THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
CASPER FIELD OFFICE

DECISION RECORD
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Introduction

This document records the decision made by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for managing public land surface and federal mineral estate in the Wallace Creek Project Area (WCPA) that is located in west-central Natrona County within Sections 15, 21, 22, 27 and 28, Township 34 North, Range 87 West, Sixth Principal Meridian. Bill Barrett Corporation (BBC) proposes to drill ten wells within the project area to test the potential for commercial production from the Upper Cretaceous Raderville Formation. Any gas produced from these wells would be transported via a proposed replacement gathering system to an expanded BBC compressor station located in the NE¼NE¼SE¼ of Section 21, Township 34 North, Range 87 West.

This decision is based on the *ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA) of BILL BARETT CORPORATION'S PROPOSED WALLACE CREEK RADERVILLE FORMATION FIELD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT* (EA number WY-060-03-108) completed for the proposal. This decision applies only to the public land surface and federal mineral estate subject to administration by the BLM. Policies for development and land use decisions within the project area are contained in the Final Platte River Resource Area (PRRA) Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision (ROD) (BLM 1985). The EA is available for public review at the BLM Casper Field Office at 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, Wyoming, 82604.

All activities associated with federal oil and gas development, operation and production, and abandonment would be conducted in compliance with all applicable Federal, State and County laws, regulations, and stipulations.

II. Alternatives Considered

A. *Proposed Action* – Drill and develop ten Raderville development wells in the Wallace Creek Project Area. The details of this alternative are contained in EA Section 2.0, PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES.

B. *No Action* – The Proposed Action would not be implemented. Current land use practices would continue, and the Wallace Creek Project Area would continue to be open for oil and gas development. Future proposed actions involving oil and gas drilling and development would require National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis on a case-by-case basis.

III. Decision

It is my decision to approve the Proposed Action analyzed in the *ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA) of BILL BARETT CORPORATION'S PROPOSED WALLACE CREEK RADERVILLE FORMATION FIELD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT*. The decision recognizes that the WCPA has been involved in oil and gas development since 1960, and that undeveloped oil and gas resources still remain in the WCPA which require consideration and protection from unnecessary environmental degradation.

Approval of the Proposed Action and individual project components are subject to the following administrative requirements, and the applicant-committed environmental protection measures identified in EA Section 4.0, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS. These requirements and mitigation measures are incorporated by reference into this decision.

Approval of the Proposed Action and individual project actions are conditioned upon and subject to the following pre-authorization administrative requirements: before any permit is issued authorizing an action on public lands (i.e. Application for Permit to Drill, Sundry Notice and report on Wells, or Right-of-Way) the final location for each well site, access road pipeline, or other facility will be evaluated specifically through a categorical exclusion (CX), an administrative decision (AD), a documentation of NEPA adequacy (DNA) or an environmental assessment (EA).

IV. Approved Project Components

This Decision record is approval for the BLM Platte River Resource Area Manager to permit the following project components to the extent they occur on public lands within the WCPA. Development beyond the specified levels will require the preparation of a supplemental environmental analysis.

- Ten new BBC Raderville wells within the WCPA with 2.25 acres of disturbance per well pad for a total disturbance of 22.5 acres to a combination of public lands, state of Wyoming lands and private ownership lands.

Well Name and Number	Legal Location of Well				Lease Number	Surface Ownership
	Quarter	Section	Township	Range		
Stone Cabin #24-21R	SE¼SW¼	21	34 North	87 West	WYW-0588A	U.S.A.
Stone Cabin #32-21R	SW¼NE¼	21	34 North	87 West	WYW-47520	State

Stone Cabin #11-27R	NW¼NW¼	27	34 North	87 West	WYW-017575A	State
Stone Cabin #13-27R	NW¼SW¼	27	34 North	87 West	WYW-139717	U.S.A.
Stone Cabin #31-28R	NW¼NE¼	28	34 North	87 West	WYW-139717	Russell Forgey
Wallace Creek Unit #43-15R	NE¼SE¼	15	34 North	87 West	WYW-0588A	Russell Forgey
Wallace Creek Unit #11-22R	NW¼NW¼	22	34 North	87 West	WYW-0588A	State
Wallace Creek Unit #13-22R	NW¼SW¼	22	34 North	87 West	WYW-47620	State
Wallace Creek Unit #32-22R	SW¼NE¼	22	34 North	87 West	WYW-47620	Russell Forgey
Wallace Creek Unit #41-27R	NE¼NE¼	27	34 North	87 West	WYW-017575A	Russell Forgey

- Access roads to well sites and ancillary facilities resulting in a total disturbance of 13.75 acres to a combination of public lands, State of Wyoming lands and private ownership lands.

- Installation of an expanded compressor station in NE¼NE¼SE¼ of Section 21, Township 34 North, Range 81 West involving surface disturbance of 3.41 acres of surface estate owned by the State of Wyoming.

