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BLM Sets Listening Sessions on Split Estate Issues

As part of the agency's ongoing efforts to implement the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the Bureau of Land Management has announced a series of listening sessions on issues surrounding development of federally owned oil and natural gas resources that underlie privately owned surface lands. Congress directed the BLM to review current policies and practices for managing so-called "split-estate" situations in consultation with affected private landowners, the oil and gas industry, and other interested parties.

A series of public listening sessions to gather ideas and recommendations for implementing the split estate provisions in the Act will be held in the following locations on the dates specified:

Albuquerque, New Mexico	Monday, March 20, 2006
Grand Junction, Colorado	Wednesday, March 22, 2006
Casper, Wyoming	Friday, March 24, 2006
Miles City, Montana	Monday, March 27, 2006
Washington, D.C.	March 30 or 31, 2006

The BLM will announce the exact time and location of each session through the local media, e-mail, and on the Split Estate website at: www.blm.gov/bmp at least 15 days prior to the session.

"The BLM is interested in hearing recommendations for ways to update its policies and procedures for managing Federal oil and natural gas resources in split estate," said Deputy BLM Director Jim Hughes. "Our goal is to ensure reasonable access to the energy supplies that meet the Nation's growing needs while minimizing the impact on privately owned surface."

Each listening session will begin with an overview of the split estate provisions of the Energy Policy Act and current split estate practices, policies, regulations, and laws that guide management of the Federal mineral estate. Participants who request to speak will then be provided a set amount of time to provide their recommendations.

Background information on split estate issues and preliminary drafts of a report to Congress are available on the BLM Split Estate website: www.blm.gov/bmp. Those not able to attend one of the listening sessions may submit comments by e-mail splitestate@blm.gov by April 1, 2006. The team writing the report to Congress will carefully consider all comments and recommendations received by e-mail and at the listening sessions in preparing a final version.

The BLM manages 700 million acres of subsurface mineral estate nationwide, including approximately 58 million acres where the surface is privately owned. In many cases, surface rights and mineral rights were severed under the terms of Federal homesteading laws, such as the Stock Raising Homestead Act of 1916.

Managing the federal mineral estate, along with 261 million surface acres, gives the BLM a central role in implementing the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Acting as steward of numerous energy resources – coal, oil and gas, geothermal, hydropower, solar, wind, and biomass energy resources – is part of the agency’s multiple-use mission to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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