Ketchum District Ranger decisions:
Wood River Journal, Hailey, Idaho
Sawtooth National Recreation Area:
Challis Messenger, Challis, Idaho
Fairfield District Ranger decisions:
The Times News, Twin Falls, Idaho

Targhee National Forest

Targhee Forest Supervisor decisions:
The Post Register, Idaho Falls, Idaho
Dubois District Ranger decisions:
The Post Register, Idaho Falls, Idaho
Island Park District Ranger decisions:
The Post Register, Idaho Falls,Idaho
Ashton District Ranger decisions:
The Post Register, Idaho Falls, Idaho
Palisades District Ranger decisions:
The Post Register, Idaho Falls, Idaho
Teton Basin District Ranger decisions:
The Post Register, Idaho Falls, Idaho

Uinta National Forest

Uinta Forest Supervisor decisions:
The Daily Herald, Provo, Utah
Pleasant Grove District Ranger decisions:
The Daily Herald, Provo, Utah
Heber District Ranger decisions:
The Daily Herald, Provo, Utah, and *Wasatch Wave,* Heber City, Utah
Spanish Fork District Ranger decisions:
The Daily Herald, Provo, Utah

Wasatch-Cache National Forest

Wasatch-Cache Forest Supervisor decisions:
Salt Lake Tribune, Salt Lake City, Utah
Salt Lake District Ranger decisions:
Salt Lake Tribune, Salt Lake City, Utah
Kamas District Ranger decisions:
Salt Lake Tribune, Salt Lake City, Utah
Evanston District Ranger decisions:
Uintah County Herald, Evanston, Wyoming
Mountain View District Ranger decisions:
Uintah County Herald, Evanston, Wyoming
Ogden District Ranger decisions:
Ogden Standard Examiner, Ogden, Utah
Logan District Ranger decisions:
Logan Herald Journal, Logan, Utah

Dated: March 5, 1996.

Robert M. Swinford,

Acting Deputy Regional Forester.

[FR Doc. 96–6743 Filed 3–20–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

Oil and Gas Leasing; Custer National Forest, Sioux Ranger District; Harding County, SD

AGENCIES: Forest Service, USDA; Bureau of Land Management, USDI.

ACTION: Notice; intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The USDA, Forest Service, and the USDI, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to disclose the environmental effects of oil and gas leasing and reasonable foreseeable actions resulting from subsequent exploration and development, as well as interconnected actions, on the portion of the Sioux Ranger District in South Dakota. The Forest Service and BLM are joint lead agencies for the preparation of this document (40 CFR 1501.5).

The Custer National Forest and Resources Management Plan (Forest Plan) and Record of Decision (1987) identified which lands on the Forest are available for oil and gas leasing. This EIS, consistent with the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Reform Act of 1987, will reaffirm the administratively available decision, identify specific lands the BLM would be authorized to lease, and develop site-specific lease stipulations designed to reduce impacts to surface resource values. This analysis will evaluate reasonable foreseeable impacts of post-leasing activity. The analysis will tier to the Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing by April 22, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Nancy Curriden, Forest Supervisor, Custer National Forest, P.O. Box 2556, Billings, Montana 59103.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mark Slacks, EIS Team Leader, Custer National Forest, 406–657–6361 or 701–842–2393.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This analysis will address oil and gas leasing and the site-specific application of lease stipulations for Federal minerals within National Forest System (NFS) lands located in Harding County, South Dakota. Included are all Federal minerals within National Forest boundaries of the North and South Cave Hills, Slim Buttes, and East and West Short Pine Hills. The project area encompasses approximately 77,330 acres, 9,575 acres of which are currently leased for oil and gas development.

This EIS will address the environmental effects of leasing in the various management areas defined in the Forest Plan. The scope of the EIS will be confined to those issues associated with oil and gas leasing and subsequent activities and will not address land allocations made in the Forest Plan.

