



USDA Forest Service Update

September 2008

SUBJECT: Energy Development on National Forests

Energy Corridors: Under respective authorities, the Energy Policy Act of 2005 directs the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, and Interior to designate energy corridors on federal lands in the 11 Western States. An interagency planning team lead by DOE with BLM as co-lead, and the FS and Defense Department (DOD) as Cooperating Agencies have prepared a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS). The DPEIS was released for public comment in December of 2007. A 90 day public comment period was used for the DPEIS. Thirty-nine Forest plans in the 11 Western states are to be amended by this action. The FS and BLM are scheduled for sign off on the Final EIS on October 9, 2008 with a Notice of Availability published in the Federal register on Oct 24, 2008.

Geothermal Development: The Forest Service and BLM continue to jointly implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in April 2006, as it relates to administrative procedures for processing geothermal leases and validating the backlog of geothermal lease applications on BLM and Forest Service lands. The BLM published new regulations for Leasing Geothermal Resources on May 2, 2007. The BLM and Forest Service released a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Geothermal Leasing on June 13, 2008 and are accepting public comments until September 19, 2008. The Agencies hosted public comment meetings during July 2008. It is expected that the final PEIS will be available for public review in the fall of 2008 with the decision documents signed December 2008.

Oil & Gas Leasing: The BLM and FS signed a joint MOU for oil and gas leasing on National Forest System (NFS) lands which includes: administrative procedures and line of authority for timely processing of oil and gas lease applications as well as the approval of the surface use plan of operations component of the Application for Permit to Drill. In March 2007 the Forest Service and BLM published Onshore Order # 1, which provides the requirements for the approval of all proposed oil and gas exploratory, development, or service wells on federal lands.

Energy Policy Liaison - The Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies have developed an MOU and agreement to enhance communication, collaboration, and develop cooperative procedures that will promote the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats in energy management and development activities.

Ground Water Technical Guide: This technical guide was developed to assess and manage ground water resources on the NFS lands. It also describes the national ground water policy and provides management guidelines for the NFS. It describes hydrologic, geologic, and ecological concepts, as well as the managerial responsibilities that must be considered to ensure the wise and sustainable use of ground water resources on NFS lands.

Hydropower: The FS is in the process of implementing a number of large settlement agreements most notably in the western United States (CA, OR and WA). Those settlements yielded improved flows and integrated operations for fish, wildlife and also recreation (whitewater rafting). We are coordinating closely with FERC as well as state agencies on implementing the associated settlement policies.

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