- Installation of a gas gathering system to tie in three existing wells and the ten new Raderville wells to the expanded compressor station. These lines are routed both along roads and in areas with no previous disturbance. The total surface disturbance for the gas gathering system is 37.61 acres to a combination of public lands, State of Wyoming lands and private ownership lands.

V. Finding Of No Significant Impact

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the *ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA) of BILL BARETT CORPORATION'S PROPOSED WALLACE CREEK RADERVILLE FORMATION FIELD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT*, I have determined that impacts from the Proposed Action are not expected to be significant and an environmental impact statement is not required.

VI. Rationale For the Decision

The decision to approve drilling and development in the WCPA is based on careful consideration of the following:

(a) Consistency with land use and resource management plans – the PRRA RMP states that "Oil and gas exploration and development will be authorized in accordance with the lease provisions. Lease constraints and development will be subject to land use decisions described in the Planning Decisions section of the RMP ROD."

(b) EA analysis – The EA presented a thorough analysis of the affected environment by describing the existing conditions of the physical, biological, cultural, and socioeconomic resources in the project area. The potential environmental consequences of construction, drilling, completion, and maintenance activities associated with the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative were discussed in detail for each potentially affected resource.

(c) Relevant resource considerations –.The resources that were addressed in the EA were identified as issues during the scoping process or interdisciplinary review as having the potential to be affected.
(d) Agency statutory requirements - This decision is consistent with Federal, State, and County authorizing actions required to implement the Proposed Action. All pertinent statutory requirements applicable to this proposal were considered.
(e) National policy – Private exploration and development of federal oil and gas leases is an integral part of the BLM's oil and gas leasing program under the authority of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended. The decision to approve the drilling and development in the WCPA is consistent with national policy.
(f) Mitigation measures developed to avoid or minimize environmental harm. The adoption of the mitigation measures identified in the EA represent all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm.

VII. Mitigation Measures

The mitigating measures listed here include the applicant committed environmental protection measures and the mitigation measures identified as a result of the EA analysis and set forth in EA Section 4.0, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS. These purpose of the mitigation measures is to minimize adverse impacts to resources on public lands and to avoid or reduce environmental harm. Properly implemented mitigation measures should ensure that the environmental impacts to the impacted resources are maintained at the lowest levels possible using practicable means.

In order to minimize the overall impact to soil resources within the WCPA which could result from the Proposed Action, the following mitigation measures are recommended:

- In order to protect sensitive soils, no occupancy or surface disturbance should be allowed on slopes in excess of 25%.

  All available topsoil (e.g., 6 to 12 inches) should be removed (stripped) from the areas of new construction and stockpiled for future reclamation of these disturbed areas. This stored topsoil, as well as cut and fill slopes on the well pad, should be secured from erosion through mulching and temporary revegetation (hydroseeding) if reclamation is not anticipated within one (1) year following initial construction.

  Unused areas (borrow ditch) along the proposed access road route(s) which would be denuded of existing vegetation during initial construction should be reseeded in order to re-establish vegetative cover and reduce the overall potential for erosion and off-site sedimentation.

  Construction and/or surface disturbing activities would be prohibited during periods when the soil material is saturated, frozen, or when watershed damage is likely to occur.

The following mitigation measures are recommended to minimize impacts to wildlife resulting from additional oil/gas exploration and development activity within the WCPA.

- To protect wintering wildlife on crucial winter ranges, drilling and/or surface use will not be allowed during the period from November 15 to April 30.

- If unusual maintenance is proposed within crucial big game winter range between November 15 and April 30, the operator must contact the BLM Authorized Officer for prior approval of operations or maintenance which would be "unusual". "Unusual" means extensive or significant operations, such as workover operations or other operations, which include loud noise or night-time activity. Emergency (safety) situations would not be restricted.

- To protect important raptor nesting habitat, drilling and/or surface use will not be allowed within 0.25 to 0.50 mile of occupied raptor nests during the period from February 1 to July 31.

- If unusual maintenance is proposed within 0.25 to 0.50 mile of an occupied nest between March 1 and June 15, the operator must contact the BLM Authorized Officer for prior approval of operations or maintenance which would be "unusual". "Unusual" means extensive or significant operations, such as workover operations or other operations, which include loud noise or night-time activity. Emergency (safety) situations would not be restricted.

- Casual use activities away from existing roads and facilities that are scheduled to occur between March 1 and mid-June should be coordinated with the BLM in order to minimize or avoid potential impacts to nesting raptors in the area. Casual uses include, but are not limited to, ground activities such as: (1) preliminary scouting of routes or sites, (2) land surveying and staking, and (3) cultural and wildlife surveys. Because casual use is generally not treated as a managed or permitted activity, there is a potential for causing impacts to nesting raptors.

Assistant Field Manager, Casper Field Office

9/16/2003
Date

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