

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
Colorado State Office
Denver Federal Center – Building 40
Lakewood, CO 80215

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for the December 2025 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale
DOI-BLM-CO-0000-2025-0002-EA

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-CO-0000-2025-0002-EA) that analyzes the effects of leasing sixty-one (61) nominated oil and gas lease parcels (51,067.87 acres) in Garfield, Jackson, Mesa, Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt Counties, Colorado, for sale in the Colorado State Office (COSO) December 2025 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale (hereafter referred to as the “Lease Sale”). The nominated parcels contain Federal minerals managed by the BLM and consist of BLM-administered surface land, surface land administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State, and private surface land. The proposed parcels are located in the Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO), Kremmling Field Office (KFO), Little Snake Field Office (LSFO), and White River Field Office (WRFO).

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) applies to the Modified Leasing Alternative (Section 2.3 of the EA). The Modified Leasing Alternative analyzes leasing sixty (60) of the nominated lease parcels (50,987.87 acres) subject to standard lease terms and conditions (43 C.F.R. Part 3100) and with applicable stipulations and lease notices derived from the land use plans identified in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Associated Land Use Plans

1	Grand Junction Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) (GJFO RMP) August 2015 (BLM 2015a) (https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/55944/510)
2	ROD and Approved RMP for the GJFO (2024 GJFO RMP) October 2024 (BLM 2024b) (https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2016085/510)
3	Kremmling ROD and Approved RMP (KFO RMP) June 2015 (BLM 2015b) (https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/68543/510)
4	Little Snake ROD and Approved RMP (LSFO RMP) October 2011 (BLM 2011) (https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/65605/510)
5	White River ROD and Approved RMP (WRFO RMP) July 1997 (BLM 1997) (https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/65266/510)

6	WRFO ROD and Approved RMP Amendment for Oil and Gas Development (WRFO RMPA) (BLM 2015c) (https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/65266/510)
7	ROD and Approved RMP for Big Game Habitat Conservation for Oil and Gas Management in Colorado (Big Game RMPA) (BLM 2024a) (https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2018400/510)
8	Greater Sage-Grouse Rangewide Planning ROD and Approved RMP Amendments for Colorado (2025 GRSR ARMPA) (BLM 2025) (https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2016719/510)

Under the Modified Leasing Alternative, one parcel (CO-2025-12-0387) would not be offered for leasing as detailed in the EA. This parcel requires further analysis of unresolved conflicts to determine whether it should be made available for lease.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on my review of the attached EA and supporting documents and considering the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321–4370m–11 (NEPA) and the Department of the Interior’s NEPA regulations at 43 C.F.R. §§ 46.10–46.450, I have determined that the Modified Leasing Alternative will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Additionally, the environmental effects do not exceed those effects described in the Final Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) for the land use plans listed in **Table 1**. Therefore, an EIS is not required. This finding is based on the degree of the effects described in the following sections within the identified affected environment.

Potentially Affected Environment

Grand Junction Field Office

Garfield County
(CO-2025-12-0388, CO-2025-12-0389, CO-2025-12-6259)

About 19 aerial miles to the north of the Town of Mack in a rural area, these parcels of BLM surface and mineral estate are generally surrounded by BLM surface and mineral estate in a landscape dominated by desert shrublands and canyons. Situated in Ashford Canyon and Correl Canyon, the lands drain to East Salt Creek. The surrounding areas are used for grazing, oil and gas development, recreation, transportation, and wildlife habitat. The Demaree Canyon Wilderness Study Area is 1.6 miles to the southwest. These parcels are within the area of the South Canyon and Gasaway fields that were originally developed from the 1970s to 1990s and, more recently, in the early 2010s.

Mesa County
(CO-2025-12-6155)

About 2.8 aerial miles to the southeast of the Town of Collbran in a rural agricultural area, this fragmented parcel has mixed surface ownership (BLM and private) and is surrounded by a mix of BLM and private surface and mineral estate in a high-desert mountain valley setting with ranches in the valley bottoms, transitioning to shrublands and ridgelines, and mountains of the Grand Mesa National Forest in the background. The fragmented parcel drains to Salt Creek and Spring Creek, which are tributaries of Plateau Creek. The surrounding areas are used for agriculture, grazing, oil and gas development, residences, recreation (Vega State Park is 3 aerial miles east), transportation, and wildlife habitat. Situated near Kirkendall Flats Deep Unit, this parcel is within the area of the Brush Creek, Buzzard Creek, Plateau, and Vega fields that have generally been developed from the early 2000s to present.

