



NEWS RELEASE

US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR ■ BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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BLM Issues Proposed Plan to Lease Coal in Haskell, Latimer, and LeFlore Counties

TULSA, OK – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Oklahoma Field Office has issued a proposed amendment to its 1994 Resource Management Plan (RMP) to address three competitive coal lease sales in Haskell, Latimer, and LeFlore counties, Oklahoma.

In 2002, the BLM received three applications for the proposed coal leases, totaling approximately 6,883 acres. The surface lands in each of the three areas are State or privately owned; however, the underlying mineral resources are federally owned. The BLM, under the Secretary of the Interior, is the Federal agency responsible for leasing federally owned coal, and the Federal Coal Leasing Amendments Act of 1976 requires that coal leases be issued in conformance with a comprehensive land use plan.

The BLM Oklahoma Field Office completed such a plan in 1994—the Resource Management Plan for Oklahoma—which included Federal mineral resources in Haskell, Latimer, and LeFlore counties. The RMP did not address the proposed areas primarily because the tracts represented lands that had been mined in the early twentieth century. Improvements in mining technology and economics now allow mining in these areas. To consider coal lease sales in these areas, the BLM has prepared an amendment to determine the areas that are acceptable for further consideration for coal leasing. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the BLM conducted an environmental assessment of the potential consequences of leasing on the environment.

The environmental review of coal mining is phased and required during (1) the process of leasing the Federal coal, which is the responsibility of the BLM, and (2) processing the application of a mine permit, which is the responsibility of the Oklahoma Department of Mines and U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. The BLM participates in the review of the mine plan to ensure that the lease stipulations are upheld and the economic recovery of the Federal coal is maximized.

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Based on the assessment of potential environmental impacts, with implementation of the protective measures, the BLM concluded that this Federal action will not result in significant impacts on the environment.

The document, which includes the Proposed RMP Amendment, Environmental Assessment, and Finding of No Significant Impact, is available for review until August 30, 2004. To review the document, go to the BLM website at www.nm.blm.gov and follow the links to **Planning**. A limited number of paper copies or compact discs are available upon request. For more information, contact Doug Cook at 918.621.4124 or Keith Tyler at 405.790.1015.

The BLM is responsible for management of the nation's public land and natural resources, including federally owned mineral resources, based on principles of multiple use and sustained yield, a combination of uses that takes into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources.

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