Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
DOI-BLM-CO-F020-2018-0067-EA

Based on review of the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the supporting documents, I have determined that the proposed oil and gas lease sale would 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 Northeast Resource Management Plan (RMP) and amendment (September 1986 and November 1991) and Royal Gorge Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) (May 1996) and Records of Decision (ROD). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below.

Context:
Oil and gas leasing in the Royal Gorge Field Office includes all those federal fluid mineral resources in Colorado east of the continental divide, with the exception of the federal fluid mineral estate within Kremmling and San Luis Valley Field Office boundaries. Many of the parcels are in rural settings and are distant from even small communities. The parcels on the plains of eastern Colorado have a patchwork of dry-land farming and uncultivated short-grass prairie which are likely used for cattle grazing. Weld County parcels are primarily in rangeland. The EA analyzes a total of 12 lease parcels in Weld and Las Animas counties; all 12 of the parcels will be included in the December 2018 lease sale. The counties that have parcels in the December sale have had minor to moderate oil and gas development activity. Certain aspects associated with the proposed lease parcels, such as air and water quality and energy development have state-wide and regional 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:

Impacts that may be beneficial and adverse: There are no direct impacts to resources from the act of leasing. The EA identifies indirect impacts from leasing as a result of potential future impacts from development of those leases at the Application for Permit to Drill (APD) stage. 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 Royal Gorge and Northeast (as amended) RMPs and their respective Final Environmental Impact Statements (FEISs).

Public health and safety: 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.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area: The EA evaluated the area of the proposed lease sale and determined that no areas with unique characteristics such as Wild and Scenic Rivers, Prime or Unique Farmlands, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, designated Wilderness areas, or Wilderness Study Areas were present.

Degree to which effects are likely to be highly controversial: There is little disagreement or controversy as to the level or nature of the effects of the proposed action on resource values.

Degree to which effects are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks: 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 eastern 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 Royal Gorge and Northeast RMPs/FEISs. Oil and gas exploration and drilling operations are regulated for health and safety through other agencies of local, state and federal governments. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

Consideration of whether the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. This project neither establishes a precedent nor represents a decision in principle about future actions. The leasing of federal minerals, and more specifically fluid minerals, has been occurring since the creation of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920. A decision to lease would not limit later resource management decisions for areas open to development proposals.

Consideration of whether the action is related to other actions with cumulatively significant impacts: Although future development could add incrementally to the oil and gas development in the eastern portion of the state, the EA did not identify any significant cumulative effects beyond those already analyzed in the Royal Gorge and Northeast RMPs/FEISs. The interdisciplinary team evaluated the lease sale in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions.

Scientific, cultural or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places: Because the proposed lease sale does not involve ground disturbance, the proposed undertaking will have no effect on historic properties. Any future development of parcels that are purchased as a result of the lease sale will be subject to additional Section 106 compliance, including identification, effects assessment, and, if necessary, resolution of adverse effects. This requirement is outlined in lease stipulation CO-39 that is attached to each lease parcel.

Threatened and endangered species and their critical habitat: All lease parcels are stipulated to protect resources if they potentially contain habitat for threatened, endangered,

candidate, or other special status plant or animal species (CO-34), alerting operators as to the potential for future restrictions on development if such species and/or habitat is found on the parcel. Parcels are also stipulated appropriately with provisions within respective RMPs to protect species that are currently listed or deemed sensitive.

Any effects that threaten a violation of Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment: The proposed action does not violate any known federal, state, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. In addition, the proposed action is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies and programs.

PREPARER: Sharon A. Sales

ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: /s/ Martin Weimer

FIELD MANAGER REVIEW: _____
Keith Berger, Field Manager
Royal Gorge Field Office

DATE SIGNED: 12/12/18

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Suzanne Mehlhoff
Suzanne Mehlhoff, Deputy State Director
Division of Energy, Lands and Minerals

DATE SIGNED: 12/12/18