Kremmling Field Office

Jackson County
(CO-2025-12-0036, CO-2025-12-0391, CO-2025-12-6156)

The parcels range from 4.6 to 7 aerial miles northeast, north, and northwest from the Town of Walden in a ranching area with meandering streams and rolling hills. The parcels have mixed surface ownership (BLM and private) and are surrounded by a mix of Federal and private surface and mineral estate. The parcels drain to tributaries of the North Platte River. The surrounding areas are used for agriculture, grazing, oil and gas development, residences, recreation, transportation, and wildlife habitat. Near the Peterson Ridge Unit, these parcels are in the same general area as the Carlstrom, McCallum, Michigan River, and North Park Niobrara fields that have undergone multiple periods of development since the 1950s, including present-day Niobrara development. The parcels are situated amongst existing and planned oil and gas development, specifically the McCallum Unit, Peterson Ridge Unit, and South McCallum Unit. Historically, most of the development in this area is vertical gas wells; however, recent development plans include directional and horizontal oil wells.

Little Snake Field Office

Central Moffat County
(CO-2025-12-0554)

About 9 aerial miles to the northwest of the Town of Craig in a rural area, this fragmented parcel of BLM surface and mineral estate is surrounded by private surface lands and BLM mineral estate in a landscape with rolling hills and valleys. Draining to the Big Gulch and the North Fork of the Big Gulch, the land in the surrounding area is used for agriculture, grazing, oil and gas development, residences, transportation, and wildlife habitat. This parcel is in the center of

Moffat County, and adjacent to the Encore Field that has undergone multiple periods of development since the 1950s, including recent Niobrara development. New drilling of horizontal wells into the Sand Wash Niobrara are the basis for the spacing and activity in this area.

Moffat and Routt Counties

(CO-2025-12-0244, CO-2025-12-0271, CO-2025-12-0273, CO-2025-12-0274, CO-2025-12-0275, CO-2025-12-0277, CO-2025-12-0379, CO-2025-12-0380, CO-2025-12-0393, CO-2025-12-0548, CO-2025-12-0550, CO-2025-12-6198, CO-2025-12-6199, CO-2025-12-6215)

About 23 aerial miles to the north-northeast of the Town of Craig in an agriculture and forestry area, these parcels have mixed surface ownership (BLM, private, and State) and are surrounded by a mix of surface and mineral estate with views of mountains and National Forest System lands of the nearby Routt National Forest. The parcels drain to Slater Creek, a tributary of the Snake River. The surrounding areas are used for grazing, oil and gas development, residences, recreation, transportation, and wildlife habitat. These parcels are located in northeast Moffat and southwest Routt counties, and are adjacent to the Focus Ranch and Welba Peak units that were initially explored in the 1970s but generally developed periodically since the early 2000s. Present-day oil and gas development targets the Niobrara.

Northern Moffat County

(CO-2025-12-0006, CO-2025-12-0025, CO-2025-12-0026, CO-2025-12-0040, CO-2025-12-0152, CO-2025-12-0153, CO-2025-12-0154, CO-2025-12-0161, CO-2025-12-0165, CO-2025-12-0167, CO-2025-12-0171, CO-2025-12-0172, CO-2025-12-0175, CO-2025-12-0184, CO-2025-12-0185, CO-2025-12-0186, CO-2025-12-0187, CO-2025-12-0237, CO-2025-12-0238, CO-2025-12-0270, CO-2025-12-0276, CO-2025-12-0283, CO-2025-12-0284, CO-2025-12-6175, CO-2025-12-6176, CO-2025-12-6177, CO-2025-12-6179, CO-2025-12-6197, CO-2025-12-6212, CO-2025-12-6213, CO-2025-12-6214)

About 21 to 50 aerial miles to the north and northwest of the Town of Maybell in the rural northwestern corner of the State, these parcels and their surrounding areas are primarily BLM surface and mineral estate with views of bluffs and buttes that drain to the Lower Colorado River. The surrounding areas are used for grazing, oil and gas development, recreation, transportation, wild horse management, and wildlife habitat. These parcels are near the Hiawatha Deep, Pilgrim, and Powder Wash units that have undergone multiple periods of development generally from the 1950s to the 2010s. These Federal units have been developed over numerous years through mainly shallow vertical drilling of gas wells. Recent drilling activity is directional.

