

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E Market St
Meeker, CO 81641**

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
DOI-BLM-CO-110-2013-0099-EA**

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the alternatives considered in DOI-BLM-CO-110-2013-0099-Environmental Assessment (EA) will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects from any alternative assessed or evaluated meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined by 43 CFR 1508.27; nor do they exceed those effects as described in the 1997 White River Field Office (WRFO) Resource Management Plan (RMP) or its Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD). An environmental impact statement is therefore not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below.

Context

The project is a site-specific action directly involving BLM administered public lands where certain aspects associated with the proposed lease parcels, such as air and water quality and energy development have state-wide and regional importance. Between twenty-seven and thirty-three parcels comprising approximately 26,448 to 50,460 acres in the WRFO are proposed for leasing in the June 2014 Colorado Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale (see EA Attachments B and C for complete legal descriptions). These parcels would be offered at public auction. Following the auction, any unsold parcels could be sold non-competitively.

Once sold, the lease purchaser would have the right to use as much of the leased lands as is reasonably necessary to explore and drill for all of the oil and gas resources within the lease boundaries, subject to the stipulations attached to the lease (43 CFR 3101). Oil and gas leases are issued for a 10-year period and continue for as long thereafter as oil or gas is produced in paying quantities. If a lease holder fails to produce oil and gas, does not make annual rental payments, does not comply with the terms and conditions of the lease, or relinquishes the lease, ownership of the minerals leased reverts back to the federal government and the lease can be resold. Drilling of wells on a lease would not be permitted until the lease owner or operator meets the site specific requirements specified in 43 CFR 3162.

Intensity

The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 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 Proposed Action:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts have been disclosed in the EA. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests, or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the White River Resource Area and adjacent land. None of the environmental effects associated with offering the proposed lease parcels for sale, as discussed in detail in the EA, were determined to be significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the White River RMP and FEIS/ROD.

2. The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety.

Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials. If the parcels are sold and the leases enter into a development stage, public health or safety would be addressed by following lease stipulations and health and safety regulations, and through conditions of approval imposed as required following site-specific analysis.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

There would be no adverse impacts to regional or local air quality, prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplain, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas, or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

4. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

There is little disagreement or controversy as to the level or nature of the effects of the lease sale on resource values.

5. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.

There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature. The lease sale is not unique or unusual. Oil and gas leasing and post-lease development have been ongoing in the United States, including portions of northwestern Colorado for more than a century. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas. The environmental effects to the human environment are considered in the corresponding RMP/FEIS/ROD. Oil and gas exploration and drilling operations are regulated for health and safety through other agencies of local, State and Federal government. Should there be discovered risks, these agencies would act accordingly.

6. 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 project does not establish a precedent for other actions that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State, or local natural resource related plans, policies, or programs. The impacts of the lease sale were considered by the interdisciplinary team within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. A decision to lease for the June 2014 sale would not limit later resource management decisions for areas open to development proposals. Significant contributions to cumulative effects are not expected from the June 2014 Lease Sale.

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

No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated. Indirect effects from potential future development of the leases could have cumulative impacts. The EA did not reveal any significant cumulative effects beyond those already analyzed in the White River RMP/FEIS. The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant new cumulative effects are not expected. At any given location cumulative impacts from oil and gas development along with other actions will be quite variable and a more accurate assessment can be made at the permitting stage. Lease stipulations and conditions of approval at the development permitting stage, including reclamation requirements, reduce the potential for cumulative impacts to resource values.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The Proposed Action would not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Any future lease development will be subject to additional Section 106 compliance, including identification, effects assessment, and if necessary, resolution of adverse effects.

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 (ESA) of 1973.

No adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act were identified. Leasing parcels for oil and gas development will likely result in future development at some locations. Exploration and development of leased parcels would likely impact wildlife, the magnitude and location of direct and indirect effects cannot be predicted until site-specific proposals are permitted. If, at a future time, there could be the potential for adverse impacts, development proposals would be modified or mitigated not to have an adverse effect or new analysis would be conducted.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

This action is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. In addition, this action is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies and programs.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

Lonny R. Bagley, Deputy State Director
Division of Energy, Lands, and Minerals

DATE SIGNED: