

After having developed a draft Environmental Assessment and conducting a series of public meetings, the Service had decided that the preparation of an EIS is appropriate for this proposed action. The decision to prepare an EIS is based upon strong public interest in the project, both supportive and non-supportive. There has also been interest expressed in development of an EIS by local governments and by members of the Ohio Congressional delegation.

Need for Action

Big and Little Darby Creeks, located 20 miles west of downtown Columbus, are the major streams in a 580-square mile watershed encompassing portions of 6 counties in central Ohio. The Darby watershed is one of the healthiest aquatic systems of its size in the Midwest and is ranked among the top five warm freshwater habitats in Ohio by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. Land use in the drainage basin has historically been agriculture, with appropriately 80 percent of the land area in fields, row-cropped, in a corn-soybean rotation. The project area was the location of the easternmost extension of the mid-continent tallgrass prairie. The following eight points help explain the need to preserve this area:

(1) Existing and threatened conversion of the watershed, from agriculture to urban land uses, presents an increased risk to the health of this aquatic system.

(2) Scientists (Ohio EPA surveys) place the number of fish species in the Darby Creek System at 94 and 60+; in the Little Darby Creek sub watershed. The number of mollusk species, including the federally endangered Northern riffle shell and the Northern club shell, is 35 (Dr. Tom Watters). They are reported to be declining.

(3) There are 3 federally endangered, 1 threatened, 1 candidate, and 10 monitored species confirmed in the original project area or likely to be in the original project area.

(4) Collectively, 44 species are designated as being state threaten or endangered throughout the watershed. Another 36 species are identified as potentially threatened or of special interest in the state. A total of 38 (24 percent) species listed in the Service's regional conservation priorities would be affected potentially by the project as proposed in the draft Environmental Assessment.

(5) While the Refuge project area encompasses only 14–15 percent of the entire Little Darby Creek Watershed, it includes almost 50 percent of all stream

miles and important aquatic habitat that is in the watershed.

(6) The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the National Park Service and the Nature Conservancy have all given special designations to the Big Darby and Little Darby Creeks. The Nature Conservancy identified this watershed as one of the "Last Great Places" in the Western Hemisphere.

(7) A 1996 report (Swanson, D.) found that the population trend in Ohio for 10 species of nongame grassland migratory birds exhibited declines in populations from 30 to 84 percent.

(8) The Service's Regional Wetlands Concept Plan, November 1990, identified the Big Darby Creek Watershed that includes Little Darby Creek as, "One of the last remaining watersheds in Ohio with excellent biological diversity." Under threat from development for water use and urban development, the area was listed as a potential wetland acquisition site.

Alternatives

A draft Environmental Assessment has been prepared and undergone public review and comment prior to this notice. This EIS will further evaluate alternative methods of establishing the Little Darby National Wildlife Refuge including alternatives for agricultural land use conservation that supports the Service's primary mission of fish and wildlife habitat protection.

Socioeconomic, fiscal, and other community impacts related to alternative methods for refuge establishment will be further explored. Critical biological and potential management impacts will be evaluated as part of each part of each alternative or suite of alternatives that may have similar effects. Development of new alternatives and further evaluation of previously formulated alternatives will be made in conjunction with the local community, and interested state agencies. As required by NEPA, the Service will also analyze the "no action" alternative as a baseline for gauging the impacts of the establishment of the refuge.

Potential impacts that may be addressed in the EIS include effects on development, land use, habitat, wildlife populations, economics and listed species. Potential associated impacts may be related to drainage maintenance, school district revenue, tax revenue, fire management, and wildlife disease.

The environmental review of the proposed establishment of the Little Darby National Wildlife Refuge will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the NEPA Act of 1969 as amended (42 U.S.C. 4371 *et seq.*),

NEPA Regulations (42 CFR 1500–1508), other appropriate Federal regulations, and Service procedures for compliance with those regulations.

The Service estimates that the draft EIS will be made available to the public during the summer of 2000.

Dated: May 31, 2000.

William F. Hartwig,

Regional Director.

[FR Doc. 00–14101 Filed 6–8–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–M

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[OR–056–1110–PH:GP0–0208]

Notice of Closure of Public Lands

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Prineville District Office.

ACTION: Notice is hereby given that all roads and trails as legally described below are seasonally closed to all uses (including, but not limited to motorized vehicle use, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding) from March 1 through August 31 annually. In addition, the area legally described below is seasonally closed to shooting from March 1 through August 31 annually. "Shooting", in this closure, is defined as the discharge of firearms.

The purpose of this closure is to protect wildlife resources. More specifically, this closure is ordered to reduce negative impacts to a nesting pair of prairie falcons. Prairie falcons are sensitive to human disturbance within the sensitive habitat area surrounding the nest site during the nesting season. Current uses at the site could jeopardize the persistence and nesting success of prairie falcons at this location.

