

Memorandum

To: Mayor and Council
From: Tom Baker, Town Administrator
Date: August 5, 2014
Re: BLM Scoping: EIS for Existing Oil and Gas Leases

Purpose: The purpose of this item is to allow a representative of the BLM to update Council on the EIS process for existing oil and gas leases on the White River National Forest. The purpose of the EIS is to identify and address issues and concerns related to the 65 existing leases issued since 1993, including 25 leases in the Thompson Divide area. The timeframe is as follows: draft EIS in summer 2015 and final EIS in summer 2016. This will be an opportunity to understand how existing leases can impact New Castle and allow Council to raise concerns or ask questions about any potential impacts to our area.

Attached is a BLM information sheet.



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Existing Leases on the White River National Forest EIS

The BLM has initiated the public scoping period for the environmental impact statement for existing leases on the White River National Forest issued since 1993.

Before BLM begins drafting the EIS, it wants to hear from the public about what issues and concerns they would like to see addressed in the EIS. Specific comments will be the most effective.

Scoping comments need to be received by **May 16, 2014** and may be emailed to WRNFleases@blm.gov; faxed to 970-876-9090; or mailed to Bureau of Land Management, Colorado River Valley Field Office, 2300 River Frontage Road, Silt, CO 81652.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does this EIS address?

The Environmental Impact Statement for the Previously Issued Oil and Gas Leases in the White River National Forest will analyze 65 existing leases issued since 1993 in the White River National Forest, including the 25 leases in the Thompson Divide area that were recently suspended through April 1, 2016.

Why are you doing this EIS?

In 2007, the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) ruled on a challenge of three leases in Pitkin County that BLM must either do its own environmental analysis or formally adopt the White River National Forest's 1993 Oil and Gas EIS for leasing on the White River National Forest.

Through the EIS, the BLM will conduct its own environmental analysis on 65 leases issued since the 1993 EIS to determine whether the leases should be voided, reaffirmed, modified with additional or different terms, or subject to additional mitigation measures for site-specific development proposals.

What is the timeframe of this EIS?

A draft EIS will be released for public comment once draft alternatives are complete, currently anticipated for summer 2015. A final EIS is anticipated in summer 2016.

How can I comment?

The public scoping period runs through May 16, 2014. Scoping comments may be emailed to WRNFleases@blm.gov; faxed to 970-876-9090; or mailed to Bureau of Land Management, Colorado River Valley Field Office, 2300 River Frontage Road, Silt, CO 81652.

Scoping is the first opportunity for public involvement where BLM seeks to identify what issues and concerns the public would like to see addressed in the EIS. The most effective comments will be specific to the EIS rather than broad, unsupported statements.

How does this EIS differ from the Oil and Gas EIS the White River National Forest itself is developing?

The BLM EIS will analyze 65 existing oil and gas leases. The White River National Forest Oil and Gas EIS address future oil and gas leasing across the entire Forest. The BLM will incorporate into its EIS as much of the analysis from the Forest Service EIS as possible.

Why did you extend the suspensions for the 25 oil and gas leases in Thompson Divide?

These 25 leases are part of the 65 leases being addressed in the EIS. One of the circumstances in which a lease suspension is normally warranted occurs when the leaseholder is awaiting a decision from the BLM or other surface management agency, such as this EIS. Additionally, both SG Interests and Ursa have pending development and unitization proposals. The first development proposal for the Ursa leases was submitted in 2009, followed by a request to unitize its seven leases in 2012. SG Interests first submitted a proposal to unitize its leases in 2011, followed by development proposals in 2012.

What does a suspension mean?

A leaseholder has 10 years to begin developing oil and gas or their lease expires. A suspension stops that 10-year clock, but also prevents the leaseholder from developing their lease while it is suspended.

Documents

- Federal Register Notice
- News Release Scoping begins (4-1-14)
- News Release Scoping extended (4-11-14)
- IBLA Decision 2007
- List of affected leases
- List of pending APDs
- Posters from Scoping Meetings

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