

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. The draft IAP/EIS will be available in either hard copy or on compact disk at the Alaska State Office, Public Information Center at 222 West 7th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99513-7599. Copies of the draft IAP/EIS will also be available for public review at the following locations: Tuzzy Public Library, Barrow, Alaska; City of Nuiqsut, Nuiqsut, Alaska; City of Atkasuk, Atkasuk, Alaska; City of Anaktuvuk Pass, Anaktuvuk Pass, Alaska; City of Wainwright, Wainwright, Alaska; and City of Point Lay, Point Lay, Alaska. The entire document can also be reviewed at the project Web site at <http://www.ak.blm.gov/nwnpra>.

DATES: Written comments on the draft IAP/EIS will be accepted for 60 days following the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**. Future meetings or hearings and any other public involvement activities will be announced at least 15 days in advance through public notices, media news releases, and/or mailings. The BLM currently plans to hold meetings and hearings in Nuiqsut, Atkasuk, Barrow, Wainwright, Point Lay, Fairbanks, and Anchorage.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Curt Wilson, BLM Alaska State Office, 907-271-5546 or Mike Kleven, BLM Northern Field Office, 907-474-2317.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Authority for developing this document is derived from the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976, as amended, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In recent years, oil and gas development has gradually moved east from the original find at Prudhoe Bay. By the late 1990's, there was a developable field at Alpine just to the east of the of NPR-A. In 1998, responding to interest from industry, the State of Alaska and the North Slope Borough, the BLM developed the Northeast NPR-A IAP/EIS which authorized a leasing program within the northeastern part of the Reserve.

The document determined where and under what conditions a leasing program could occur. Since that time, two lease sales have been conducted. The first was held in May 1999 and 867,721 acres were leased bringing in \$104.6 million. A second lease sale was

held in June 2002 and 579,269 acres were leased for a total of \$63.8 million. This level of interest, and the fact that industry has announced the discovery of oil in three test wells within the leased area, has stimulated interest in expanding exploration to the area covered by this draft IAP/EIA. President Bush responded to this interest by identifying the area as having a high priority in his energy plan. Should the BLM undertake leasing in the Northwest NPR-A, this IAP/EIS will form the basic NEPA documentation to authorize this leasing, and it will determine those lands that are available and those that are unavailable for leasing.

Public participation has occurred throughout the period since the Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS was published in November 2001. Scoping meetings were held in Nuiqsut, Atkasuk, Barrow, Wainwright, Point Lay, Fairbanks, and Anchorage. The planning area provides particularly important habitat for caribou, waterfowl, and other species. Many of the local residents of the area rely on harvesting these resources for subsistence purposes. Ensuring adequate protection of these resources has been one of the main focuses of public discussion in scoping meetings. The BLM has worked very closely with the North Slope Borough and the State of Alaska in developing this draft IAP/EIS. The Mineral Management Service of the Department of the Interior has also assisted the BLM in developing the document.

Dated: November 22, 2002.

Henri R. Bisson,

State Director, Alaska.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[MT-029-03-1310-DT CBMP]

Notice of Availability of the Montana Statewide Oil and Gas Final Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Amendment to the Powder River and Billings Resource Management Plans (RMPs); Montana

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Availability.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Montana Environmental Policy Act, the Bureau of Land

Management (BLM) has jointly prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment with the State of Montana (State). The planning area includes oil and gas estate administered by BLM in the Powder River and Billings RMP areas. The Powder River RMP area encompasses the southeastern portion of Montana consisting of Treasure and Powder River Counties, and portions of Rosebud, Big Horn, Carter, and Custer Counties. There are approximately 2,522,950 BLM-administered oil and gas acres in the Powder River RMP area. The Billings RMP area encompasses the south-central portion of Montana consisting of Wheatland, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Sweet Grass, Stillwater, Yellowstone, and Carbon Counties, and the remaining portion of Big Horn County. There are approximately 662,066 BLM-administered oil and gas acres in the Billings RMP area. The BLM-administered oil and gas acreage in Blaine, Park, and Gallatin Counties is not part of the BLM planning effort. The State's planning area is statewide.

DATES: The FEIS and Proposed Plan Amendment will be available for review for 30 calendar days from the Date the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes its NOA in the **Federal Register**. In addition, the 30-day protest period on the Final EIS and proposed Amendment will begin at that time. To be considered, the protest must be postmarked no later than the last day of the 30-day protest period and sent according to the instructions provided in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice. Although not a requirement, sending a protest by certified mail, return receipt requested, is recommended.

The State of Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation (Board) will hold a public hearing on the Final EIS. Future meetings or hearings and any other public involvement activities will be announced in 15 days in advance through public notices, media news releases, mailings, and/or through the Board Web site at <http://www.bogc.dnrc.state.mt.us>. Following the public hearing, the Board will issue its Record of Decision.

Public Participation: The draft EIS and proposed RMP Amendment were available for public review from February 15, 2002, to May 15, 2002. Written comments were received from agencies, organizations, and individuals. All comments were considered during the preparation of the Final EIS and proposed RMP amendment. Reading copies will be available at local public libraries. Public