

total project area is approximately 30,200 acres. This acreage includes approximately 28,280 acres of Federal surface and mineral estate managed by BLM; 1,280 acres of State of Wyoming surface and minerals; and 640 acres of private surface ownership. All of the privately owned surface acres are split estate (private surface/Federal minerals) lands.

The operators' original proposal to drill 450 wells in addition to 47 existing wells at the same number of locations was approved by the BLM in the Environmental Assessment, Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record for the Modified Jonah Field II Natural Gas Project, March 2000 (Modified Jonah Field II EA). The operators now propose to drill 1,250 additional wells from 850 well locations within the same area analyzed in the Modified Jonah Field II EA. The operators' new proposal is based on a 10 to 20 acre down-hole spacing pattern (32 to 64 wells per aliquot section). The operators propose to explore known productive formations as well as deeper formations that have not been tested. The planned development would include the following associated structures and facilities in addition to the 850 proposed new well locations: needed separators and hydrators, storage tanks, field access and resource roads, a system of gathering and sales pipelines, compressor stations, and five additional water wells.

During the preparation of the EIS, proposed development of additional exploratory wells within the project area on public lands may be approved subject to an environmental review by BLM and to a finding that such development is consistent with the 1988 Pinedale Resource Management Plan (RMP). Such a review will also ensure that the proposed development would not limit the consideration of a range of reasonable alternatives for this proposed Jonah Infill Drilling Project EIS.

The purpose of this project is to extract and recover natural gas from the Jonah Field by allowing the operators to provide clean burning fuel for distribution to consumers. In addition, this project would meet the goals and objectives of the President's National Energy Plan by diversifying domestic energy supplies, improving and accelerating environmental protection, and strengthening America's energy security.

BLM personnel, other agencies, and individuals have preliminarily identified the following issues that will be addressed in the EIS: Air quality; Federally-listed Threatened, Endangered, Candidate and Sensitive

Species and their habitats; surface and groundwater resources; short-term revegetation and restoration of disturbed areas and their long-term stabilization, including control of noxious weeds; prehistoric and historic cultural resources; social and economic effects to the local communities; wildlife habitat and fisheries; nesting raptors; wetlands and riparian areas; visual and landscape resources; and recreation activities and opportunities, such as hunting and fishing.

The BLM has identified the following benefits that may be derived from the natural gas development: Increased royalties and tax revenues to local, State, and Federal governments; additional opportunities for employment and economic benefits for communities near the project area; increases in Wyoming's share of new and existing natural gas markets; and development of natural gas resources to assist in attainment of clean air objectives in conformance with Presidential and Congressional directives.

Any authorizations and actions proposed for approval in the EIS will be evaluated to determine if they conform to the decisions in the 1988 Pinedale RMP. Actions that result in a change in the scope of resource uses, terms and conditions, and decisions of the Pinedale RMP may require amendment of the RMP. If the BLM determines that a plan amendment is necessary, preparation of the JIDP EIS and the analysis necessary for the RMP amendment may occur simultaneously. Appropriate analysis will accompany the decision to conduct an RMP amendment.

Also, the Pinedale RMP is currently being revised, with completion scheduled for October 2004. Because the Jonah Infill Drilling Project EIS and the Pinedale RMP revision will be developed on overlapping schedules, the information and analysis needed for these planning efforts will be jointly prepared and used for both EISs, to the greatest extent possible. Further information of the status of this RMP revision may be obtained from the Web site at <http://www.pinedalermp.com>.

The BLM will announce public meetings and comment periods through local news media and the Pinedale Field Office Web site, <http://www.wy.blm.gov/pfo/info.htm>, at least 15 days prior to the event. The first in a series of meetings is tentatively scheduled for late March 2003, in Pinedale, Wyoming. The BLM will also provide additional opportunities for public participation throughout the preparation of the EIS.

Dated: February 13, 2003.

**Robert A. Bennett,**  
State Director.

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[WY-030-1310-DB]

#### **Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Conduct Scoping for the Seminole Road Coalbed Methane Natural Gas Development Project, Carbon County, Wyoming, and Notice of the Potential for Amendment of the Great Divide Resource Management Plan**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and to conduct scoping for the Seminole Road Gas Development Project, Carbon County, Wyoming, and Notice of the Potential for Amendment of the Great Divide Resource Management Plan (RMP).

**SUMMARY:** Under section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Rawlins Field Office, announces its intent to prepare an EIS on the potential impacts of a proposed coalbed methane natural gas development project. In September 2002, the BLM received from Dudley & Associates, LLC (Dudley) a proposal to drill and develop up to 1,240 wells (on an estimated 785 well pad sites) and associated facilities. The proposed project area encompasses approximately 137,000 acres of mixed Federal, State, and private land. A 30 to 40 year development and operational period is proposed. The project area is located approximately 20 air miles northeast of the city of Rawlins, Carbon County, Wyoming. Based on the information developed during the course of this analysis, the BLM may decide it is necessary to amend the 1990 Great Divide RMP.

**DATES:** This notice initiates the public scoping process. The BLM can best use public input if comments and resources information are submitted within 60 days of the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. Public scoping meetings will be held in Rawlins, WY and Hanna, WY. The BLM will notify the public of meeting dates, times, and locations 15 days in advance by a news release to the media, individual letter