

Bureau of Land Management, Interior

§ 3280.2

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- 3286.1 Model Unit Agreement.

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AUTHORITY: 30 U.S.C. 1001–1028 and 43 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*

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Subpart 3280—Geothermal Resources Unit Agreements—General

§ 3280.1 What is the purpose and scope of this part?

(a) The purpose of this part is to provide holders of Federal and non-Federal geothermal leases and owners of non-Federal mineral interests the opportunity to unite under a Federal geothermal unit agreement to explore for and develop geothermal resources in a manner that is necessary or advisable in the public interest.

(b) These regulations identify:

- (1) The procedures a prospective unit operator must follow to receive BLM approval for unit area designation and a Federal geothermal unit agreement;
- (2) The operational requirements a unit operator must meet once the unit agreement is approved; and

(3) The procedures BLM will follow in reviewing, approving, and administering a Federal geothermal unit agreement.

§ 3280.2 Definitions.

The following terms, as used in this part or in any agreement approved under the regulations in this part, have the following meanings unless otherwise defined in such agreement:

Minimum initial unit obligation means the requirement to complete at least one unit well within the timeframe specified in the unit agreement. If this requirement is not met, BLM deems the unit void as though it was never in effect.

Participating area means that part of the unit area that BLM deems to be productive from a horizon or deposit, and to which production would be allocated in the manner described in the unit agreement, assuming that all lands are committed to the unit agreement.

Plan of development means the document a unit operator submits to BLM defining how the unit operator will diligently pursue unit exploration and development to meet both initial and subsequent unit development and public interest obligations.

Public interest means operations within a geothermal unit resulting in:

- (1) Diligent development;
- (2) Efficient exploration, production and utilization of the resource;
- (3) Conservation of natural resources; and
- (4) Prevention of waste.

Reasonably proven to produce means a sufficient demonstration, based on scientific and technical information, that lands are contributing to unit production in commercial quantities or are providing reservoir pressure support for unit production.

Unit agreement means an agreement for the exploration, development, production, and utilization of separately owned interests in the geothermal resources made subject thereto as a single consolidated unit without regard to separate ownerships, which provides for the allocation of costs and benefits on a basis defined in the agreement or plan.

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Unit area means the area described in a unit agreement as constituting the land logically subject to development under such agreement.

Unit contraction provision means a term of a unit agreement providing that the boundaries of the unit area will contract to the size of the participating area, by having those lands outside of the participating area removed. BLM will contract the unit area if additional unit wells are not drilled and completed within the timeframe specified in the unit agreement.

Unit operator means the person, association, partnership, corporation, or other business entity designated under a unit agreement to conduct operations on unitized land as specified in such agreement.

Unit well means a well that is:

- (1) Designed to produce or utilize geothermal resources in commercial quantities;
- (2) Drilled and completed to the bona fide geologic objective specified in the unit agreement, unless a commercial resource is found at a shallower depth; and
- (3) Located on unitized land.

Unitized land means the part of a unit area committed to a unit agreement.

Unitized substances means deposits of geothermal resources recovered from unitized land by operation under and pursuant to a unit agreement.

Working interest means the interest held in geothermal resources or in lands containing the same by virtue of a lease, operating agreement, fee title, or otherwise, under which, except as otherwise provided in a unit agreement, the owner of such interest is vested with the right to explore for, develop, produce, and utilize such resources. The right delegated to the unit operator as such by the unit agreement is not to be regarded as a working interest.

§ 3280.3 What is BLM's general policy regarding the formation of unit agreements?

For the purpose of more properly conserving the natural resources of any geothermal reservoir, field, or like area, or any part thereof, lessees and their representatives may unite with each other, or jointly or separately

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with others, in collectively adopting and operating under a unit agreement for the reservoir, field, or like area, or any part thereof, including direct use resources, if BLM determines and certifies this to be necessary or advisable in the public interest.

§ 3280.4 When may BLM require Federal lessees to unitize their leases or require a Federal lessee to commit a lease to a unit?

(a) BLM may initiate the formation of a unit agreement, or require an existing Federal lease to commit to a unit agreement, if in the public interest.

(b) BLM may require that Federal leases that become effective on or after August 8, 2005, contain a provision stating that BLM may require commitment of the lease to a unit agreement, and may prescribe the unit agreement to which such lease must commit to protect the rights of all parties in interest, including the United States.

§ 3280.5 May BLM require the modification of lease requirements in connection with the creation and operation of a unit agreement?

(a) BLM may, with the consent of the lessees involved, establish, alter, change, or revoke rates of operations (including drilling, operations, production, and other requirements) of the leases, and make conditions with respect to the leases, in connection with the creation and operation of any such unit agreement as BLM may consider necessary or advisable to secure the protection of the public interest.

(b) If leases to be included in a unit have unlike lease terms, such leases need not be modified to be in the same unit.

§ 3280.6 When may BLM require a unit operator to modify the rate of exploration, development, or production?

BLM may require a unit agreement applying to lands owned by the United States to contain a provision under which BLM or an entity designated in the unit agreement may alter or modify, from time-to-time, the rate of resource exploration or development, or production quantity or rate, under the unit agreement.