

### Draft Environmental Assessment

We are announcing the availability of a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) that was prepared to evaluate potential environmental effects associated with our authorization or denial of IDFG's proposal to lethally take wolves in the Lolo Zone in an effort to reduce wolf populations to a minimum of 20 to 30 wolves in 3 to 5 packs and reduce predation pressure on the elk population in that zone. A No Action and Preferred Action are described, and the environmental consequences of each alternative are analyzed.

No-Action Alternative (Deny Requested Authorization). Under the No-Action Alternative, the Service would deny IDFG's 10(j) proposal to remove wolves in the Lolo Elk Management Zone, and current management direction for wolves would continue. In the Lolo Elk Management Zone, wolves would be managed by the Service or their designated agent and could be removed when livestock, stock animals, or dogs are killed by wolves as currently provided for in the 2008 10(j) rule (73 FR 4720, January 28, 2008). The No-Action Alternative management strategy would not include lethal removal of wolves in response to predation on wild ungulate populations.

The No-Action Alternative would continue to allow management activities by State and Tribal governments to address major causes of elk declines other than wolf predation. Past management activities have included changes in elk hunting seasons and harvest strategies, changes in black bear and mountain lion seasons to address low calf survival, and efforts to improve elk habitat. These management activities would not be affected under the No-Action Alternative.

Preferred Alternative (Approve Requested Authorization). Under the preferred alternative, the Service would approve the IDFG 10(j) proposal to remove wolves in the Lolo Elk Management Zone to reduce wolf predation on elk populations over a 5-year period. This alternative would provide an adaptive management strategy to reduce the wolf population. Wolves would be removed to manage for a minimum of 20 to 30 wolves in 3 to 5 packs. Based on the 2009 year-end wolf population estimate of 76 wolves residing in the Lolo Elk Management Zone, the initial removal is estimated to be a minimum of 40 to 50 wolves. Levels of wolf removal in subsequent years are expected to be lower, and would be based on wolf population monitoring. Management activities would be intended to protect the elk

population in the Lolo Elk Management Zone while maintaining wolf populations that meet recovery objectives. This alternative includes monitoring both wolf and elk populations yearly to determine elk response to the implementation of management activities and whether adaptive changes in wolf removal are needed based on yearly monitoring results.

Wolf removal would be accomplished by IDFG personnel and other approved agents of the State of Idaho. Wolves that inhabit the Lolo Elk Management Zone would be targeted for removal. Removal would be accomplished using legal means approved by the Service under provisions of the Service's 2008 10(j) rule. Wolf control will occur through shooting from aircraft or from the ground, or by capture with foothold traps or snares followed by euthanasia. IDFG is not proposing to use poison or other chemical means to control wolves. The goal of the removal would be to reduce pack sizes and, when appropriate, to remove entire packs. The primary removal effort would occur during the winter months. Most wolf control would occur on U.S. Forest Service lands outside of designated wilderness. IDFG is not proposing to use aircraft to remove wolves from within designated wilderness. Wolf carcasses would be recovered from the field, when possible, and processed for collection of biological data. Hides and skulls would be used for educational purposes.

### Next Steps

After the comment period ends, we will analyze comments received and determine whether to: (1) Prepare a final EA and Finding of No Significant Impact and authorize lethal take of wolves in the Lolo Zone under section 10(j) of the ESA in response to wolf impacts on elk populations, (2) reconsider our preferred alternative and deny IDFG's proposal, or (3) determine that an Environmental Impact Statement should be prepared prior to authorizing or denying IDFG's proposal.

### Public Availability of Comments

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

### Authorities

The Environmental Review of this project will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*); NEPA Regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508); other appropriate Federal laws and regulations; Executive Order 12996; and Service policies and procedures for compliance with those laws and regulations.

Dated: February 4, 2011.

**Theresa E. Rabot,**

*Acting Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[LLWYD03000. L51100000. GN0000. LVEMK10CW580]

### Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Lost Creek In Situ Uranium Recovery Project in Sweetwater County, WY

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent.

**SUMMARY:** In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rawlins Field Office, Rawlins, Wyoming, intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and by this notice is announcing the beginning of the scoping process to solicit public comments and identify issues.

**DATES:** This notice initiates the public scoping process for the EIS. Comments on issues may be submitted in writing until March 14, 2011. The date(s) and location(s) of any scoping meetings will be announced at least 15 days in advance through local media, newspapers and the BLM Web site at: <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/rfdocs/lostcreek.html>.