The Custer Forest Plan identifies Forest-wide and management area multiple use goals, objectives and standards. Oil and gas leasing and possible subsequent exploration and development activities and their individual and cumulative effects were considered in the development of Forest-wide goals and objectives, as well as in the development of specific management area direction. The goals for the ten management areas (MAs) within the project area are very briefly summarized here: MA B, provides for the continuation of livestock grazing; MA C, to manage for key wildlife habitat areas; MA D, to maintain or improve long-term diversity and quality of habitat for selected species; MA E, to facilitate exploration, development and production of energy and mineral resources; MA F, to provide a spectrum of recreation opportunities; MA L, to provide opportunities for research, study, and monitoring of natural-occurring ecological processes; MA M, to provide healthy, self-perpetuating riparian plant and water communities; MA N, to provide healthy, self perpetuating woody draw plant communities; MA O, to protect the unique geological and scenic features of National Natural Landmarks; and MA P, to provide adequate facilities for the administration of the Custer National Forest. The Forest Plan identifies lease stipulations to be applied by Management Area (also Appendix V). Briefly and in part, no surface use stipulations are recommended for riparian areas, wetlands, floodplains, slopes exceeding 40%, fragile soils, areas of mass failure hazard, Management Area C, recreation areas, national natural landmarks, and administrative areas. Surface occupancy Restrictions and Limited Surface Use stipulations are used primarily for wildlife, visual and recreation values.

The Forest Supervisor will decide which National Forest System lands are administratively available for oil and gas leasing and with what, if any, stipulations for other surface resource protection. The Forest Supervisor will also decide what specific National Forest system lands the BLM will be authorized to offer for lease, subject to the Forest Service required stipulations.

The BLM State Director will decide whether or not to offer for lease those specific lands authorized by the Forest Service. The State Director will also decide whether or not to lease Federal minerals beneath non-Federal lands (split estate lands) within the project area (there are approximately 165 acres of split estate lands under BLM jurisdiction within the project area).

The Responsible Officials for this EIS and these decisions are Nancy Curriden, Forest Supervisor, and Larry E. Hamilton, BLM State Director.

Additional Resource Information

The project area consists of National Forest System lands within the following Townships and Ranges within Harding County, South Dakota: T 17 N, R 1 E; T 16 N, R(s) 3 & 4 E; T(s) 20, 21, & 22 N, R(s) 4, 5, & 6 E; and T(s) 16, 17, 18, & 19 N, R(s) 7, 8, & 9 E; Black Hills Meridian. As noted previously, this includes the North and South Cave Hills, Slim Buttes, and East and West Short Pine Hills. All National Forest System lands within the project area lie within a 30 mile radius of Buffalo, South Dakota. The following information provides a synopsis of the resources found within the project area.

The project area includes five forested hill or butte areas situated like islands in the extensive grasslands in northwestern South Dakota. These island-like hills or buttes are comprised of sandstone and are geologically younger than the surrounding grasslands. The geology, soils, and topographic relief of the hills and buttes, along with increasing precipitation from the prairie to the tops of the buttes, results in a biologically diverse area.

Geologic Resources

There are a number of caves, paleontological resources, and special geologic features within the project area. In addition to providing an opportunity for scientific study, these geologic features have been used historically and prehistorically, and continue to be used, by Native Americans as well as others. Caves also provide habitat for certain species of vertebrate and invertebrate creatures. Additionally, much of the analysis area is rich in vertebrate and invertebrate fossils.

The Castles National Natural Landmark is a special geologic feature that lies within the project area. This landmark was added to the National Register of Natural Landmarks in 1978, is 1,005 acres in size, and is located in the northern part of the Slim Buttes.

Other special geologic features that may exist within the project area are Cretaceous/Tertiary (K/T) boundary outcrops and geologic type sections. The K/T boundary marks a major extinction even in geologic time. The formations representing this event are exposed in the project area. Some such outcrops have world-class characteristics, literally occurring in only a few places in the world. Geologic type sections are the outcrop areas for a particular rock formation for which the formation was originally described and named.

