

The Pinedale Anticline EIS identifies the need for amendment, planning review, and/or maintenance of the following 1988 Pinedale RMP items: (1) The amendment of a Pinedale RMP off-road vehicle (ORV) designation; (2) the update and modification, if necessary, of visual resource management (VRM) classification; and (3) withhold unleased Federal lands and minerals and/or expired leases in the Hoback Basin, southern foothills of the Gros Ventre Range, and the Wind River Front from oil and gas leasing until the effects of leasing these lands can be addressed in a planning review of the Pinedale RMP and Bridger-Teton Leasing EIS.

DATES: Comments on the FEIS will be accepted for 30 days following the date that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes their Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**. The EPA notice is anticipated to be published on June 2, 2000. Protest of the proposed ORV designation amendment to the Pinedale RMP must be postmarked within 30 days following the date that the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the filing notice for the Final EIS in the **Federal Register**.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the FEIS should be sent to Bureau of Land Management, Bill McMahan (Project Coordinator), 280 Highway 191 North, Rock Springs, WY 82901, or they can be e-mailed to bill_mcmahan@blm.gov.

Protests on the proposed ORV designation amendment to the Pinedale RMP should be sent to the Director (210), Bureau of Land Management, Attention: Brenda Williams, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bill McMahan, Project Coordinator, Bureau of Land Management, Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901, (307) 352-0224.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The DEIS (NOA published by EPA in the **Federal Register**, November 26, 1999; comment due date February 4, 2000, following State Director approval of a 10 day extension of time for review/comment on the DEIS) analyzed a proposal by the Pinedale Anticline Operators to drill up to 900 new wells to achieve 700 producing locations over the next 10 to 15 years on their leased acreage within the Pinedale Anticline Project Area (PAPA) (approximately 197,345 acres) in western Wyoming. Lands associated with the new drilling program are located between the town of Pinedale, Wyoming, and the Jonah Natural Gas Field (30 miles south); and between the Green River on the west and Wyoming Highway 191 on the east (between 8 and 15 miles wide). Comments were

received on the DEIS from a number of groups. A total of 235 comment letters were received. BLM held a public hearing on January 12, 2000. A total of 86 people signed in at the hearing—17 gave statements. BLM responses to each comment letter and hearing comments are included in Sections 5, 6, and 7 of the FEIS.

Factors Affecting Pinedale Resource Management Plan (RMP) Completed in 1988—The Pinedale Anticline EIS addresses the need for amendment, planning review, and/or maintenance of the Pinedale RMP. The EIS identifies that (1) the RMP decision designating portions of the PAPA as “open” to off-road vehicle (ORV) use should be amended from “open” to “limited to existing roads and trails” to protect surface values and to be consistent with other oil/gas development areas; (2) the visual resource management (VRM) classification for the VRM classifications within the Resource Area need to be updated and the RMP modified if necessary; and (3) all Federal lands and minerals that are unleased and/or that have expired leases in the Hoback Basin, southern foothills of the Gros Ventre Range, and the Wind River Front should be withheld from oil and gas leasing until the effects of leasing these lands can be addressed in a planning review to determine any needed modification to the 1988 Pinedale RMP and to the Bridger-Teton Leasing EIS (Management Areas 21, 45, 71, and 72).

The RMP planning review for the identified areas (see Pinedale Anticline DEIS Figure 5-2) would address new issues and concerns for air quality related values, protection of scenic values of the mountain ranges, protection of the new and/or more densely populated rural subdivisions occurring on private surface underlain by Federal minerals, and other resource concerns. An analysis of these factors may affect Federal mineral leasing and other Federal authorizations on the described lands.

The Pinedale Anticline EIS proposal to amend the Pinedale RMP ORV “open” area designation to “limited to existing roads and trails” is protestable. This is the only part of the Pinedale Anticline EIS that is protestable under the BLM Planning Regulations (43 CFR 1610.5-2). Anyone disagreeing with the proposed decision to change the ORV designation within the Pinedale Anticline project area must file a written protest within the 30-day review period for the FEIS. The proposed amendment may be protested by parties who participated in the Pinedale Anticline EIS process, who have an interest which

is or may be adversely affected by the proposed change, and who raised issue with ORV use during the EIS process. The protest must include the following information: (1) The name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest; (2) a statement of the issue(s) submitted during the DEIS review process by the protesting party, or an indication of the date the issue(s) were discussed for the record; (3) a statement of the part(s) of the recommendation being protested; (4) a copy of all documents addressing the issue(s) that were submitted during the DEIS review process by the protesting party, or an indication of the date the issue(s) were discussed for the record; and (5) a concise statement explaining why the proposed decision is believed to be wrong.

At the end of the 30-day protest period, the proposed change, if not protested, will become final. If a protest is received, approval of oil and gas development will be based upon the existing ORV designation until final action on the protest has been completed. Any significant change made as a result of a protest will be made available for public review and comment before it is approved.

This DEIS, in compliance with section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (as amended), includes the Biological Assessment for the purpose of identifying any endangered or threatened species which are likely to be affected by the proposed action.

Dated: May 12, 2000.

