



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
BAKERSFIELD FIELD OFFICE  
CA-160-06-057

## DECISION RECORD

Leasing Certain Parcels within the  
Bakersfield Field Office  
for the  
June 14, 2006 Oil and Gas Lease Sale

**DECISION:** It is my decision to approve the proposed action as described in Environmental Assessment (EA) number CA-160-06-057. Mitigation measures were built into the proposed action, and I have determined that additional mitigation is not required.

**RATIONALE:** This decision allows 32 parcels encompassing 19,619.87 acres of land within the Bakersfield Field Office to be offered for oil and gas leasing. These lands were previously identified as being available for leasing in the Caliente Resource Management Plan, which was prepared with extensive public involvement. Restrictive stipulations designed to protect sensitive resources were identified at that time. This action is in conformance with that direction, which was analyzed in an environmental impact statement.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been mandated by Congress and the President to manage public lands for multiple use. One of these legitimate uses is energy production. The Bakersfield Field Office has a proven track record of balancing energy production with other uses, including wildlife habitat and the protection of cultural resources.

The proposed action allows BLM to comply with national directives regarding oil and gas leasing. This environmental assessment documents that this action can be approved and implemented without unnecessary and undue degradation.

A “no action” alternative was also considered. Since no unresolved conflicts involving alternate uses of resources, or options offering meaningful differences in environmental impacts, were identified during the course of analysis, the range of two alternatives was considered to be sufficient.

This environmental assessment was made available for public review on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006. The public was notified of the availability of the environmental assessment via a press release and notices on BLM webpages.

BLM received only one response to that environmental assessment, and it contained a number of concerns. The final EA addresses those concerns. In addition, other minor clarifications and additions were made in the final environmental assessment.

Key points in the final EA include:

The BLM proposes to lease 32 selected parcels for possible oil and gas development, down from the original 34 parcels. EA Parcel 35 section 19 and EA Parcel 37 were withdrawn from the proposed action. The U.S government does not own the minerals. EA Parcel 35 section 20 was withdrawn due to information found that identified a health risk.

The parcels to be offered for leasing are widely scattered from Township 23 S., Range 16 E., to Township 26 S., Range 28 E., of the Mount Diablo Baseline and Meridian and south to Township 4 North 17 West of the San Bernardino Base Meridian. Many of these parcels were nominated by industry, and therefore represent areas of high interest (see Appendix A- description of lands). Approximately 19,619.87 acres of Federal mineral estate land are considered for leasing. Approximately 2,869.33 acres are public surface with Federal mineral rights and approximately 16,750.54 acres are split estate (private surface with Federal subsurface minerals). All parcels would be subject to special leasing stipulations that would protect both endangered species and sensitive species and their habitat.

BLM projects that up to 20 wells will be drilled on lands proposed for leasing in this action, and no more than 15 acres of permanent and 27 acres of temporary disturbance. It is not likely that all parcels will be leased, and the environmental assessment forecasts that only a small number of leased parcels will ever be developed. In addition, the disturbance from any development that does occur is projected to cover only a small part of a given parcel. This environmental assessment takes a hard look at the types and extent of the impacts that can be expected, and how they might affect critical resources. In the future when specific development proposals are received, they will be evaluated via subsequent site specific environmental analyses. Although a lessee does have the right to develop a lease, BLM retains the authority to require proposals to be relocated or redesigned in such a way as to protect sensitive resources.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:** Environmental impacts associated with the proposed action have been assessed. Based on the analysis provided in the attached EA, I conclude the approved action is not a major federal action and will result in no significant impacts to the environment under the criteria in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.18 and 1508.27. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement to further analyze possible impacts is not required pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

#### **APPEALS:**

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the

