

The Greater Deadman Bench Region (GDBR) involves approximately 98,785 acres located in Townships 6 to 8 South, Ranges 21 and 25 East, Salt Lake Base Meridian, about 20 miles south of Vernal, Uintah County, Utah. The DEIS analyzes the effects of a maximum natural gas and oil development scenario within the GDBR that is conceptual in nature. The final location of well pads, roads, and pipelines would be determined through future site-specific assessments required for each facility. QEP's proposal includes drilling an additional 1,020 natural gas and 219 oil wells and constructing associated ancillary transportation and transmission facilities within the project area. BLM-administered lands account for about 85% (83,860 acres) of surface and mineral estate lands within the BDGR. The State of Utah's Utah State School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration accounts for about 12% (1,440 acres) of surface and mineral estate lands; and the remaining 4% (3,470 acres) consists of various privately owned surface and mineral estate lands within the project area. QEP proposes to drill 1,239 wells at the rate of 100–120 wells per year over a period of 10 years, or until the resource base is fully developed. Of this total number, 891 wells would be drilled at new locations and 348 wells would be drilled from existing well pads.

As set out in the NOI, as of March 2003, the GDBR includes about 278 existing oil and water-injection wells producing from or injecting water into the Green River formation and 300 gas wells producing from the Wasatch formation. About 57 miles of primary roads and 314 miles of secondary roads have been constructed within the region. The new gas wells would be drilled to the Uinta, Green River, Wasatch, Mesaverde, Blackhawk/Mancos, and the Frontier/Dakota formations. The new oil wells would be drilled to the Green River formation.

The DEIS describes in detail and analyzes the impacts of QEP's Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. The Proposed Action incorporates standard operating procedures and applicant-committed best management practices currently employed on BLM-administered public lands in the Uintah Basin that mitigate impacts to the environment. Six additional alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed analysis. The following is a summary of the alternatives:

1. *Proposed Action*—Up to 1,020 natural gas and 219 oil wells would be drilled to the Uinta, Green River, Wasatch, Mesaverde Group, Blackhawk/Mancos and the Frontier/Dakota

formations. About 170 miles of new roads and 235 miles of pipelines, 22 new central tank facilities and 15 new gas compressor stations would be constructed to support this proposed development. At this time the Proposed Action is the BLM's preferred alternative.

2. *No Action Alternative*—Oil and gas development on Federal lands under the Proposed action would not be implemented. However some level of development would continue to occur under APDs previously approved by the authority of the 1985 Book Cliffs RMP. An additional 130 wells would be located on State of Utah and private leases.

3. *Alternatives Considered, But Eliminated From Further Analysis*—

a. No new development on Federal lands.

b. Suspension of operations for an extended period of time.

c. Exchange of leases.

d. Full-field directional Drilling.

e. Conventional oil and gas development.

f. Best Management Practices (BMP).

The public is encouraged to comment on any of these alternatives.

The BLM welcomes your comments on the Greater Deadman Bench Region DEIS. The BLM asks that those submitting comments make them as specific as possible with reference to chapters, page numbers, and paragraphs in the DEIS document. Comments that contain only opinions or preferences will not receive a formal response; however, they will be considered as part of the BLM decision-making process. The most useful comments will contain new technical or scientific information, identify data gaps in the impact analysis, or will provide technical or scientific rationale for opinions or preferences. It is BLM's practice to make comments, including the names and street addresses of each respondent, available for public review at the BLM office listed above during business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except for Federal holidays. Your comments may be published as part of the EIS process. Individual respondents may request confidentiality.

If you wish to withhold your name or street address, or both, from public review, or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comments. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. BLM will not consider anonymous comments. All submissions from organizations or businesses will be

made available for public inspection in their entirety.

William Stringer,

Vernal Field Manager.

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[UT-080-05-1310-EJ]

#### Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Gasco Production Company Natural Gas Field Development, Duchesne and Uintah Counties, UT

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent to conduct public scoping and to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Gasco Natural Gas Field Development, Duchesne and Uintah Counties, Utah.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Vernal Field Office, Vernal, Utah, will prepare an EIS on the proposed expansion of existing natural gas field development operations. The EIS area encompasses approximately 236,165 acres predominately in the West Tavaputs Exploration and Development Area with some overlap into the Monument Butte-Red Wash, and East Tavaputs Exploration and Development Areas. The project is located primarily on BLM administered lands (203,357 acres). The project area also includes lands administered by the State of Utah (27,765 acres), and several private landowners (5,043 acres). Gasco has mineral lease rights underlying both the public and private lands. The Vernal Field Office Manager will be the authorized officer for this project.

