



Texas National Forests and Grasslands, Oil and Gas Leasing and Availability Analysis

THE PROJECT

The National Forests and Grasslands in Texas (NFGT) is initiating the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). The EIS will analyze and disclose the effects of identifying areas as available or unavailable for new oil and gas leasing. The proposed action identifies the following elements: What lands will be made available for future oil and gas leasing; what stipulations will be applied to lands available for future oil and gas leasing, and if there would be any plan amendments to the 1996 NFGT Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan).

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR CHANGE

The Forest Service withdrew its consent to lease NFGT lands from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for oil and gas development in 2016. The reason for the withdrawal of consent was due to stakeholder concerns, including insufficient public notification, insufficient opportunity for public involvement, and insufficient environmental analysis. There is a need to analyze the impacts of new oil and gas development technologies on surface and subsurface water and geologic resources; air resources; fish and wildlife resources; fragile and rare ecosystems; threatened and endangered species; and invasive plant management. There is also a need to examine changed conditions since the Forest Plan was published. These current issues and changed conditions need to be evaluated in determining which National Forest System (NFS) lands administered by the NFGT should be made available for future oil and gas leasing.

OIL AND GAS LEASING STIPULATIONS

For lands made available for future oil and gas leasing, stipulations may be applied. Stipulations are defined as follows:

- **No Surface Occupancy (NSO) Stipulation:** Use or occupancy of the surface is prohibited to protect identified resource values.
- **Timing Limitation Stipulation:** A seasonal restriction that prohibits surface use during specified time periods to protect identified resource values.
- **Controlled Surface Use:** Use and occupancy is allowed (unless restricted by another stipulation) but identified resource values require special operating constraints that may modify the lease rights.

For more information on what stipulations are existing and what stipulations are proposed, see Table 1, Draft Stipulations for Current Management and Proposed Action and Acres in the Decision Area (reverse page).

PLAN AMENDMENTS

The Forest Plan includes current stipulations for oil and gas leasing. New stipulations or changes to existing stipulations may require a plan amendment. Under the Proposed Action, the Forest Plan would be amended.

THE PROPOSED ACTION AND NO ACTION ALTERNATIVES

The Forest Service developed a proposed action based on the need for change. See Table 1, Draft Stipulations for Current Management and Proposed Action and Acres in the Decision Area and Table 2, Summary of Alternatives for more information (reverse page).

HOW TO COMMENT

Comments may be submitted by mail, electronically, or via fax.

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Electronically: Email robert.potts@usda.gov

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Alternative		Stipulation	Area within Decision Area (Acres) ²
Current Management ¹	Proposed Action		
N/A	NSO	Blackland prairies	2,400
N/A	NSO	Fort Worth prairies	2,000
N/A	NSO	Louisiana pine snake	2,100
N/A	NSO	Research National Areas	500
N/A	CSU	Designated Trails	7,500
N/A	NSO ³	RCW Active Cluster Sites	226,700
N/A	NSO ³	RCW Active Cluster Sites – Foraging Habitat	226,700
N/A	CSU ³	RCW Breeding Season	226,700
N/A	NSO	Springs	100
N/A	NSO	Special Aquatic Sites	500
N/A	NSO	Inclusional Wetlands	<100 ⁴
N/A	NSO	Erosive/Steep Soils (>15% slopes)	3,400
CSU-16-08	NSO ⁵	Management Area 8D – Natural Heritage Areas	3,900
CSU-16-05	CSU	Grassland Streams	2,600
CSU-16-06	CSU	Grassland Erosion	17,900 ⁶
CSU-16-09	CSU	Grasslands Flood Control and Erosion Control Structures	0 ⁹
CSU-16-07	CSU	River Bottom Areas	0 ⁹
CSU-16-02	N/A	Trails	11,200
CSU-16-03	NSO ⁵	Toledo Bend Reservoir Shoreline	2,000 ⁸
CSU-16-04	NSO ⁵	Sam Rayburn Reservoir Shoreline	400 ⁸
CSU-16-01	CSU	SMZ/Riparian Areas ⁷	35,100
NSO-14-04	N/A	Cross Timbers Research National Area	400
NSO-14-01	NSO	Developed Recreation Areas	3,500
NSO-14-02	NSO	Scenic Areas	3,000
NSO-14-03	NSO	Lake Conroe	4,200 ⁸
TL-15-01	N/A	Turkey nesting areas	34,600

Stipulation Type	Current Management (Acres) ¹	Proposed Action (Acres) ¹
No Surface Occupancy	11,100	28,000
Controlled Surface Use	73,100	63,100
Timing Limitation	34,600	0

¹Acres are calculated for the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas decision area. The decision area consists of Forest Service surface lands that underlie federal mineral estate. Some stipulation acre calculations may overlap.

¹ – Includes the stipulation number from the 1996 Forest Plan

² – Some of the stipulations overlap and exceed the overall NSO, CSU, and TL areas calculated for the NOI where the overlaps were accounted for.

³ – The RCW stipulations require site specific surveys to identify NSO and CSU areas. The 226,700 acres represents the area of Management Area 2 within the Decision Area where the stipulations apply. The acreage is not included in the overall NSO acreage.

⁴ – Inclusional wetlands have not been mapped yet <100 acres is an estimation.

⁵ – These stipulations were converted from CSU under the 1996 Forest Plan to NSO in the Proposed Action since the CSU stipulation actually included NSO restrictions. This includes 6,300 acres.

⁶ – Moderately fragile soils data provided by NRCS is an indicator for grassland erosion areas. There are no fragile soils on the grasslands; Moderately fragile soils on the grasslands are as follows: 1,500 acres on Caddo National Grassland, 16,400 acres on the Lyndon B. Johnson National Grassland.

⁷ – The Streamside Zone/Riparian Areas stipulation was mapped using a 66-foot buffer for intermittent streams and a 100-foot buffer for perennial streams. This stipulation requires field surveys to verify mapping prior to ground disturbance.

⁸ – In some instances larger reservoirs may have fewer acres compared to the smaller reservoirs. This is because acre calculations are based on the decision area, not the actual size of the reservoir.

⁹ – There are no river bottom areas or grassland flood control and erosion control structures mapped that overlap with the decision area.