Heritage Resources

Internationally recognized rock art is located in the North Cave Hills, of which 102 of these sites are currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Cave Hills have been recognized as having the highest site density in the Custer National Forest. The Native American communities continue to use traditional hunting, and plant and mineral gathering areas within the project area. The Cheyenne, Sioux and Assiniboine have expressed concern over the proper treatment of traditional cultural properties and burials located in the project area. The site of the Battle of the Slim Buttes is adjacent to the project area, and is considered sacred to the Lakota Sioux. Ludlow Cave is located in the Cave Hills and is considered one of the most important sites in the State of South Dakota, as well as being considered sacred to the Hidatsa, Crow, Arikara, Cheyenne, Assiniboine, and Sioux.

Hydrologic Resources

The project area is at the divides for tributaries draining into the Little Missouri, Gran, and Moreau Rivers. Streamflows are erratic, with most streams being intermittent in nature. During most of the year surface water is generally lacking. Water quality within the project area has not been measured, but may be better than the surrounding areas because of the sandy soils on the buttes. Ground water supplies in general range from poor to fair in quality.

Recreation and Visual Resources

There are two developed recreation sites (Reva Gap and Picnic Springs), numerous dispersed sites, caves, a proposed Research Natural Area (Deer Draw), and The Castles National Natural Landmark within the project area. In addition, the area is popular for hunting deer, turkey, antelope, and grouse (sage and sharptail).

Each of the five geographic areas (buttes) within the project area stand out like islands from the sea of grass surrounding them. Their striking contrast to the prairie around them results in a unique, high-quality visual experience.

Social and Economic Resources

The communities within and near the project area rely on income from numerous sources, including livestock production, crops farming (primarily wheat, oats, and barley), tourism and recreation, and oil and gas development.

Special Areas—Research Natural Areas/Special Interest Areas

There are two special areas within the project area. The Castles National Natural Landmark is a Special Interest Area and was discussed previously. Deer Draw, located in the Slim Buttes, is a proposed Research Natural Area. Deer Draw features vegetation types which are absent from other designated natural areas within the region. Of primary significance is the presence of an interconnected series of woody draws in good to excellent ecological condition.

Transportation System

The present road network is accessed by County and State roads which pass through or by the isolated areas of National Forest System lands. This road network provides access to nearly every section of land in the project area. Road standards vary from double lane paved roads to unconstructed single lane wheel tracks. Primary uses of State and County roads include farm and ranch use, tourism, oil production activity, National forest access, hunting, and general access or through travel. Primary uses of the National Forest road system includes recreation visits (pleasure driving, hunting, camping, picnicking, etc.), National Forest administration, and other National Forest uses (grazing, oil production, mineral exploration).

Preliminary Issues

Based on comments made by the public on past proposals or actions, the following is a list of preliminary issues to be addressed in this Environmental Impact Statement. This list is subject to verification, and will be confirmed or modified based on the public responses received during this scoping process.

1. Sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide, as well as other noxious gases, are common emissions from oil wells in some areas of the Williston Basin. Also, there would be additional emissions from equipment and vehicles used in oil and gas exploration, development, and production (e.g. drilling rigs and pump jacks powered by internal combustion engines). There is the potential to exceed established air quality standards from noxious gases emitted from oil and gas development, as well as from equipment and vehicle emissions.

2. Oil and gas exploration, development, and production may affect threatened and endangered species or sensitive species. There are concerns that oil and gas exploration, development, production, and rehabilitation could affect habitats,

resulting in a change of plant and wildlife populations.

