



United States Department of the Interior

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MOAB FIELD OFFICE

2005 MAY 16 P 1:28

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Southeast Utah Group
Arches and Canyonlands National Parks
Hovenweep and Natural Bridges National Monuments
2282 S. West Resource Boulevard
Moab, Utah 84532-3298

IN REPLY REFER TO:

DEPT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MGMT

MOAB FIELD OFFICE

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L3025

May 13, 2005

Memorandum

To: Deputy State Director, Division of Lands and Minerals, BLM

From: Superintendent, Southeast Utah Group

Subject: Comments on Notice of August, 2005 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale of Lands Proximal to Canyonlands National Park: Parcels UT0805-261, UT0805-262, UT0805-263, UT0805-266

The National Park Service (NPS) requests Parcels UT0805-261, -262, -263 and -266 be deferred until the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Monticello Field Office is completed.

The proposed parcels are located east of the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park in Lockhart Basin. Some of the parcels include the canyon rims and are therefore shared between the Monticello and Moab Field Areas. All four parcels are located within the viewshed of both Canyonlands National Park and the BLM Canyon Rims Area. These parcels contribute to the exceptional landscape as viewed and experienced from the rims on BLM lands and as viewed from scenic overlooks within Canyonlands National Park.

Both the BLM and the NPS manage these lands in part for this scenic quality according to our respective policies. The parcels in question have a history of controversy as issues were raised and addressed by the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Interior Board of Land Appeals, in the ruling for IBLA 98-144, 98-168 and 98-207, decided on May 20, 1998. Some of the issues included decisions on resource allocations reflected in the current RMP that were inconsistent with visual resource classification assignments relative to lease stipulations. Further, mitigation measures for desert bighorn sheep and their habitat in Lockhart Basin remain unresolved as was footnoted in the IBLA decision.

The subject parcels are part of a group in the Hatch Point and Lockhart Basin area proposed for lease in August. These parcels lie within the boundary of either the Moab or Monticello Field Office and in some cases are shared parcels. Both Field Offices maintain that their parcels would be offered consistent with their existing RMP, respectively.

Parcels within the Moab Field Office are subject to visual classification level II as a result of an amendment to the Moab Field Office RMP after full public review and comment. However, parcels in the Monticello Field Office, including those that are either shared or contiguous to the Moab parcels, are managed as visual classification level III. This less restrictive visual resource management level does not allow for lease stipulations protective of the viewshed desired by the NPS. Stipulations desired by the NPS would be similar to those that already exist on parcels within the group in the Moab Field Office. It is for this reason that we do not object to the Moab parcels but do take exception to the Monticello parcels.

The Moab Field Office RMP was amended to address management in the Hatch Point and Canyon Rims area. This was not the case with the Monticello RMP. Both Field Offices are in the process of preparing a new RMP. The NPS requests that the subject parcels be deferred until this inconsistency with resource allocation decisions, applied visual classifications, and relevant stipulations for oil and gas lease development can be addressed in the RMP planning process. Additionally, mitigation measures should be considered for the desert bighorn sheep and habitat in both Canyonlands National Park and BLM public lands. The NPS would welcome that opportunity for involvement.

Having met with BLM staff, the NPS appreciates the time dedicated by the both the Monticello and Moab Field Office staff in reviewing our inquiry. Our request is predicated on finding solutions that best address the needs and purposes of the park, while being considerate of and working cooperatively with the BLM as they discharge their responsibilities associated with the oil and gas lease sale program. Please do contact me at (435) 719-2101 for further discussion as may be needed.

Thomas A. Troutman FOR:

Anthony J. Schetzle
Superintendent
Southeast Utah Group

cc:

Cordell Roy, Utah State Coordinator, National Park Service
Margaret Wyatt, Moab Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management
Sandra Myers, Monticello Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management
Mike Reberg, State Director, Congressman Jim Matheson
Donna Sackett, Central Utah Area Director, Senator Robert Bennett
Ron Dean, Eastern Utah Director, Senator Orrin Hatch
Lynn Stephens, Chairman, San Juan County Commission