BLM and OSMRE seek comments on Coyote Creek coal lease application

Pilot project increases efficiencies across two Interior agencies, streamlines NEPA review of leasing and permitting coal mining

(DICKINSON, N.D.) – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) are seeking public scoping comments regarding the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) that will analyze potential impacts from leasing 320 acres of federal coal to the Coyote Creek Mining Company adjacent to its existing Coal Creek Mine in Mercer County.

The BLM and OSMRE EA is part of an innovative Department of the Interior pilot project to streamline required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance. In order to increase operational efficiencies, the BLM and OSMRE are working as co-lead agencies on an EA that will allow each agency to issue its own findings regarding the significance of potential impacts resulting from leasing and permitting coal mining.

The purpose of the scoping process is to obtain feedback from the public on relevant issues that may influence the development of the environmental analysis, including alternatives, and guide the process for preparing the environmental assessment. Comments will be accepted for a 15-day period ending on Oct. 29, 2018.

The BLM and OSMRE also plan to have the draft EA available for public review period by late fall of 2018, at which time public comments on the document and associated analyses will be accepted and considered.

As the federal government’s manager of public minerals, the BLM has responsibility for overseeing completion of the EA associated with federal coal leasing and exploration. The North Dakota Public Service Commission is the regulatory authority responsible for issuing permits for coal mining and reclamation in accordance with the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, and OSMRE is responsible for reviewing mining plans for federal coal and providing recommendations before the mining plan is approved in accordance with the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920.

For more details on the proposal, how to comment and pertinent contact information, go to the BLM ePlanning website at https://eplanning.blm.gov and conduct a “Text Search” for the project NEPA number DOI-BLM-MT-0000-2018-0006-EA. Information on the proposed project, the associated EA,
and public involvement opportunities can also be found on the OSMRE website at
https://www.wrcc.osmre.gov/initiatives/coyoteCreekMine.shtm.

Those who intend to provide comments are advised that including an address, phone number, email
address or other personal-identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While
those commenting can ask in their comments to have personal-identifying information withheld from
public review, the agencies cannot guarantee that they will be able to do so. All submissions from
organizations, from businesses and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives of
organizations or businesses, will be available for public review.

For more information contact the BLM Project Manager, Joel Hartmann, at (406)896-5159 or the
OSMRE Project Manager, Logan Sholar, at (303)293-5036.

– BLM & OSMRE–