3. Caves are created by geologic processes and cave features (e.g. ice, stalactites, stalagmites, crystals, etc.) are important from a scientific perspective. Cave features may be vandalized, or possibly destroyed, as a result of increased access into an area, precluding scientific study of cave formation and cave processes. In addition, oil and gas exploration, development, and production may affect cave hydrology, biological resources, heritage resources, air flow, mineral formations, and is a possible source of pollution from spills and accidents. Also, cave-dwelling wildlife, especially bats, could be affected by oil and gas development activities.

4. Much of the analysis area is rich in vertebrate and invertebrate fossils. There are concerns over the possible destruction and loss of these resources. These activities may also create new fossil-bearing exposures that would not otherwise be found.

5. There are special geological features that are present (The Castles National Natural Landmark), and some that may be present (e.g. the Cretaceous/Tertiary (K/T) boundary outcrops, and Geologic Type Sections) within the project area. There are concerns that oil and gas exploration, development, and production activities may damage or adversely affect these resources.

6. The entire project area is permitted for livestock grazing. Access roads and pads for wells and ancillary equipment constructed for oil and gas exploration, development, and production may affect the lands permitted for grazing.

7. There are several concerns regarding Heritage Resources:

a. That recorded and unrecorded sites will not receive adequate protection from oil and gas activities, as well as the potential for atmospheric and visual intrusions.

b. That improved access could result in site vandalism and unauthorized site excavation.

c. Native American communities are concerned that traditional cultural properties, and plant and mineral gathering areas will not receive respectful treatment.

8. Oil and gas development may affect water resources, including associated resources such as wetlands and riparian areas. All water uses, water quality and quantity may be affected by oil and gas exploration, development, production, and rehabilitation. Also, oil, hazardous materials, and other fluid spills from production facilities, trucks, and pipelines may affect surface water quality, as well as other resource values.

9. There is a concern that vehicles and equipment, as well as the construction of drilling pads and roads for oil and gas exploration, development, and production may provide suitable transport and habitat, respectively, for noxious weeds to infest new and larger areas.

10. Oil and gas development activities have the potential to affect recreation values and activities within the project area in several ways. Travel over Forest Development Roads to developed recreation sites, as well as dispersed sites, could be affected during exploration, drilling, and production operations. Use of recreation facilities, the National Forest, a high quality visual experience, scenic driving (the nation's number one recreational activity), hunting, and other recreational activities could be affected by commercial traffic, drilling, and production activities and facilities.

11. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management surface management policies which may protect some resources at the expense of others may have a net positive or negative effect on the total income to communities. Included with this issue are the effects of Forest Service surface management policies on the economics of oil and gas development and production, resulting in the possible preclusion of drilling due to environmental protection policies.

12. Land ownership within and adjacent to National Forest System lands in the analysis area is a system of intermingled Federal, State, and private lands. Availability of Federal lands for oil and gas leasing affects industry decisions to lease and develop intermingled or adjacent State and private lands.

13. Jurisdiction or ownership on the National Forest road system, within the project area, is generally complete, except for segments of access routes between the Forest boundary and the County road providing access to the area. Because of the commercial aspect of the proposed action, lack of clear rights-of-way may create access difficulties for future, site-specific project decisions.

Preliminary Alternatives

The following have been identified as preliminary alternatives. A reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed action will be developed that meet the underlying purpose and need for the proposal, except the No Action Alternative because it is required under the National Environmental Policy Act. The Environmental Impact Statement will discuss the issues, a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed action designed to respond to the issues, and the amount of oil and gas development that might occur under each alternative. The alternatives can be adjusted to fit specific concerns, and new alternatives can be developed based on the responses received from the public and other agencies through the scoping process.

Alternative 1—No Action—No leasing at this time.

Alternative 2—Proposed Action—Issue leases with the stipulations identified in the Forest Plan.

Alternative 3—Standard Terms—Issue leases with standard lease terms only, no additional stipulations.

Public participation will be important to the analysis. Part of the goal of public involvement is to identify additional issues and to refine the preliminary issues noted above. People may visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision. However, two periods are specifically designated for comments on the analysis: (1) During the scoping process, and (2) during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement comment period.

