
From: Hayes, Miriam (Nicole) <mnhayes@blm.gov>
Sent: Friday, January 18, 2019 2:22 PM
To: coastalplainAR; Sean Cottle
Subject: Fwd: [EXTERNAL] Coastal Plains DEIS Comment Letter
Attachments: ATT00001.txt; Coastal Plain DEIS Comment Letter Jan19.pdf

Nicole Hayes

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From: **David Fuller** <ddf7001@humboldt.edu>
Date: Fri, Jan 18, 2019 at 1:16 PM
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Coastal Plains DEIS Comment Letter
To: <mnhayes@blm.gov>

Hello Nicole — I attempted to submit my comments on the Coastal Plains DEIS via ePlanning but the link provided kept taking me to the Documents tab and I could not figure out how submit my comments from there. I am assuming this will not be corrected due to the furlough. So, I am attaching my comments to this email. I am also sending a paper copy via USPS.

Thanks for considering my comments. I hope the furlough ends quickly and you can return to work soon — Dave

David Fuller
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Dear Coastal Plain EIS Team:

First of all, thank you for reading my comments. Somebody has to do it and I hope you are being paid well for your hard work.

During the public scoping period I submitted a letter requesting, among other things, that the BLM use nonmarket economic analysis methods specifically to determine impacts to the Existence Value of the millions of acres of unspoiled lands that may be affected, directly and indirectly, by the proposed leases. I was disappointed to read the DEIS and see this statement on page 3-231:

“As noted in *Affected Environment*, quantifying nonmarket values associated with the Arctic Refuge is not part of this analysis.”

Please note that this is not actually “noted”, or even mentioned, in the *Affected Environment* section of the document. In fact, no explanation or rationale is provided as to why the BLM has chosen not to analyze nonmarket values. As you may be aware, BLM Instruction Memorandum 2013-131 provides policy and guidance for the analysis of nonmarket environmental values. A few applicable excerpts from Attachment 1 of IM 2013-131:

“At least a *qualitative* description of the most relevant nonmarket values should be included for the affected environment and the impacts of alternatives in NEPA analyses involving environmental impact statements (EIS), for both resource management plans (RMP) and project- level decisions.”

“The use of *quantitative* valuation methods should contribute to the analysis of one or more issues to be addressed in the environmental analysis supporting planning or other decision-making. A quantitative analysis of nonmarket values in EIS-level NEPA analyses is strongly encouraged where one or more of the criteria provided below apply.”

The first criterion listed: “A proposed action is likely to have a significant direct or indirect effect (as defined at 40 CFR 1508.8 and 1508.27), and the quality or magnitude of the effect can be clarified through the analysis of nonmarket values. For example, a proposed wind energy installation may affect the viewshed of a nearby community in ways that alter scenic values.”

“Passive uses concern values attributed to a place, landscape, or ecological condition without direct use or experience. Many Americans will attribute value to the existence of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) as a wilderness without having been there.”

“The added time and expense required for original nonmarket studies should not preclude their use by the BLM: many biophysical studies prepared for environmental analyses supporting RMPs or individual project approvals require as great or greater budgets and timeframes.”

Clearly, the BLM has not followed its own policy and guidance and has chosen instead to ignore impacts to nonmarket environmental values, even when the Existence Value associated with the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) is used as an example in BLM’s own policy memo. In addition, the BLM chose to ignore the substantive comments and peer-reviewed citations that I provided during the public comment period.

Oil development in ANWR has been a highly controversial subject for decades. A study by Bengston et al. (2010) analyzed 23,000 media stories published between 1995–2007 about ANWR. Compared to many other remote areas where oil development is occurring the American public is well aware of the ecological values associated with ANWR and value the existence of these values within ANWR even though they will never visit. ANWR is unique in this regard and these nonmarket values should part of the NEPA analysis.

A thorough nonmarket economic analysis should not be precluded by the arbitrary time limits set in Secretarial Order 3355. The NEPA process for the Coastal Plains leasing should be exempt from Secretarial Order 3355 given the decades of controversy noted above. Note that 40 CFR 1500.8 allows agencies to set time limits but states that the limits must be consistent with the purposes of NEPA and that agencies should consider, among other factors, the degree to which the action is controversial. Not many NEPA analyses are as controversial as this one. As stated in IM 2013-131 “added time and expense required for original nonmarket studies should not preclude their use by BLM”.

Thank you for considering my comments.

References

Bengston, David N., David P. Fan, and Roger Kaye. 2010. The national public’s values and interests related to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a computer content analysis. *International Journal of Wilderness* 16(3) 13–20.

Bureau of Land Management. 2013. Instruction Memorandum 2013-131, Guidance on estimating nonmarket environmental values. September 12, 2013.
<https://www.blm.gov/policy/im-2013-131-ch1> and Attachment 1.