

leases, which include the right to develop CBNG. Recognizing that the leases have been issued, the alternatives to be considered in the EA will analyze whether to modify the leasing decisions in light of the remedial issue analysis (*i.e.*, after consideration of the appropriate environmental issues foreseeable at the time the leases were offered for sale.)

The rationale of the Court ruling requires that BLM consider those environmental issues found to have been inadequately considered in the 1985 Buffalo RMP EIS. This EA may, however, examine a broader array of environmental issues associated with CBNG leasing decisions that were reasonably foreseeable prior to the issuance of these leases. An array of environmental issues was subject to in-depth re-examination in the Powder River Basin Oil and Gas Project (PRB) EIS and RMP Amendment Record of Decision (ROD) that was signed April 30, 2003. The ROD amended the 1985 Buffalo RMP to raise the anticipated level of use of the resource area for oil and gas and to develop appropriate resource use restrictions to mitigate impacts to other resources.

In the PRB EIS, the BLM carefully analyzed the cumulative effects on air, water, and other resources of the potential development of 51,000 CBNG wells. The BLM determined that with the leasing stipulations in the 1985 Buffalo RMP and new mitigation measures approved in the PRB EIS, the 51,000 wells would not result in any social, environmental, or economic effects that would preclude accomplishment of one or more of the 1985 Buffalo RMP objectives as long as appropriate conditions of use are required. This EA may substantially incorporate by reference impact analyses from the PRB EIS.

BLM is including in the scope of the EA the three leases that were the subject of the Court and IBLA's decisions, as well as 418 additional oil and gas leases that have been issued since February 2000 within the Buffalo Field Office administrative area. BLM will take a "hard look" at the environmental consequence of each alternative and has not foreclosed, simply because of the difficulty of implementation, choosing to implement any of the alternatives under review.

In addition to this EA, BLM is preparing an EA to consider continued implementation of the leasing decisions in the Buffalo RMP in future years.

Potential Alternatives: For the purposes of analysis, the BLM has developed the following reasonable range of comprehensive alternatives,

and will analyze particular environmental issues that were foreseeable at the time the leases were offered for sale:

1. No Action Alternative: Affirm the issuance of 421 leases on the terms prescribed in the 1985 RMP, as amended.

2. Modify leases to add stipulations to address issues such as water disposal, use of diesel engines, slopes, erosive soils, and proposed Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

3. Modify leases to subject them to less restrictive stipulations consistent with the 1985 RMP, as amended.

4. Modify leases to preclude development of CBNG. We believe that this is what the Court meant by "not issuing the leases at all," since the Court found no problems with the adequacy of existing NEPA analyses to support leasing for conventional oil and gas.

Dated: November 30, 2004.

Alan L. Kesterke,

Associate State Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[CO-600-05-1610-DF]

Notice of Public Meetings, Southwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council Meetings

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (FACA), the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Southwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council (RAC) will meet as indicated below.

DATES: The Southwest Colorado RAC meetings will be held January 21, 2005; March 4, 2005; May 6, 2005; and July 22, 2005.

ADDRESSES: The Southwest Colorado RAC meetings will be held January 21, 2005, at the Bill Heddles Recreation Center, located at 530 Gunnison River Dr., Delta, CO; March 4, 2005, at the Holiday Inn Express, located at 1391 S. Townsend Ave., in Montrose, CO; May 6, 2005, at the Gunnison County Fairgrounds, Multipurpose Building, 275 S. Spruce St., in Gunnison, CO; and July 22, 2004, at the Avon Hotel, 144 E. 10 St., in Silverton, CO.

The Southwest Colorado RAC meetings will begin at 8 a.m. and

adjourn at approximately 3 p.m. Public comment periods regarding matters on the agenda will be at 2 p.m.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Barbara Sharrow, BLM Uncompahgre field office manager, 2505 S. Townsend Ave., Montrose, CO; telephone 970-240-5300; or Melodie Lloyd, Public Affairs Specialist, 2815 H Rd., Grand Junction, CO, telephone 970-244-3097.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Southwest Colorado RAC advises the Secretary of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management, on a variety of public land issues in Colorado.

Topics of discussion for all Southwest Colorado RAC meetings may include the BLM National Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy, committee reports, recreation, fire management, land use planning, invasive species management, energy and minerals management, travel management, wilderness, land exchange proposals, cultural resource management, and other issues as appropriate.

These meetings are open to the public. The public may present written comments to the RACs. Each formal RAC meeting will also have time, as identified above, allocated for hearing public comments. Depending on the number of persons wishing to comment and time available, the time for individual oral comments may be limited.

Dated: December 8, 2004.

Barbara Sharrow,

*Uncompahgre Field Office Manager,
Designated Federal Official for the Southwest Colorado RAC.*

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

Potential for Oil Shale Development, Extension of Public Comment Period

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Interior.

ACTION: Notice of extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: The BLM published a **Federal Register** on November 22, 2004 seeking public input on the terms to be included in leases of small tracts for oil shale research and development within the Piceance Creek Basin, northwestern Colorado; the Uinta Basin, southeastern Utah; and the Green River and Washakie Basins, western Wyoming. BLM received a request to extend the