Exemptions to this closure order will apply to administrative personnel for monitoring purposes; other exceptions to this restriction may be made on a case-by-case basis by the authorized officer. This emergency order will be in effect until further notice and will be evaluated in the Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan/EIS. The authority for this closure is 43 CFR 89268.3(d)(i)(iii)(v): Operations—closures.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: This closure order applies to all roads and trails located in Township 18 South, Range 14 East, WM, Sections 22, 23, 27 and 28, within ¼ mile the Badlands Rock.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul Schmidt, Wildlife Biologist, BLM Prineville District, P.O. Box 550,

Prineville Oregon 97754, telephone (541) 416-6784.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Violation of this closure order is punishable by a fine not to exceed \$1,000 and/or imprisonment not to exceed 12 months as provided in 43 CFR 9268.3(d)(iv).

Dated: June 1, 2000.

Don L. Smith,

Acting District Manager, Prineville District Office.

[FR Doc. 00-14641 Filed 6-8-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-33-M

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[NM-932-4120-05; OKNM 104590]

Invitation To Participate; Exploration for Coal in Oklahoma

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: Members of the public are hereby invited to participate with Farrell Cooper Mining Company on a pro rata cost sharing basis, in a program for the exploration of coal deposits owned by the United States of America. The lands are located in Haskell County, Oklahoma, and are described as follows:

T. 10 N., R. 21 E., Indian Meridian
Sec. 1, S $\frac{1}{2}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 12, NW $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$,
NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE, and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$;
Containing 920.00 acres, more or less.

Any parties electing to participate in this exploration program shall notify in writing, both the State Director, Bureau, of Land Management, NW Mexico State Office, P.O. Box 27115, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-0115, and Farrell Cooper Mining Company, P.O. Box 11050, Fort Smith, Arkansas 72917. Such written notice must include a justification for wanting to participate and any recommended changes in the exploration plan with specific reasons for such changes. The notice must be received no later than 30-calendar days after the publication of this notice in the Federal Register.

This proposed exploration program is for the purpose of determining the quality and quantity of the coal in the area and will be conducted pursuant to an exploration plan to be approved by the Bureau of Land Management. A copy of the exploration plan as submitted by Farrell Cooper Mining company may be examined at the Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Office, 1474 Rodeo Road, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502, and the Tulsa Field

Office, 7906 East 33rd Street, Suite 101, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74145.

Dated: June 1, 2000.

Carsten F. Goff,

Acting State Director.

[FR Doc. 00-14642 Filed 6-8-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-84-M

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Environmental Impact Statement for Fruitland Coalbed Methane Gas Development

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, USDI, and Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meetings.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service San Juan National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management San Juan Field Office published a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for the Fruitland Coalbed Methane Gas Development on April 4, 2000, (65 FR 17672). Included in the notice were dates for public meetings to review the notice of intent. This notice changes the public meeting dates from May 16 to June 28, 2000, and from May 17 to June 29, 2000, and extends the comment period for written comments for the notice of intent from June 1 to July 14, 2000. These changes are necessary to accommodate increased public interest.

DATES: The meetings will be held on June 28, 2000, and June 29, 2000; written comments must be received by July 14, 2000.

ADDRESSES: The June 28 meeting will be held at La Plata County Fairgrounds, Exhibit Hall, 2500 Main Street, Durango, Colorado; the June 29 meeting will be held at Bayfield High School, 800 County Road 501, Bayfield, Colorado. Both meetings will be from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Written comments should be sent to the San Juan Field Office Manager, Bureau of Land Management, USDI, 15 Burnett Court, Durango, Colorado 81301.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jim Powers (970) 247-4874.

Dated: June 1, 2000.

Calvin N. Joyner,

San Juan Field Office Manager, Colorado, Bureau of Land Management, USDI, and Forest Supervisor, San Juan National Forest, Colorado, Forest Service, USDA.

[FR Doc. 00-14639 Filed 6-8-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-JB-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management.

[NV-056-1430-ES; N-41567-29]

Notice of Realty Action: Lease/ conveyance for Recreation and Public Purposes

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Recreation and public purpose lease/conveyance.

SUMMARY: The following described public lands in Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada, were segregated on December 1, 1996 for administrative purposes under serial number N-61855. This segregation on the lands listed below will be terminated upon publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. The land has been examined and found suitable for lease/conveyance for recreational or public purposes under the provisions of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, as amended (43 U.S.C. 869 *et seq.*). The Clark County School District proposes to amend their current Recreation and Public Purposes lease N-41567-29 to include the following lands for development and expansion of Edith Garehime Elementary School.

Mount Diablo Meridian, Nevada

T. 20 S., R. 60 E.,
Section 8: S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Containing 5 acres, more or less.

The land is not required for any federal purpose. The leases/ conveyances are consistent with current Bureau planning for this area and would be in the public interest. The leases/ patents, when issued, will be subject to the provisions of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act and applicable regulations of the Secretary of the Interior, and each will contain the following reservations to the United States:

1. A right-of-way thereon for ditches or canals constructed by the authority of the United States, Act of August 30, 1890 (43 U.S.C. 945).

2. All minerals shall be reserved to the United States, together with the right to prospect for, mine and remove such deposits from the same under applicable law and such regulations as the Secretary of the Interior may prescribe.

And will be subject to:

1. Easements in favor of City of Las Vegas for roads, public utilities and flood control purposes.

2. All valid and existing rights, which are identified and shown in the case file.