

The FEIS evaluates the site-specific and cumulative environmental impacts of exchanging the land and coal resources offered by P&M for Federal coal. P&M proposes to mine the coal in the PSO Tract if the exchange is completed as proposed and they acquire ownership of the coal resources in the Tract. Therefore, the FEIS considers the environmental impacts of mining the Federal coal as a possible consequence of executing the proposed exchange. If the land-for-coal exchange is approved, neither the Record of Decision (ROD) nor the Final EIS would constitute authorization for commencement of mining operations.

Before land exchanges can be approved, they must meet two criteria: The exchange must be in the public interest as required under 43 CFR 2200.0-6(b); and the value of the interests being exchanged must be equal as required under 43 CFR 2200.0-6(c). This environmental analysis is being prepared as required under 43 CFR 2200.0-6(h). It will be used as a supporting study in making a determination as to whether this exchange is in the public interest. Following completion of this environmental analysis but prior to the issuance of ROD, a public meeting will be held to receive public comment on the public interest factors of the proposed exchange as required under 43 CFR 2203.3.

Both the USDA Forest Service and USDI BLM national land exchange review boards have technically reviewed P&M's proposal to exchange land for coal. Prior to a decision to approve, or disapprove, the exchange following the public interest determination meeting, the exchange will be subject to final review by each agency's national land exchange board, and the BLM Director, as well as the Department of Justice.

The FEIS analysis assumes that all the Federal coal within the PSO Tract as proposed by P&M would be exchanged for all of the lands being offered by P&M. In accordance with 43 CFR 2200 the actual amount of Federal coal offered for exchange would be the amount required to equal the value of the lands offered to the United States Government by P&M. To ensure that the lands, or interests, being exchanged are of equal value, the fair market value of the respective properties must be evaluated. In this case, the fair market value of the P&M lands will be determined through a fee appraisal by a BLM-approved qualified appraiser. BLM will determine the fair market value of the Federal coal. An independent

contract appraiser will review all appraisals.

The EIS analyzes two alternatives, the Proposed Action and Alternative 1, No Action. Under the Proposed Action, the exchange would be completed and the Bridger, JO Ranch, and Welch Lands would become Federal lands administered by the USDA Forest Service and BLM. BLM is considering several options to the Proposed Action that would modify the Welch Lands to exclude an active underground coal seam fire on those lands. Under the proposed action, or any option, P&M would acquire an amount of Federal coal underlying the PSO Tract that would be equal in value to the Bridger, JO Ranch, and Welch Lands. Alternative 1 is the No Action Alternative, which assumes that the proposal to exchange would be rejected.

Agency-Preferred Alternative: The BLM's preferred alternative is the Proposed Action. Because the Bridger Lands in Lincoln County include most of the remaining parcels of private land within the Bridger-Teton National Forest, Kemmerer Ranger District, the USDA Forest Service is a cooperating agency in the preparation of this FEIS. The USDA Forest Service's preferred alternative is the Proposed Action.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) is an additional cooperating agency. OSM has primary responsibility to administer programs that regulate surface coal mining and the surface effects of underground coal mining operations. If the exchange is completed, the coal would no longer be Federally owned, however; OSM would retain some oversight responsibilities for the regulation of the proposed surface coal mine.

Land Use Plans

If the exchange is completed, the United States Government would acquire ownership of the lands and minerals offered by P&M for exchange. At that time, the USDA Forest Service would use the analysis documented in this FEIS to revise the land ownership status maps and extend management direction to the Bridger Lands that would become NFS lands. The BLM would use the analyses documented in this FEIS to maintain the Pinedale RMP and Rawlins RMP to extend management direction to the Bridger Lands and JO Ranch Lands that would become public land. The Buffalo Field Office would use the analyses to identify the isolated parcel (the Welch Ranch Lands) as public lands administered by the BLM under the Buffalo RMP. In addition, Buffalo Field

Office intends to use the analysis to prepare a site-specific plan for the Welch Lands to amend the BLM Buffalo RMP (1985, amended 2001).

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 submission 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: June 11, 2003.

Robert A. Bennett,

State Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Minerals Management Service

Outer Continental Shelf, Pacific OCS Region, Environmental Document Prepared for Development of the Eastern Half of Lease OCS-P 0451

AGENCY: Minerals Management Service (MMS).

ACTIONS: Notice of availability of Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

SUMMARY: The MMS Pacific OCS Region has prepared an EA for Arguello Inc.'s revisions to the Point Arguello Field Development and Production Plans to include development of the eastern half of Lease OCS-P 0451 pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

DATES: MMS completed the EA and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on June 19, 2003.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Maurice Hill, Minerals Management Service, Pacific OCS Region, 770 Paseo Camarillo, Camarillo, CA 93010, telephone (805) 389-7815. A digital copy of the EA on a Compact Disk may be requested by calling 1-800-6-PAC-OCS (1-800-672-2627), or by sending a request to the above address.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The MMS prepares EA's and Findings for Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas exploration and development activities and other operations on the Pacific OCS. Arguello Inc. proposes to develop the