

impacts such as water drawdown and water production is proceeding at a rate greater than that predicted in the EAs.

DATES: Comments to be considered in the draft EIS should be submitted by June 28, 1996. The draft EIS should be available for public review by mid September of 1996.

ADDRESSES: Questions or concerns should be addressed to Richard Zander in the Buffalo Resource Area Office, 189 North Cedar, Buffalo, Wyoming 82834.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Richard Zander, phone: 1-800-301-3483.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Shortly after the Lighthouse decision was issued in June of 1995, several companies came forward with proposals for approximately 200 additional wells. In addition to the new well proposals impacts were progressing at a faster rate than those predicted in the EAs. Marquiss was modeled at 6 gpm and Lighthouse was modeled at 11 gpm initially declining to an average of 7 gpm. New technological developments such as underreaming the open hole completion in the coal and fracing the coal have led to increased gas production and increased water production. We are seeing 15 to 25 gpm which is a doubling or tripling of the water production in both project areas, with no indication of any decline in water production. This is substantially greater than what was modeled for the NEPA analysis. In Marquiss, because of increased pump rates, static water level drawdowns have occurred in 3 years rather than the 10 years predicted in the NEPA analysis. We do not know if they will go lower. Model assumptions that water production would decline after 1 year are apparently not correct. Torch Operating believes 2 to 3 years may be more realistic. Since water production began in early 1993, we currently have 3 years of production. Torch Operating has stated they are at the point of balancing their production for optimum gas production and water production rates have declined from 25 gpm to 20 gpm.

Monitoring data from one of the shallow wells in the Marquiss project area is possibly showing a decline in the static water level in a sandstone aquifer above the coal. We have talked with the State Engineers Office about this and feel it is too early to determine if there is communication occurring between the two zones. We are closely watching this activity within the aquifers. This type of occurrence makes it imperative that we continue forward with the monitoring program laid out in the Lighthouse EA.

Lighthouse was modeled as a 5-year progressive project. Proposals by Western Gas Resources, Petrox, Inc., DCD, Inc., would possibly shorten the development timeframe. Western Gas has assumed responsibility for the southern two thirds of the project area from American Oil and Gas. They are currently drilling stratigraphic tests on the Durham Buffalo Ranch in Township 45 North, Range 71 and 72 West. We will not do any additional computer groundwater modeling on the areas south of Gillette. It is not feasible to credibly or accurately model as large an area we are talking about with the data available. As variables increase, accuracy decreases. We propose to extrapolate what we have modeled and what we have monitored to make a prediction on expected impacts.

We support the landowner/industry group working on a Water Well Mitigation Agreement that is designed to address the question of potential impacts to water wells, so significant impacts do not occur and we intend to utilize this agreement in the development of the proposed action for the EIS. However, static water level declines are not the only issue we need to deal with. The increased rate of development, increased rates of production, increased surface water discharges, and increased area of disturbance are also questions that need to be addressed. We must evaluate the potential for cumulative impacts as a result of coal and coalbed methane development in the same general area at a time when development areas and production levels for both are increasing.

Dated: May 21, 1996.

Alan R. Pierson,
State Director.

[FR Doc. 96-13272 Filed 5-24-96; 8:45 am]

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[NV-050-1020-001]

Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council—Notice of Meeting Locations and Times

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Resource Advisory Council meeting locations and times.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (FACA), 5 U.S.C., the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), council meeting of the Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council

will be held as indicated below. The agenda includes a public comment period, discussion of laws and regulations that pertain to grazing, and an update of standards and guidelines.

All meetings are open to the public. The public may present written comments to the council. Each formal council meeting will have a time allocated for hearing public comments. The public comment period for the council meeting is listed below. Depending on the number of persons wishing to comment, and time available, the time for individual oral comments may be limited. Individuals who plan to attend and need further information about the meetings, or need special assistance such as sign language interpretation or other reasonable accommodations, should contact Michael Dwyer at the Las Vegas District Office, 4765 Vegas Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89108, telephone, (702) 647-5000.

DATES, TIMES: Dates are June 10 and 11, 1996, from 8 a.m. to approximately 4:30 p.m. The council will meet at the Desert Research Institute, located at 755 E. Flamingo, Las Vegas, NV 89119. The public comment period will be on June 10 from 10 a.m. to noon.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of the council is to advise the Secretary of the Interior, through the BLM, on a variety of planning and management issues associated with the management of the public lands. The council will vote on recommendations for Standards and Guidelines that will be presented to the State Director, Nevada on June 11.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lorraine Buck, Public Affairs Specialist, Las Vegas District, telephone: (702) 647-5000.

Dated: May 15, 1996.

Gary L. Ryan,

Associate District Manager.

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[AZ-046-1430-01; AZA 23060]

Public Land Order No. 7197; Withdrawal of Public Lands for the Waterman Mountains Area of Critical Environmental Concern; Arizona

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Public land order.

SUMMARY: This order withdraws public lands from surface entry and mining for a period of 50 years for the Bureau of Land Management to protect the endangered Nichol Turk's Head Cactus