

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

DOI-BLM-CO-040-2018-0087-EA

Based on review of the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the supporting documents, I have determined that the proposed March 28, 2019 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 *Colorado River Valley Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (2015 CRVFO ROD/ARMP)* Approved, June 12, 2015; *Grand Junction Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (2015 GJFO ROD/ARMP)*, Approved August 10, 2015; *Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA)*, approved September 2015 and *Final Environmental Assessment for the June 8, 2017 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale* (June 2017 EA) for the White River, Little Snake, and Kremmling field offices, approved June 8, 2017, and Record(s) of Decision (RODs). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the action as described below.

Context:

Nearly all of the Oil and gas leasing in the Colorado River Valley and Grand Junction Field Office is located within the Uinta-Piceance Basin. Unleased Federal minerals mostly underlie the Roan Plateau Area and National Forest Lands. Almost all of the available BLM-administered federal oil and gas mineral estate within the CRVFO and GJFO are currently leased for oil and gas exploration and production. The lease sale contains parcels in Garfield and Mesa counties. Of those parcels currently in the sale, historically Mesa County has had the greatest oil and gas activity with Garfield having more minor levels of development. Certain aspects associated with the proposed lease parcels, such as air and water quality and energy development have state-wide and regional importance. There is one parcel, 8435, which overlaps with the DeBeque Rim wilderness characteristics inventory unit. The leasing of parcels within the inventory unit would not directly result in a decrease in naturalness.

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 Memorandums, 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 CRVFO and GJFO RMP(s) and their respective FEIS(s).

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 sales 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:

No anticipated effects analyzed in the EA would be considered highly controversial. There is little disagreement or controversy as to the level or nature of the effects of the proposed action on resource values. While the Preferred Alternative may be considered somewhat controversial to some members of the public, the Preferred Alternative conforms with the current land use plan, which allocated federal mineral estate as either available or administratively closed to oil and gas leasing.

Degree to which effects are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks:

Leasing 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 CRVFO and GJFO RMP/FEIS. 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:

The EA did not identify any significant cumulative effects beyond those already analyzed in the CRVFO and GJFO RMP(s)/FEIS (s). 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 would 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. The parcels are also stipulated appropriately with provisions within the respective RMP(s) to protect species that currently are 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: Danielle R. Courtois

ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Erin R. Jones

FIELD MANAGER REVIEW:

Gloria Tibbits, Field Manager
Colorado River Valley Field Office

DATE SIGNED: _____

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

Susanne Mehlhoff, Deputy State Director
Division of Energy, Lands and Minerals

DATE SIGNED: _____