During the scoping process, the Forest Service is seeking information and comments from Federal, State, and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. A scoping document will be mailed to parties known to be interested in the proposed action by March 22, 1996. The agency invites written comments and suggestions on this action, especially regarding identification of issues and alternative development. An open house will be held in Buffalo, South Dakota sometime in April 1996. Notification of the time and place of this open house will be published in local newspapers.

The comment period on the draft environmental impact Statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the Federal Register.

A Draft EIS is scheduled for release to the public for comment in March 1997, and the Final EIS is scheduled for September 1997.

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice at this early stage of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact Statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions.

Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. *NRDC.*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact Statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact Statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc.* v. *Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 45-day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final environmental impact Statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments should be as specific as possible. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

Dated: March 13, 1996.

Nancy T. Curriden,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 96–6775 Filed 3–20–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

Tie Camp Project, Medicine Bow/Routt National Forest, Carbon County, Wyoming and Jackson County, Colorado

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to analyze and disclose the environment effects of a site-specific proposal to harvest timber in the Coon Creek area of the Hayden Ranger District of the Medicine Bow/Routt National Forest within Carbon County, Wyoming and Jackson County, Colorado. The proposal could have impacts on the Coon Creek ''roadless area.'' The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to the proposed action.

The Forest Service is soliciting comments during the scoping phase of the environmental analysis process from other Federal, State, and local agencies, Indian Tribes, and organizations and individuals who may be interested or affected by the decision. The analysis process will include:

1. Identification of the issues to be addressed.

2. Identification of the issues to be analyzed in detail.

3. Elimination of non-significant issues, issues addressed by previous environmental analyses, and issues not within the scope of this decision.

DATES: Comments related to the scope of the analysis should be received by April 15, 1996. Comments may be either written or oral.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Don G. Carroll, District Ranger, Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger District, P.O. Box 187, Encampment, Wyoming 82325. Oral Comments can be made by calling (307) 327–5481.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andy Cadenhead, Project Coordinator, (307) 327–5481.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Medicine Bow National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Appendix A) identifies three potential timber sales in the Tie Camp analysis area: Commisary Park, Rim Road, and Damfino Creek. The Routt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan lists the Dinner Park Timber Sale as a potential project in the analysis area. The proposed action is consistent with both the Medicine Bow and Routt National Forest Plans, and is intended to implement both Plans and also achieve the desired future condition for the area.

The decisions to be made consist of how to best manage the area, and whether to implement the proposed activities, including measures designed to mitigate any adverse environmental effects. A reasonable range of alternatives, including ''no action,'' which would result in no development of the area, and the ''proposed action,'' will be considered. Other alternatives may be formulated in response to ''scoping,'' and may consider various combinations of designs for implementing the proposed activities.

The Responsible Official will be Jerry E. Schmidt, Forest Supervisor, Medicine Bow/Routt National Forest, 2468 Jackson Street, Laramie, Wyoming, 82070.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is expected to be available during mid-1997 and the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) available during September, 1997.

A 45-day public comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will commence on the day the Environmental Protection Agency publishes a ''Notice of Availability'' in the Federal Register.

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers an early notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of Draft Environmental Impact Statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp.* v. *NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement stage, but are not raised until after completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon* v. *Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc.* v. *Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). As a result of these previous court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 45-day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns related to the proposed action, comments on this Draft Environmental Impact Statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft document. Comments may also address the adequacy of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement or the merits of the alternatives displayed in the document. Reviewers should refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations at 40 CFR 1503.3 for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act for addressing these points. Please note that any comments that are submitted in relation to this DEIS will be considered as public information.

Dated: March 6, 1996.

Jerry E. Schmidt,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 96–6758 Filed 3–20–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–11–M

Intergovernmental Advisory Committee Meeting

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.