

management actions will be incorporated to minimize incidental take:

1. Clearcutting will be avoided on slopes occupied by Red Hills salamanders.
2. Mechanical site preparation will be avoided within occupied habitat.
3. If an area is select cut, woody litter will be maintained to provide some shade, maintain moisture and preserve invertebrate fauna. Select cutting that maintains at least two-thirds canopy cover and creates minimal surface disturbance may not adversely impact salamander populations.
4. If areas above or below slopes occupied by salamanders are cleared, a buffer strip of natural vegetation will be left to provide shade and allow moisture retention to vegetation on the slope. Size of the buffer will vary depending on aspect, but will provide shade at all times of the day.
5. Annual monitoring will be conducted for each habitat class to assess the performance of the HCP goals and objectives. Monitoring will be conducted between April 1 and October 31. A 5-year comprehensive review of monitoring results will be conducted to better determine the density threshold below which the species may not be considered to be successfully maintained. This report will be submitted by December 31, 2005.
6. After the first ten years, a comprehensive review of permit conditions, HCP implementation, and monitoring results will be conducted.
7. Existing access roads will be used to the extent practicable, and no roads will be constructed through areas of optimal habitat. Any new road construction through moderately suitable or marginal habitat will be carefully planned so as to cause the least possible damage to the habitat and will comply with Alabama's Best Management Practices for forestry.
8. The applicant will conduct or participate in training workshops for all its foresters and technicians that work in the plan area. Workshops will train employees to recognize Red hills salamander habitat, properly establish buffers around and mark timber within occupied habitat, and to minimize impacts of machinery. Employees will be provided general biological background information, will be familiarized with general details of the HCP, and will be required to participate in the implementation of the plan.

As stated above, the Service has made a preliminary determination that the issuance of the ITP is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment

within the meaning of section 102(2)(C) of NEPA. This preliminary information may be revised due to public comment received in response to this notice and is based on information contained in the HCP. The Service will also evaluate whether the issuance of a section 10(a)(1)(B) ITP complies with section 7 of the Act by conducting an intra-Service section 7 consultation. The results of the biological opinion, in combination with the above findings, will be used in the final analysis to determine whether or not to issue the ITP.

Dated: December 21, 2000.

H. Dale Hall,

Acting Regional Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[WY-920-1320-EL, WYW151133]

Federal Coal Lease Application

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability of a draft environmental assessment and notice of public hearing on the Belle Ayr 2000 federal coal lease application in the decertified Powder River federal coal production region, Wyoming.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and implementing regulations and other applicable statutes, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces the availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Belle Ayr 2000 Coal Lease Application, BLM serial number WYW151133, in the Wyoming Powder River Basin (PRB), and announces the scheduled date and place for a public hearing pursuant to 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 3425.4. The draft EA analyzes the impacts of issuing a Federal coal lease for the proposed Belle Ayr 2000 Federal coal tract. The purpose of the hearing is to solicit public comments on the Draft EA, the fair market value, the maximum economic recovery, and the proposed competitive sale of the coal included in the proposed Belle Ayr 2000 Federal coal tract. The Belle Ayr 2000 tract is being considered for sale as a result of a coal lease application received from RAG Wyoming Land Company (RAG) on July 28, 2000. The tract as applied for includes about 243.61 acres containing approximately 29 million tons of recoverable Federal coal reserves in Campbell County, WY.

DATES: A public hearing will be held at 7 p.m. MDT, on January 18, 2001 at the Clarion Western Plaza Motel, 2009 S. Douglas Highway, Gillette, WY. An open house will start at 6:30 p.m., prior to the hearing, to answer questions related to the leasing process and this coal lease application. Written comments on the Draft EA will be accepted until on or before January 29, 2001.

ADDRESSES: Please address questions, comments or requests for copies of the Draft EA to the Casper Field Office, BLM, Attn: Nancy Doelger, 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, WY 82601; or you may e-mail them to the attention of Nancy Doelger at casper_wymail@blm.gov; or fax them to 307-261-7587.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Nancy Doelger or Mike Karbs at the above address, or phone: 307-261-7600.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The application for the Belle Ayr 2000 tract was filed as a maintenance tract coal lease-by-application (LBA) under the provisions of 43 CFR 3425.1.

On July 28, 2000, RAG filed coal lease application WYW151133 for the Belle Ayr 2000 Federal coal tract with the BLM for the following lands:

T48N, R71W, 6th P.M., Campbell County, Wyoming

Section 28: Lots 3 through 6;

Section 29: Lots 1, 6.

Total surface area applied for: 243.61 acres.

RAG had previously applied for a maintenance LBA that encompassed the coal resources included in the Belle Ayr 2000 lease application as well as additional coal resources northwest of the Belle Ayr 2000 lease application area on March 20, 1997. They filed a request to modify the 1997 Belle Ayr LBA by withdrawing the lands included in the Belle Ayr 2000 application on July 28, 2000. RAG then filed a separate lease application for the lands withdrawn from the original LBA and included in Belle Ayr 2000 Tract.

The Powder River Regional Coal Team reviewed the request to modify the Belle Ayr 1997 LBA application and the application for the Belle Ayr 2000 LBA at their public meeting on October 25, 2000, in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and recommended that BLM process it.