**DATES:** This notice announces the public scoping process. A public scoping period of at least 30 days will commence on the date this notice is published in the **Federal Register**. Comments on issues, potential impacts, or suggestions for additional alternatives can be submitted in writing to the address listed below within 30 days of the date this Notice is published, or within 15 days after the last public meeting is held. Public open meetings will be conducted during the scoping period in Vernal, Duchesne, and Price, Utah. All public meetings will be announced through the local news media at least 15 days prior to the event.

In addition, formal opportunities for public participation will be provided through comment on the alternatives and upon publication of the BLM Draft EIS.

**ADDRESSES:** Written scoping comments should be sent to the Environmental Coordinator, Bureau of Land Management, Vernal Field Office, 170 South 500 East, Vernal, Utah 84078, ATTN: Gasco Field Development EIS; Fax 435-781-4410. Documents pertinent to this proposal may be examined at the Vernal Field Office located in Vernal, Utah. Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Vernal Field Office located in Vernal, Utah during regular business hours 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays, and will be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). They may be published as part of the EIS and other related documents. 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 and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For further information and/or to have your name added to our mailing list, contact Stephanie Howard, 435-781-4469.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Gasco Production Company proposes to expand its operations by drilling 1,538 wells within the Monument Butte-Red Wash, West Tavaputs, and East Tavaputs Exploration and Development Areas (as delineated in the Draft Vernal RMP) through the year 2020 based on a 40, 80, and 160 acre spacing pattern. This EIS is directly north of, but not related to, the West Tavaputs EIS that is ongoing in the Price Field Office BLM. Estimated new surface disturbance associated with the construction of well pads, new access roads, and pipelines would be approximately 10,302 acres. Existing roads within the project area and approximately 400 miles of newly constructed roads would provide the primary access routes to the new well sites. Approximately 525 miles of pipelines would be constructed and buried where conditions allow. Additional compression and processing

facilities will be required to accommodate the new wells.

Major issues include potential impacts to special status plants and animals, vegetation, socio-economics, cultural resources, air quality, and soils. The EIS will consider and analyze potential impacts of natural gas development at the levels projected by Gasco, or as refined during the scoping process. This analysis will include a site-specific evaluation of Gasco's proposal and an appropriate range of alternatives. Alternatives identified at this time include the proposed action and the no action alternatives. Additional alternatives such as application of additional mitigation measures based on best management practices and/or higher well density may be developed if necessary based on issues and concerns identified through the scoping process.

The management of BLM public lands and resources encompassed by the project area is directed and guided by the BLM's Record of Decision for the Diamond Mountain Resource Management Plan. The majority of the proposed project lies within an area that was previously partially developed for oil and gas production and is designated as Category 2 for oil and gas leasing by the BLM. Category 2 areas are those that are open to oil and gas leasing with stipulations to protect sensitive surface resources.

Dated: October 26, 2005.

**William Stringer,**

*Field Manager, Vernal Field Office.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[OR-027-1110-JM-H2KO; G-05-0219]

#### Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the North Steens Ecosystem Restoration Project

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Act of 2000, the BLM has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement to analyze and undertake the North Steens Ecosystem Restoration Project. The

proposed project area lies within the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area, designated by the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Act of 2000, and the Andrews Management Unit, lands outside the boundary of the Cooperative Management and Protection Area but within the boundary of the Andrews Resource Area. The project is located in Harney County, Oregon, and affects approximately 336,000 acres of public and private lands.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement evaluates five alternative management approaches including two No Action (continuation of current management and no treatment) Alternatives.

**DATES:** Written comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be accepted for 45 days following publication of the Environmental Protection Agency's Notice of Availability for this Draft Environmental Impact Statement in the **Federal Register**. Future public meetings and any other public involvement activities will be announced in advance through notices, media news releases, and/or mailings.

**ADDRESSES/COMMENTS:** Written comments should be sent to North Steens Ecosystem Restoration Project Environmental Impact Statement Lead, BLM Burns District Office, 28910, Highway 20 West, Hines, Oregon 97738; (541) 573-4543; fax (541) 573-4411; or e-mail ([ornseis@blm.gov](mailto:ornseis@blm.gov)). Comments, including names, street addresses, and other contact information of respondents, will be available for public review. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to request that BLM consider withholding your name, street address, and other contact information such as internet address, fax or phone number from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. The BLM will honor requests for confidentiality on a case-by-case basis to the extent allowed by law. The BLM will make available for public inspection in their entirety all submissions from organizations or businesses and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses.

Copies of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be sent to affected Federal, Tribal, State and local government agencies, and to interested publics and will be available at the BLM Burns District Office. The supporting