Alan L. Kesterke,

Associate State Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[WY-030-2000-1310-DB]

Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement; Desolation Flats Natural Gas Development Project, Carbon and Sweetwater Counties, Wyoming, To Conduct a Planning Review of the Proposed Project Area, and if Necessary, Amend Either or Both the Great Divide and Green River Resource Management Plans

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and to conduct scoping for the Desolation Flats Natural Gas

Development Project, Carbon and Sweetwater Counties, Wyoming.

SUMMARY: Under section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Rawlins Field Office, will direct the preparation of an EIS on the potential impacts of a proposed natural gas field development project. Approximately 385 gas wells and associated facilities could be constructed on approximately 229,781 acres of primarily Federal land (some private and State included), over a 20-year development period. The project area is located in southwestern Carbon County and southeastern Sweetwater County, Wyoming. The proposed action may be modified, as a result of comments received during scoping or anytime during the preparation of the draft EIS, to include actions that may, upon review, require a plan amendment to the Green River and Great Divide Resource Management Plans. A planning review of existing land-use decisions would be conducted. Additionally an evaluation of potential relevant and important resource values in the Desolation Flats project area portion of the Monument Valley Management Area of the Rock Springs Field Office would be done. Any needed changes in existing management or any new management actions to be prescribed for the area will be identified and, if necessary, the Green River RMP amended. In accordance with 43 CFR 3420.1-2, this notice also serves as a call for coal and other resource information to solicit indications of interest and information on coal resource development potential in the proposed project area and on other resources which may be affected by the proposed project. Affected Federal lands are administered by the BLM Rawlins and Rock Springs Field Offices. The EIS will be prepared by a third-party contractor.

DATES: Comments on the project proposal will be accepted through June 23, 2000. Public scoping meetings will be held at 7 p.m. on the following dates, at the following locations:

- June 7, 2000, in Rock Springs, Wyoming, Bureau of Land Management, Rock Springs Field Office, 280 Highway 191 North.
- June 8, 2000, in Rawlins, Wyoming, Bureau of Land Management, Rawlins Field Office, 1300 North Third Street.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be sent to Bureau of Land Management, Rawlins Field Office, John Spehar, Team Leader, 1300 North Third Street, P.O. Box 2407, Rawlins, Wyoming 82301, phone (307)

328-4200, or e-mailed to rawlins_wymail@blm.gov. Additionally, the Scoping Notice will be posted on the Wyoming BLM homepage at www.wy.blm.gov. Your response is important and will be considered in the environmental analysis process. If you do respond, we shall keep you informed of decisions resulting from the analysis. Please note that public comments submitted for this scoping review, including names, e-mail addresses, and street addresses of the respondents will be available for public review and disclosure at the above address during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday through Friday, except holidays. Individual respondents may request confidentially. If you wish to withhold your name, e-mail address, or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this plainly at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bureau of Land Management, John Spehar, Project Manager, 1300 North Third Street, P.O. Box 2407, Rawlins, Wyoming 82301, phone 307-328-4264, e-mail: John_Spehar@blm.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Marathon Oil Company (Marathon) has notified the Bureau of Land Management that Marathon and other operators propose a 20-year field development project. The proposed project area, referred to as the Desolation Flats area, is generally located in Townships 13-16 North, Ranges 94-96 West, Sixth Principal meridian, Carbon and Sweetwater Counties, Wyoming.

The project area is located approximately 14 miles west and north of Baggs, Wyoming. The project area is approximately 229,781 acres in size. The vast majority of land and mineral ownership is Federal. The Federal land surface and Federally owned minerals are managed by the Rawlins and Rock Springs BLM Field Offices.

Marathon and other operators propose to drill 385 wells on 361 locations and construct associated facilities, including roads, well pads, pipelines, and compressor stations. Drilling of exploratory or confirmation/delineation wells on existing Federal leases will be permitted on a case-by-case basis during the preparation of the EIS. A site-

specific environmental assessment (EA) will be prepared for each individual drilling proposal.

The Desolation Flats project area contains lands covered by two existing natural gas development project EISs. The Mulligan Draw Unit EIS and the Dripping Rock/Cedar Breaks Area EA were approved for spacing of one well per section and for drilling in the Almond Formation. The intent of including the Mulligan Draw EIS area and the Dripping Rock/Cedar Breaks EA area within the Desolation Flats project area, as described by the operators, is to determine the feasibility and environmental impacts of a well-spacing density greater than the authorized one-well per 640-acre spacing.

This EIS will address cumulative impacts and will include consideration of affects of other oil and gas projects addressed in recently completed EISs for the Mulligan Draw Gas Field Project, the Creston/Blue Gap Natural Gas Project, the soon to be completed Continental Divide/Wamsutter II Natural Gas Project, and the recently proposed Atlantic Rim Coalbed Methane Project EA. Potential issues to be addressed in the EIS include, but are not limited to: impacts to wildlife populations and their habitats, access road development and transportation management, surface and ground water resources, impacts from additional drilling and production activities, reclamation, noxious weed control, conflicts with livestock grazing operations, protection of cultural and paleontological resources, threatened and endangered species, and cumulative impacts.

Dated: May 12, 2000.

Alan R. Pierson,

State Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[ID-010-0777-XQ]

Notice of Meeting

AGENCY: Lower Snake River District, Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Meeting notice.

SUMMARY: The Lower Snake River District Resource Advisory Council will meet in Boise. Potential agenda topics are the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Plan, the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for the U.S. Air Force