In order to be included in the Draft EIS, all comments must be received prior to the close of the scoping period or 15 days after the last public meeting, whichever is later. We will provide additional opportunities for public participation upon publication of the Draft EIS.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments related to the Lost Creek In Situ

Recovery Project by any of the following methods:

- *Web site:* <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/rfdocs/lostcreek.html>;
- *E-mail:*

*Lost Crk Mine\_WY@blm.gov*;

- *Fax:* (307) 328-4224; or

- *Mail:* Rawlins Field Office,

Attention: Eldon Allison, 1300 North Third Street, P.O. Box 2407, Rawlins, Wyoming 82301-2407.

Documents pertinent to this proposal may be examined at the Rawlins Field Office.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For further information and/or to have your name added to our mailing list, contact Eldon Allison, Team Leader, telephone (307) 328-4267; address 1300 North Third Street, P.O. Box 2407, Rawlins, Wyoming 82301-2407; e-mail [Eldon\\_Allison@blm.gov](mailto:Eldon_Allison@blm.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The applicant Lost Creek ISR LLC (Lost Creek) has filed a plan of operations pursuant to the 43 CFR subpart 3809 regulations to construct an ore recovery plant, an access road to the site, and a pipeline system for the flow of oxidizing leach solution to injection wells and return of fluids from recovery wells to the recovery plant site; to drill injection, recovery and monitoring wells; and to construct associated facilities such as parking lots, power lines, *etc.* Development and recovery of the uranium consists of dissolving underground uranium-bearing minerals into solution and then bringing it to the surface facility for concentration.

The Lost Creek ISR project is located about 40 miles northwest of Rawlins, Wyoming, in Sweetwater County. More specifically, the project is located in sections 16-20, 29-31, T. 25 N., R. 92 W., and sections 13, 24, and 25, T. 25 N., R. 93 W. The project area boundary includes approximately 4,250 acres, but no more than 324 acres would be subjected to actual surface disturbance and would be approved by the BLM. Most of the surface disturbance would be related to construction of the well pads used to extract the uranium in solution from the site. Construction would occur year round. The plant site would comprise approximately 10 acres, including parking space for about 50-60 employees. Multiple subsurface ore bodies range in depth from about 300-700 feet below the surface. Each of the six separate cells containing uranium would be established and mined one at a time. It is expected that mining operations would last about 8 years. An estimated additional 3 years would be required for startup and closure of the site for a total project length of 11 years.

A proposed final reclamation plan for the project area has been submitted. All surface facilities would be removed when the project is completed and the land re-contoured to near pre-disturbance condition and re-vegetated.

In conjunction with this proposal, Lost Creek has also applied for a material source license from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). The NRC is in the process of conducting its own environmental review and has released a draft Supplemental EIS. BLM may decide it is appropriate to incorporate by reference into its own EIS all or part of the NRC's Supplemental EIS once it is complete. In 2009, the BLM and the NRC entered into a memorandum of understanding to foster greater cooperation between the agencies with regard to the development of uranium resources on public lands.

The purpose of the public scoping process is to determine relevant issues that will influence the scope of the environmental analysis, including alternatives, and guide the process for developing the EIS. At present, the BLM has identified the following preliminary issues:

1. What standard operating procedures, best management practices or mitigation measures are necessary to reduce impacts from mineral resource exploration and development?
2. How will access to and transportation across the BLM lands be influenced by project facilities?
3. Will changes to recreation and off-highway vehicle management be necessary to protect the safety of public land users?
4. How will project activities affect wildlife or wildlife habitat including threatened, endangered, candidate, and sensitive species?
5. What effects to vegetation (including noxious and invasive species) might be expected from project development?
6. Will special project considerations be necessary to protect cultural resources?
7. Will the project facilities change wildland fire management response?
8. Will the project affect livestock grazing?
9. What project facilities will influence visual resource management?
10. Will project development affect air and water quality?
11. Will project development affect groundwater quality and quantity?

The BLM will utilize and coordinate the NEPA commenting process to satisfy the public involvement process for section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f) as provided for in 36 CFR 800.2(d)(3).

Native American Tribes in the project area were consulted regarding the proposed project in conjunction with the NRC environmental review process, which resulted in an agreement among certain Tribes, BLM, NRC, and the State Historical Preservation Office. The BLM has invited three Tribes to be cooperating agencies in its EIS process. Any additional Native American Tribal consultations will be conducted in accordance with policy, and Tribal concerns will be given due consideration, including impacts on Indian trust assets. Federal, State, and local agencies, and Native American Tribes, along with other stakeholders that may be interested in or affected by the BLM's decision on this project, are invited to participate in the scoping process and, if eligible, may request or be requested by the BLM to participate as a cooperating agency. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

**Authority:** 40 CFR 1501.7.

**Donald A. Simpson,**  
*State Director.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

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LVCLK09K0760]

### Notice of Availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Westside Land Conveyance Project, Washakie and Big Horn Counties, WY

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Westside Land Conveyance Project and by this notice is announcing its availability.