

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

**Decision Record and Leasing Recommendation
Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-MT-C030-2014-0189-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-C030-2014-0189-EA, in which 3 whole and 2 partial parcels of the 7 lease parcels containing 462.18 federal surveyed mineral acres in whole or part would be offered for competitive and/or noncompetitive lease issuance at the January 27, 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. The remaining 2 whole and 2 partial parcels containing 2,608.29 federal surveyed mineral acres would be deferred pending further review of sage grouse being analyzed in the current NDFO RMP amendment, and potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) to be analyzed in the upcoming RMP revision.

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 7 parcels, covering 3,070.47 surveyed Federal mineral acres (1,403.54 surveyed BLM administered surface, 2.12 surveyed BOR surface and 1,664.81 surveyed private 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 7 lease parcels of Federal minerals for oil and gas leasing, covering 3,070.47 surveyed Federal mineral acres (1,403.54 surveyed BLM administered surface, 2.12 surveyed BOR surface and 1,664.81 surveyed private surface), in conformance with the existing land use planning decisions. The parcels are located in Bowman, Dunn, McKenzie and Williams 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, 3 whole and 2 partial parcels of the 7 lease parcels, 462.18 surveyed Federal mineral acres (2.12 surveyed BOR surface and 460.06 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 the remaining 2 lease parcels in whole and 2 partial lease parcels, encompassing 2,608.29 surveyed Federal mineral acres (1,403.54 surveyed BLM administered surface and 1,205.40 surveyed private surface). Two of these lease parcels contain critical sage grouse habitat being analyzed in the current NDFO RMP Amendment. The two partial parcels recommended for deferral contain potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) to be analyzed in the upcoming RMP revision currently planned to be initiated in 2016. This would provide for consideration of alternatives in upcoming NDFO RMP planning.

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, 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.

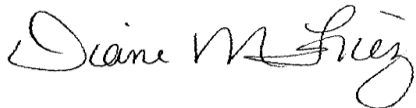
Recommended by:



Loren Wickstrom, Acting Field Manager

Date: 1-12-2015

Concurrence by:



Diane M. Friez, District Manager

Date: 1-20-2015

Approved by:



Donato J. Judice, Deputy State Director, Division of Energy, Minerals and Realty

Date: 1-21-2015