

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Little Snake Field Office,  
455 Emerson St.  
Craig, CO 81625**

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)  
DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0044EA**

**BACKGROUND**

The Proposed Action is to issue a federal coal lease modification to existing federal lease COC54608. Lease COC54608 was issued in February, 1996 for 2,600 acres. Underground mining of the Wadge seam within this 2,600 acre lease boundary occurred from June, 1996 - September, 2001. In August, 2002, Twentymile Coal (TC) relinquished 2,280 acres of lease COC54608. The current COC54608 lease contains 320 acres of the Wadge seam coal only. The proposed lease modification would add approximately 310 acres to existing coal lease COC54608 for underground development and production of federal coal reserves in the Wolf Creek seam, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, including terms and conditions for protecting non-mineral resources. The lease modification would add 230 acres of unleased coal within the existing 320 acre boundary of COC54608 and 80 acres of unleased federal coal adjoining lease COC54608.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the Proposed Action is not a major federal action and 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 meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the Little Snake Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (2011). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is 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 underground mining of federal coal reserves by modifying an existing federal coal lease to add 310 acres. The surface estate is privately owned by Twentymile Coal and Ashley Investments. Production of the coal in the lease modification would occur over a seven year period. There will be no direct surface impacts as a result of modifying this federal coal lease.

The 310 acre lease modification is located in rural Routt County, Colorado, in an area with a rich history of mining and livestock grazing. The area also contains scattered rural development and habitat for many wildlife species. Surrounding communities include Steamboat Springs, Oak Creek, Hayden and Craig. No short or long term significant impacts are expected.

### **Intensity**

The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the Peabody Twentymile Coal, LLC 310 acre lease modification application. With regard to each:

#### **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 project would make a minor contribution to small amounts of airborne particulate matter and release of methane and greenhouse gases. Benefits of the project would be continuation of gainful employment in the coal mine, additional federal royalties, additional state revenue from taxes, and contribution to the supply of coal to meet the nation's energy demands. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Little Snake Field Office area and adjacent land.

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

Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. Potential risks to public health and safety would be low and would occur over limited, brief periods. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials. Post leasing operations would have to comply with the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety (DRMS) mining permit requirements.

#### **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.**

This decision for modifying an existing federal coal lease and its effects are not unique. Coal leasing decisions has been made in this area for over 80 years. There is no scientific controversy over the nature of the impacts. There is some uncertainty about the long-term cumulative effects of GHG's and how these effects can be managed. The potential intensity of effects on the quality of the human environment is minimal.

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

The project is not unique or unusual in this area. Coal mining has been ongoing for over 100 years in the area. The BLM has been making decisions on similar actions for many years and has experience implementing similar actions in this area. There are no effects 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.

**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 decision does not set 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. This decision is not unusual and significant cumulative effects are not predicted. This decision does not entail any known issues or elements that would create a precedent for future mining decisions. The decision does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Leasing of additional coal reserves was evaluated in the 2011 LSFO ROD and Approved RMP. Documentation in an EIS is not required.

**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.

**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.**

Based on previous and ongoing cultural surveys and through mitigation by avoidance, no adverse impacts to cultural resources were identified or are anticipated. There are no known American Indian religious concerns or person or groups who might be disproportionately or adversely affected as anticipated by the Environmental Justice Policy.

**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 (ESA) were identified. If, at a future time, there could be the potential for adverse impacts, treatments would be modified or mitigated to not 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.**

Neither the Proposed Action nor impacts associated with it violate any laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. The Proposed Action is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.

**SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:**

  
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Field Manager

**DATE SIGNED:**

12/31/15