White River Field Office

Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties

(CO-2025-12-0381, CO-2025-12-0382, CO-2025-12-0384, CO-2025-12-6256 [technically in the LSFO but in the same development area of WRFO parcels], CO-2025-12-6257, CO-2025-12-6258)

About 15 aerial miles to the northwest of the Town of Meeker in a rural area, these parcels have mixed surface ownership (BLM and private) and are surrounded by a mix of surface estate and primarily BLM mineral estate with gulches and valleys draining to the White River. The land in the surrounding area is used for grazing, oil and gas development, transportation, and wildlife habitat. These parcels are within the Pinyon Ridge and White River fields, and are situated amongst existing and planned oil and gas development, specifically the Ant Hill and Wiley units that have undergone multiple periods of development since the 1950s, including present-day Niobrara development. Historically, most of the development in this area has been through vertical or directional gas wells in the Williams-Fork Formation; however, in northern Rio Blanco and southern Moffat counties, recent development plans include drilling horizontal oil wells in the Niobrara Formation.

Southern Rio Blanco County
(CO-2025-09-0278)

About 30 aerial miles to the southwest of the Town of Meeker in a rural area, this parcel has private surface ownership and, while immediately surrounded by private surface estate and BLM mineral estate, the general area is dominated by BLM surface and mineral estate. The parcel is situated in a landscape characterized as pinyon and juniper shrublands with gulches that drain northward into Piceance Creek. The land in the surrounding area is used for grazing, oil and gas development, transportation, and wildlife habitat. Near the Sulphur Creek Field and Big Jimmy Unit, this parcel is situated near existing and planned oil and gas development that has undergone multiple periods of development generally from the 1950s to the early 2000s.

Degree of Effects

i. Short- and long-term effects

The temporal scale of effects includes the 10-year period of a lease term, unless the lease is held by production, in which case the temporal scale is extended to the life of the producing well(s). If the lease parcels are developed, short-term impacts from development activities (construction, drilling, and completion) are assumed to occur within 2 to 5 years.

Long-term impacts would substantially remain for more than 5 years. Short- and long-term effects of oil and gas leasing are discussed in the EISs of each pertinent land use plan identified in **Table 1**. Future oil and gas exploration and development is expected to continue on public land, according to the Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenarios (RFDs). Oil and gas development Colorado is anticipated to continue in the foreseeable future, cumulatively increasing surface disturbance and potential impacts to resources and values. In recent years, Federal well development has changed from conventional vertical and directional drilling to directional and horizontal drilling. This has reduced the number of developed wells but has increased overall oil and gas production. Hypothetical future parcel oil and gas development scenarios are presented in Section 3.2.1 of the EA with a detailed characterization of each area presented in Appendix F of the EA.

The EA generally considers potential impacts to access and transportation, cultural resources, farmlands, fire management, forest management, lands and realty, lands with wilderness characteristics, minerals, national and state scenic and historic byways, national historic trails,

Native American cultural interests, paleontological resources, permitted range management, public recreation, riparian zones and wetlands, soil, special designations, vegetation (invasives, special status species), visual resources, wastes, water resources, wild horses and burros, and wildlife (aquatic, big game, Greater sage-grouse, migratory birds, and special status species). The EA analyzes three issues in detail: 1) air quality, 2) greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and 3) social and economic conditions.

Although future potential development of the proposed lease parcels could add incrementally to oil and gas development, the EA did not identify any significant effects beyond those already analyzed in the EISs of each pertinent land use plan identified in **Table 1**. Standard lease terms and conditions, applied lease stipulations, site-specific design measures, and conditions of approval (COAs, attached to a permit to avoid or minimize potential impacts to resources and values) pertinent to future Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs), as well as Federal and State regulations, are expected to minimize potential short- and long-term adverse effects. In addition, the BLM will engage proactively with local populations and tribal communities prior to approving any development proposal. The BLM interdisciplinary team evaluated the lease sale in the context of the affected environment and, as appropriate, reasonably foreseeable trends and planned actions.

