

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
LITTLE SNAKE FIELD OFFICE**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
February 2014 Oil and Gas Lease Sale
DOI-BLM-CON010-2013-0049EA**

BACKGROUND

It is the policy of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as derived from various laws, including the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 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.

The BLM's Colorado State Office conducts quarterly competitive lease sales to sell available oil and gas lease parcels. This EA was prepared to analyze the impacts of leasing parcels nominated with the Little Snake Field Office in the February 2013 lease sale.

The EA considered a range of alternatives from leasing all nominated parcels to leasing no parcels. Some of the nominated parcels will be deferred from the February 2014 lease sale due to resource concerns and, therefore, were not analyzed in detail. The proposed action was to lease 9 of the 28 parcels in the Little Snake Field Office area. The BLM would defer leasing 19 parcels that contain priority greater sage-grouse habitat until the NW CO Greater Sage-Grouse Amendment/EIS is completed.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the information contained in the EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the Proposed Action or alternatives will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the: Little Snake Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (October 2011); (2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Resource Management Plan; and (3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA.

Context

The action would occur within the LSFO boundary and would have local impacts on the resources similar to, and within the scope of those described and considered within the LSFO RMP/ROD (October

2011) and its respective EIS. The project is a site-specific action on BLM-administered land and/or mineral estate that by itself does not have known or identified international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity

The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into resources and issues considered (includes supplemental authorities Appendix 1 H-1790-1) and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations, and Executive Orders.

The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.* This project may have minor short term impacts to soils, vegetation, and wildlife; however, these impacts are not expected to be significant and will be further analyzed in site specific NEPA documents at the development stage, should the decision be made to lease the proposed parcels.

2. *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.* The proposed action is not expected to significantly impact public health and safety. Oil and gas development is a common practice in the area and no significant impacts to health and safety are known.

3. *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.* There are no prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas within the affected area. No significant impacts to riparian vegetation, parklands, wetlands, or municipal water supplies are expected and will be further analyzed and minimized in site specific NEPA documents at the development stage, should the decision be made to lease the proposed parcels.

4. *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.* Oil and gas development is a common practice in the area and the effects are generally well understood. NEPA documents at the development stage would incorporate all new information to analyze impacts.

5. *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.* Oil and gas development is a common practice in the area and the effects are generally well understood. NEPA documents at the development stage would incorporate all new information to analyze impacts.

6. *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.* This decision is like one of many that have previously been made and would continue to be made by the BLM responsible officials regarding leasing on public lands. The decision is within the scope of the Resource Management Plan and is not expected to establish a precedent for future actions. It would allow for site specific development on the leases however that development would be analyzed in future NEPA documents and is not expected to have significant impacts.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

There are no significant cumulative effects on the environment, either when combined with the effects created by past and concurrent projects, or when combined with the effects from natural changes taking place in the environment or from reasonably foreseeable future projects. Additional analysis would take place at the development stage to ensure cumulative impacts are disclosed.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources. This undertaking will have no effect on historic properties from leasing. Site specific surveys and consultation with SHPO will take place at the development stage and we expect to minimize impacts to these resources through that process.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. No impacts are expected to endangered or threatened species or their designated critical habitats.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. This decision complies with other Federal, State, or local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

This is an unsigned FONSI for public comment

Deputy State Director
Division of Energy, Lands, and Minerals

Date