

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
North Dakota Field Office  
99 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue W, Suite A  
Dickinson, ND 58601**

**Decision Record and Leasing Recommendation  
Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-MT-C030-2015-0085-EA**

**Decision:**

It is my decision to implement Alternative C (the Preferred Alternative) as identified in the North Dakota Field Office (NDFO) Oil and Gas Leasing Environmental Assessment (EA), DOI-BLM-MT-C030-2015-0085-EA, in which 7 parcels of the 8 lease parcels containing 1,124.24 federal surveyed mineral acres in whole or part would be offered for competitive and/or noncompetitive lease issuance at the July 14, 2015 competitive sale. Competitive leases will be issued for parcels sold at the sale, and noncompetitive leases may be issued for applications filed during the 2-year period following the sale. 1 parcel containing 40.02 acres is deferred pending further review of sage grouse being analyzed in the current NDFO RMP amendment.

Additionally, Parcel NDM97300-7K containing 49.36 acres, which was analyzed to be leased as part of the Preferred Alternative, will be deferred and not included in the sale to allow the BLM the opportunity to resurvey the area during the summer of 2015.

**Authorities:**

The authority for this decision is contained in 43 CFR 3100.

**Compliance and Monitoring:**

Should the parcels be developed, monitoring may be required and would be addressed and analyzed under future NEPA documentation.

**Terms, Conditions, and Stipulations:**

For all parcels, standard terms and conditions, as well as the lease notices and stipulations identified by parcel in Appendix A of the EA, would apply and be attached to the lease parcel(s).

**Plan Conformance and Consistency:**

The proposed action and alternatives have been reviewed and found to be in conformance with the following BLM plans and associated Record of Decision(s): North Dakota RMP (April 1988) and its associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the governing land use plan for the NDFO.

**Alternatives Considered:**

Alternative A – No Action. The No Action Alternative would exclude all 8 parcels, covering 1,164.26 surveyed Federal mineral acres (49.36 surveyed BLM administered surface and 1,114.9 surveyed private/State surface), from the competitive oil and gas lease sale. Surface management would remain the same and ongoing oil and gas development would continue on surrounding Federal, private, and State leases.

Alternative B – Proposed Action. The Proposed Action Alternative would be to offer 8 lease parcels of Federal minerals for oil and gas leasing, covering 1,164.26 surveyed Federal mineral acres (49.36 surveyed BLM administered surface and 1,114.9 surveyed private surface), in conformance with the existing land use planning decisions. The parcels are located in Burke, Williams, Divide, Golden Valley, and Bowman counties, North Dakota. Parcel number, size, and detailed locations and associated stipulations are listed in Appendix A of the EA.

Alternative C – BLM Preferred Alternative. The preferred alternative, 7 whole parcels of the 8 lease parcels, 1,124.24 surveyed Federal mineral acres (49.36 surveyed BLM administered surface and 1074.88 surveyed private surface) would be offered for competitive oil and gas lease sale and lease issuance. Standard terms and conditions, as well as stipulations identified in Appendix A of the EA would apply.

The preferred alternative would defer 1 lease parcel in whole, encompassing 40.02 surveyed Federal mineral acres (40.02 surveyed private surface), is recommended for deferral. This lease parcel contains critical greater sage grouse habitat being analyzed in the current NDFO RMP Amendment; therefore, 1 whole lease parcel would be deferred pending further review and analysis.

**Public Comments:**

This EA was made available for a 30-day public comment period which ended on September 24, 2014. A total of 2 written submissions were received during the 30-day comment period. After review and consideration of the comments, some modifications have been made to the EA. Changes made to the analysis are noted with gray-scale shading and/or strikeout so the modifications to the EA can easily be identified. Refer to Chapter 5 of the updated EA for a summary of public participation and changes made to the EA.

**Rationale for the Decision:**

The decision to approve Alternative C, the preferred alternative, and defer and remove parcel NDM 97300-7K from this lease sale is based on the following: 1) consistency with resource management and land use plans; 2) national policy; 3) agency statutory requirements; 4) relevant resource issues; and 5) application of measures to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

1. The decision is in conformance with the North Dakota RMP (April 1988) and its associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the governing land use plan for the NDFO.
2. It is the policy of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as derived from various laws, including the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended [30 U.S.C. 181 *et seq.*] and the

Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, to make mineral resources available for disposal and to encourage development of mineral resources to meet national, regional, and local needs.

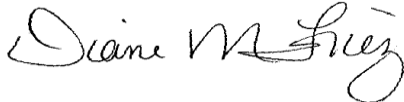
3. The decision is consistent with all federal, state, and county authorizing actions required for implementation of the Preferred Alternative.
4. Standard terms and conditions as well as special stipulations would apply. Lease stipulations (as required by Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations 3101.1-3) were added to each parcel as identified by the NDFO to address site specific resource concerns or new information not identified in the planning process.

Recommended by:



Loren Wickstrom, Acting Field Manager  
Date: 7/06/15

Concurrence by:



Diane M. Friez, District Manager  
Date: 7/06/15

Approved by:



Donato J. Judice, Deputy State Director, Division of Energy, Minerals and Realty  
Date: 7/07/2015