ii. Beneficial and adverse effects

Leasing does not directly impact resources or values. The EA analyzes eight hypothetical future parcel oil and gas development scenarios to identify direct and indirect impacts from leasing that may occur as a result of potential future development (Section 3.2.1 and Appendix F of the EA). The issuance of an oil and gas lease itself does not authorize any development or disturbance of the surface of leased lands, but such activity may be subsequently authorized by the BLM through approval of an APD or other permit. If a parcel does sell and undergoes development, public health and safety would be protected by Federal, State, and local health and safety regulations, standard lease terms and conditions, lease stipulations, site-specific design measures, and COAs attached to the permit following site-specific analysis. Oil and gas leasing and post-lease development have been ongoing in the United States, including Colorado, for more than a century. The Federal government has a long history of reviewing proposals and inspecting oil and gas development across the nation to protect public health and safety. The environmental effects on the human environment are considered in the corresponding RMPs/EISs, of which the EA tiers.

As described in the pertinent RMPs/EISs, future potential oil and gas development may have beneficial and adverse impacts to resources and values. Such impacts include, but are not limited to, air emissions, habitat disturbance, pipeline and powerline installation, road construction, socioeconomic effects (e.g., jobs and revenue), stormwater discharge, surface disturbance, surface use, and water consumption. Impacts to resources and values are not expected to be significant due to standard lease terms and conditions, lease stipulations, site-specific design measures, and COAs pertinent to future APDs, as well as Federal, State, and local regulations. GHG emissions, as well as social and economic conditions, are discussed in further detail below.

The effects of leasing and potential oil and gas development on GHG emissions levels is discussed in Section 3.6.2 of the EA. Future development of lease parcels under consideration

could lead to emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O), which are the three most common GHGs associated with oil and gas development. These GHGs would be emitted from activities occurring on the leased parcels and from the end-use consumption of any fluid minerals produced. However, the BLM cannot reasonably determine at the leasing stage whether, when, and in what manner a lease would be explored or developed. The uncertainty that exists at the time the BLM offers a lease for sale includes crucial factors that would affect actual GHG emissions and associated impacts, including but not limited to the future feasibility of developing the lease, well density, geological conditions, development type (vertical, directional, or horizontal), hydrocarbon characteristics, specific equipment used during construction, drilling, and production, abandonment operations, product transportation, and potential regulatory changes over the 10-year primary lease term. Actual development on a lease is likely to vary from what is analyzed in this EA and will be evaluated through a site-specific environmental analysis when an operator submits an APD or plan of development to the BLM. For the purposes of this analysis, the BLM has evaluated the potential impacts of the proposed leasing action by estimating and analyzing the projected potential GHG emissions from oil and gas development from the parcels. Projected emissions estimates are based on past actual oil and gas development analyses and any available information from existing development within the State. The BLM must consider the effects of its onshore oil and gas lease sales on GHG emissions. For this sale, the BLM relied on its own specialist report (the 2023 Annual GHG Report) and other data to compare the sale's potential emissions with national and global emissions, and to contextualize the GHG emissions produced by future development of the lease, displaying the GHG emissions in comparison to commonly understood emissions sources such as motor vehicles. The BLM further explained that it lacks the data and tools to estimate specific, climate-related effects from the sale. *See* Section 3.6.2 of the EA, as well as the 2023 Annual GHG Report. As of the publication of this FONSI, there are no established thresholds or standards, qualitative or quantitative, for NEPA analysis to assess the greenhouse gas emissions in terms of the action's effect on the climate, incrementally or otherwise to evaluate the significance of the greenhouse gas emissions from this proposed lease sale.

At the lease sale stage, it is unknown where, or if, development would occur in the lease parcels; as specific types and locations of development are proposed, their specific potential effects would be analyzed and addressed in detail at the time of proposed site-specific development. In general, acquisition and development of new leases provide short-term local and regional jobs, and long-term revenue on a sustained basis. These may include employment opportunities related to the oil and gas service support industries in the region, as well as Federal, State, and local government revenues related to taxes, royalty payments, and other revenue streams. Section 3.7.2 of the EA addresses how oil and gas leasing and potential development may affect socioeconomic conditions of the surrounding areas. The natural resources and mining industries (including quarrying and oil and gas extraction) have one of the highest average annual wages in the study area analyzed in the EA. The wages in those industries are 85 percent higher than the average annual wages across all industries in the study area. Average wage per job numbers are typically lower in agriculture and farming, and leisure and hospitality (BLS 2024b). Leasing mineral rights for the development of Federal minerals generates public revenue. Revenues from oil, gas, and coal extraction are generated from bonus bids, royalties, and rents paid by producers on public lands. These funds are collected and subsequently distributed to the Federal and State governments. The Department of the Interior, through the Office of Natural Resources Revenue

