

Public Law 105-167
105th Congress

An Act

Apr. 13, 1998
[S. 750]

To consolidate certain mineral interests in the National Grasslands in Billings County, North Dakota, through the exchange of Federal and private mineral interests to enhance land management capabilities and environmental and wildlife protection, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. EXCHANGE OF CERTAIN MINERAL INTERESTS IN BILLINGS COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA.

(a) **PURPOSE.**—The purpose of this Act is to direct the consolidation of certain mineral interests in the Little Missouri National Grasslands in Billings County, North Dakota, through the exchange of Federal and private mineral interests in order to enhance land management capability and environmental and wildlife protection.

(b) **EXCHANGE.**—Notwithstanding any other provision of law—

(1) if, not later than 45 days after the date of enactment of this Act, Burlington Resources Oil & Gas Company (referred to in this Act as “Burlington” and formerly known as Meridian Oil Inc.), conveys title acceptable to the Secretary of Agriculture (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”) to all oil and gas rights and interests on lands identified on the map entitled “Billings County, North Dakota, Consolidated Mineral Exchange—November 1995”, by quitclaim deed acceptable to the Secretary, the Secretary shall convey to Burlington, subject to valid existing rights, by quitclaim deed, all Federal oil and gas rights and interests on lands identified on that map; and

(2) if Burlington makes the conveyance under paragraph (1) and, not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the owners of the remaining non-oil and gas mineral interests on lands identified on that map convey title acceptable to the Secretary to all rights, title, and interests in the interests held by them, by quitclaim deed acceptable to the Secretary, the Secretary shall convey to those owners, subject to valid existing rights, by exchange deed, all remaining Federal non-oil and gas mineral rights, title, and interests in National Forest System lands and National Grasslands identified on that map in the State of North Dakota as are agreed to by the Secretary and the owners of those interests.

Burlington
Resources Oil &
Gas Company.

(c) **LEASEHOLD INTERESTS.**—As a condition precedent to the conveyance of interests by the Secretary to Burlington under this Act, all leasehold and contractual interests in the oil and gas interests to be conveyed by Burlington to the United States under this Act shall be released, to the satisfaction of the Secretary.

(d) **EQUAL VALUATION OF OIL AND GAS RIGHTS EXCHANGE.**—The values of the interests to be exchanged under subsection (b)(1) shall be deemed to be equal.

(e) **APPROXIMATE EQUAL VALUE OF EXCHANGES WITH OTHER INTEREST OWNERS.**—The values of the interests to be exchanged under subsection (b)(2) shall be approximately equal, as determined by the Secretary.

(f) **LAND USE.**—

(1) **EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT.**—The Secretary shall grant to Burlington, and its successors and assigns, the use of federally-owned surface lands to explore for and develop interests conveyed to Burlington under this Act, subject to applicable Federal and State laws.

(2) **SURFACE OCCUPANCY AND USE.**—Rights to surface occupancy and use that Burlington would have absent the exchange under this Act on its oil and gas rights and interests conveyed under this Act shall apply to the same extent on the federally-owned surface estate overlying oil and gas rights and interests conveyed to Burlington under this Act.

(g) **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS.**—All activities of Burlington, and its successors and assigns, relating to exploration and development on environmentally sensitive National Forest System lands, as described in the “Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Certain Severed Mineral Estates, Billings County, North Dakota”, executed by the Forest Service and Burlington and dated November 2, 1995, shall be subject to the terms of the memorandum.

(h) **MAP.**—The map referred to in subsection (b) shall be provided to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives, kept on file in the office of the Chief of the Forest Service, and made available for public inspection in the office of the Forest Supervisor of the Custer National Forest within 45 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

(i) **CONTINUATION OF MULTIPLE USE.**—Nothing in this Act shall limit, restrict, or otherwise affect the application of the principle of multiple use (including outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and fish and wildlife purposes) in any area of the Little Missouri National Grasslands. Federal grazing permits or privileges in areas designated on the map entitled “Billings County, North

Dakota, Consolidated Mineral Exchange—November 1995” or those lands described in the “Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Certain Severed Mineral Estates, Billings County, North Dakota”, shall not be curtailed or otherwise limited as a result of the exchanges directed by this Act.

Approved April 13, 1998.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S. 750 (H.R. 2574):

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 105-471 accompanying H.R. 2574 (Comm. on Resources).

SENATE REPORTS: No. 105-92 (Comm. on Energy and Natural Resources).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

Vol. 143 (1997): Oct. 6, considered and passed Senate.

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