

# **REQUEST FOR SCOPING COMMENTS**

## **USDA Forest Service UINTA NATIONAL FOREST**

### **LEGAL NOTICE FOR UINTA NATIONAL FOREST OIL AND GAS LEASING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

The Uinta National Forest, with the assistance of the Bureau of Land Management, Salt Lake Field Office, and the State of Utah serving as cooperating agencies, is initiating the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement that would determine under what conditions (stipulations) leases would be issued. The EIS would analyze all lands with a federally-owned leasable mineral estate within the Uinta National Forest.

The EIS analysis area includes the entire Uinta National Forest (approximately 897,400 acres), with the exception of designated wilderness areas (approximately 58,400 acres) and privately held mineral resources in the Strawberry Reservoir area which cover approximately 61,300 acres, for a total study area of approximately 777,700 acres.

The purpose of the proposed action is to complete a forest-wide leasing analysis. The need is to be responsive to requests for oil and gas leasing on the Forest. Currently only a portion of the Forest is available for leasing and most of that area has already been leased. Also, the proposed action is needed in order to comply with the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Reform Act of 1987 which requires the Forest Service to analyze lands under its jurisdiction that are legally available for leasing in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

The Proposed Action would make leasing decisions, including identification of stipulations as required by 36 CFR 228.102(d) for the Uinta National Forest System lands. Leasing stipulations outlined on page 3-7 of the 2003 LRMP will be the basis of the stipulations applied forest-wide. The Proposed Action may result in an amendment to the Uinta Revised Forest Plan.

In addition to the Proposed Action, the No Action alternative will be analyzed in detail. The No Action Alternative would continue current management of leasing activities on approximately 197,000 acres of the Uinta National Forest. The remainder of the Uinta National Forest would continue to have no leasing opportunities.

The Forest Supervisor will decide which lands with federal mineral ownership are administratively available for oil and gas leasing and determine what conditions (stipulations) would be applied to future oil leases on the Uinta National Forest. This decision will not result in ground-disturbing activities within National Forest System lands administered by the Uinta NF such as exploration, drilling, and/or field development. Any ground disturbing activity that may be proposed subsequent to leasing would require further review and environmental analysis prior to approval, as outlined in current Federal regulations (36 CFR 228.107).

Issues which may be analyzed in both alternatives include: the socioeconomic effects of oil and gas leasing and subsequent activities; effects on terrestrial and aquatic flora and fauna, including

threatened and endangered species, sensitive species, and management indicator species; effects on both developed and dispersed recreation; effects on air resources; effects on water resources, including wetlands, floodplains, riparian areas, culinary and municipal water systems, and groundwater; effects on visual resources; effects of leasing stipulations and mitigation measures on oil and gas exploration and development activity; effects on soils and geologic hazards; effects on cultural and traditional heritage resources; effects on transportation; effects on upland vegetation; effects on riparian vegetation; effects on inventoried roadless areas; effects on other mineral resource extraction activities; and effects on noxious weeds and invasive species.

One public scoping meeting will be held using an informal workshop format on Friday, March 3, 2006, at the Provo City Library's Bullock Room from 5 pm – 7 pm. The Library is located at 550 North University Avenue, Provo, UT 84601.

Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be postmarked or received within 45 days from date of publication of this notice in the Federal Register to ensure full consideration. The draft environmental impact statement is expected December 2006 and the final environmental impact statement is expected November 2007.

Please submit substantive issues or concerns to the Responsible Official: Dan Dallas, Acting Forest Supervisor, Uinta National Forest, P.O. Box 1428, 88 West 100 North, Provo, UT, 84603; phone (801) 342-5100; fax (801) 342-5185; e-mail: [comments-intermtn-uinta@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-intermtn-uinta@fs.fed.us). E-mailed comments must be submitted in MS Word (\*.doc) or rich text format (\*.rtf) and should include the project name in the subject line. Oral comments as well as written comments may also be submitted at the above address during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday–Friday, excluding federal holidays.

Each individual or representative from each organization submitting substantive comments must either sign the comments or otherwise verify identity in order to attain appeal eligibility. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project.

Information regarding this project will be posted on the Uinta National Forest's website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/uinta/projects/nepa>. For additional information, please contact Pam Jarnecke, Environmental Coordinator, or Kim Martin, Minerals Staff Officer, Supervisor's Office of the Uinta National Forest at the address and phone number listed above.