(ONRR), collects a set percentage of the sales value of Federal coal, natural gas, and oil. The leasing of these minerals supports local employment and income and generates public revenue for surrounding communities. The economic contributions of Federal fluid mineral leasing actions are largely influenced by the number of acres leased, and can be measured in terms of jobs, income, economic output, and public revenue generated. Additional details on the economic contribution of Federal fluid minerals are discussed in the RMPs/FEISs identified in **Table 1**.

iii. Effects on public health and safety

Public health and safety air-resource-related effects are addressed in Sections 3.5 of the EA. The Modified Leasing Alternative does not authorize lease occupancy or surface use. The Modified Leasing Alternative, through the imposition of standard lease terms and lease stipulations, would avoid or minimize impacts, including public health and safety. Upon receipt of an APD, the BLM will review the proposed location and could, within the extent consistent with lease rights granted, modify the siting of the location by up to 800 meters and prohibit new surface disturbing activities for a period of up to 90 days in any lease year consistent with 43 C.F.R. § 3101.12. The BLM would then initiate a site-specific environmental analysis that considers reasonably foreseeable effects of the specific action, including consideration of necessary State or local government permits.

In all potential exploration and development scenarios, Federal, State, and local regulations, standard lease terms and conditions, lease stipulations, site-specific design measures, and COAs attached to the permits will require the use of best management practices consistent with lease rights granted and any other Federal, State, or local-derived authority and permits. Based on site-specific environmental review, the BLM may also require or recommend site-specific COAs at the APD stage. Reasonable measures to avoid or minimize impacts to resources or values may include, but are not limited to, relocation or modification to siting or design of facilities, timing of operations, specification of interim and final reclamation measures, and specification of rates of development and production in the public interest. At a minimum, as previously noted, modifications that are consistent with lease rights include, but are not limited to, requiring relocation of proposed operations by up to 800 meters and prohibiting new surface disturbing operations for a period of up to 90 days in any lease year (43 C.F.R. § 3101.12).

In addition to the BLM, other Federal, State, and local agencies regulate oil and gas development to protect health and safety. These include, but are not limited to, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Colorado Energy and Carbon Management Commission, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and pertinent counties (Garfield, Jackson, Mesa, Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt Counties).

The environmental effects on the human environment are considered in the corresponding RMPs/EISs (**Table 1**), to which the EA tiers. Significant impacts to public health and safety are not anticipated.

iv. Effects that would violate Federal, State, Tribal, or local laws protecting the environment

None of the effects associated with the Modified Leasing Alternative would violate any Federal, State, Tribal, or local law protecting the environment. This lease sale is consistent with applicable laws, land use plans, and policies. Federal and State agencies, tribes, and local governments were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. As documented in the EA, the Modified Leasing Alternative is consistent with the applicable RMPs/RODs, policies, and programs and 43 C.F.R. §§ 3100.21–3100.22 for drainage protection. Future development of the leases issued pursuant to the planned December 2025 sale is conditioned on future BLM approval of APDs submitted under 43 C.F.R. Part 3160 and compliance with all associated statutes and regulations, as amended, and Notice(s) to Lessees. The lease sale is consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

Development of the leases would be conditioned on compliance with applicable laws and regulations. All lease parcels are stipulated to protect resources and values if they potentially contain habitat for threatened, endangered, candidate, or other special status plant or animal species (HQ-TES-1), alerting operators to the potential for future restrictions on development if such species and/or habitat are/is found on the parcels. The parcels are also subject to stipulations consistent with the governing RMPs to protect listed and sensitive species. Any future development of the leased parcels is subject to additional National Historic Preservation Act compliance, including identification, effects assessment, and, if necessary, resolution of adverse effects. This requirement is outlined in lease stipulation HQ-CR-1 that is attached to the lease parcels. In addition to national level stipulations, lease parcels also have Colorado-specific lease stipulations, including CO-29, CO-34, and CO-39, which notify prospective lessees of: 1) potential paleontological resource inventory and mitigation; 2) potential habitat for a threatened, endangered, candidate, or other special status plant or animal; and 3) protection for cultural resources, respectively.

Doug Vilsack, State Director

Date