The Belle Ayr Mine, which is adjacent to the lease application area, has an approved mining and reclamation plan from the Land Quality Division of the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and an approved air quality permit from the Air Quality Division of the Wyoming DEQ to mine up to 45 million tons of coal per year.

According to the application filed for the Belle Ayr 2000 tract, the maintenance tract would be mined to maintain production at the existing Belle Ayr Mine. The tract is also contiguous to an existing lease at the Caballo Mine.

The Belle Ayr 2000 tract is bounded on three sides by existing coal leases at the Belle Ayr and Caballo Mines. Under the approved mining plans for these two mines, a large portion of the tract will be disturbed when the adjacent leases are mined in order to recover all of the coal in those leases.

The Draft EA analyzes two alternatives. The Proposed Action is to issue a maintenance lease for the Belle Ayr 2000 tract as applied for to the successful bidder at a competitive sealed bid sale. The second alternative, Alternative 1, is the No Action Alternative, which assumes that the application for the Belle Ayr 2000 tract is rejected.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement is a cooperating agency in the preparation of this EA because it is the Federal agency that would recommend approval or disapproval of the Mineral Leasing Act (MLA) mining plan for the Belle Ayr 2000 LBA tract to the Secretary of the Interior, if a lease is issued for the tract.

During the scoping process, the issues that were identified related to this lease application included: The potential for conflicts with recovery of coalbed methane resources in the coal; potential cumulative impacts of increasing mineral development in the PRB; validity and currency of resource data; public access; potential impacts to threatened and endangered species and other species of concern; potential cumulative air quality impacts; potential impacts of nitrogen oxide emissions resulting from blasting of coal and overburden; and cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable actions such as the construction and operation of the DM&E railroad in the cumulative analysis.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the BLM, Casper Field Office, 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, WY, during regular business hours (8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the final EA. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the

extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives of officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Dated: December 21, 2000.

Alan Rabinoff,

Deputy State Director, Minerals and Lands.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[CO-910-0777-XX]

Colorado Resource Advisory Council Meeting

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice: Joint meeting of the Front Range, Northwest, and Southwest Resource Advisory Councils.

SUMMARY: The next meeting of the three Colorado Resource Advisory Councils will be held on Wednesday, January 31, and Thursday, February 1, 2001, at the Sheraton Denver West Hotel, 360 Union Boulevard, Lakewood, Colorado.

DATES: The joint meeting will be held Wednesday, January 31, and Thursday, February 1, 2001.

ADDRESSES: For further information on the joint meeting, contact Sheri Bell, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 2850 Youngfield Street, Lakewood, Colorado; Telephone (303) 239-3670. For information on the Southwest RAC, contact Roger Alexander, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) at (970) 240-5335. For information on the northwest RAC, contact Lynn Barclay at (970) 826-5096. For information on the Front Range RAC, contact Ken Smith at (719) 269-8553.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The three Colorado Resource Advisory Councils (RAC) will meet on January 31 and February 1, 2001, at the Sheraton Denver West Hotel, Lakewood, Colorado. The meeting will start at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, January 31, ending at 4:30 p.m. that same day. The meeting will reconvene Thursday, February 1 at 8 a.m., ending at approximately 12 noon. Discussion will include fire management, off-highway vehicles, recreation guidelines and processes for coordinating multi-council efforts. In addition, several topics of general interest will be presented to the councils by guest speakers. Time will be made available for the RACs to meet

individually, if needed, at the end of the joint meeting.

The meeting is open to the public. Interested persons may make oral statements at the meetings or submit written statements at the meeting. Time for public comment will be provided at 4 p.m., Wednesday, January 31, 2001. Per-person time limits for oral statements may be set to allow all interested persons an opportunity to speak.

Summary minutes of council meetings are maintained at the Bureau of Land Management Offices in Craig, Grand Junction, Montrose, and Canon City, Colorado. They are available for public inspection and reproduction during regular business hours within thirty (30) days following the meeting.

Dated: December 22, 2000.

Duane Johnson,

Acting Little Snake Field Manager.

[FR Doc. 00-33332 Filed 12-28-00; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[AZ-910-0777-26-241A]

State of Arizona Resource Advisory Council Meeting

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Arizona Resource Advisory Council Meeting notice.

SUMMARY: This notice announces a meeting and tour of the Arizona Resource Advisory Council (RAC). The meeting and tour will be held on January 25-26, in Yuma, Arizona. The business meeting will be held in the BLM Yuma Field Office, 2555 East Gila Ridge Road. It will begin at 9 a.m. and will conclude at approximately 4 p.m. The agenda items to be covered include the review of the December 12, 2000 meeting minutes; BLM State Director's Update on legislation, regulations and statewide planning efforts; Update on National Off-Highway Vehicle Use Strategy and RAC Discussion of OHV Guideline; Update on Wildland Urban Interface Issues and Outreach Efforts; Discussion of New RAC Working Group Assignments; Update Proposed Field Office Rangeland Resource Teams; Reports from BLM Field Office Managers; Reports by the Standards and Guidelines, Recreation and Public Relations, Wild Horse and Burro Working Groups; Reports from RAC members; and Discussion of future meetings. A public comment period will