management Plan. It will be based on the existing statutory requirements and will meet the requirements of the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: All interested parties including federal, state and local agencies are invited to participate in the environmental analysis scoping process. The scoping period will begin immediately and will end March 15, 1996.

The following issues and concerns have been identified:

- Possible impacts to the hydrologic resources;
- Potential for social and economic impacts to the area;
- Potential redesignation of crucial winter range for deer and antelope from unsuitable for mining to suitable for mining with stipulations;
- Cultural resources and traditional lifeway values;
- The level of environmental documentation necessary (EA or EIS).

The public is encouraged to present their ideas and views on these and other issues and concerns. All issues and concerns will be considered in the preparation of the environmental analysis.

The scoping process used to collect issues and concerns will involve one public meeting and a written comment period. The written comment period will begin immediately and will close on March 15, 1996. The public meeting will be held February 29, 1996, at 7 p.m. at the Sheridan County Fulmer Public Library, 335 West Alger Street, Sheridan, Wyoming 82801.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: All comments and requests for further information should be addressed to Todd Christensen, Area Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Powder River Resource Area, 111 Garryowen Road, Miles City, Montana 59301, telephone number (406) 232-4331.

Glenn A. Carpenter,

District Manager.

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State of Arizona Resource Advisory Council Meeting

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Arizona Resource Advisory Council Meeting, notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the third meeting of the Arizona Resource Advisory Council. The meeting will be held February 22-23, 1996, beginning at 8:30 a.m. in the New Mexico Room at the Bureau of Land Management's National Training Center, 9828 N. 31st Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85051. The agenda items to be covered at this meeting include review of previous meeting minutes, standards and guidelines work group report, update on Arizona Preservation Initiative, discussion of recreation travel, tourism, and public relations working group, presentation of Lower Gila Resource Management Plan Amendment, Phoenix District, and public comment period which will take place at 3:30 p.m. February 22, 1996, and 11:30 a.m., February 23, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Clinton Oke, Bureau of Land Management, Arizona State Office, 3707 N. 7th St., Phoenix, Arizona 85014, (602) 650-0512.

Denise P. Meridith,

State Director.

[FR Doc. 96-626 Filed 1-18-96; 8:45 am]

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[WY-030-06-1060-00]

Helicopters and Motorized Vehicles Use for Gathering Wild Horses and Burros; Meetings

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of public hearing.

SUMMARY: A public hearing on the use of helicopters in wild horse management activities will be held at the Jeffrey Center in Rawlins, Wyoming. **DATES:** February 21, 1996.