

Questions and Answers for Oil/Gas and Hydraulic Fracturing

Why does the Forest Service involve the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Forest Planning?

By federal law, BLM has jurisdiction over federal minerals such as oil and gas; therefore, the Forest Service cooperates with BLM to make sure that any environmental consequences of mineral exploration or development are assessed, and the public is given an opportunity to comment on such before any decisions are made.

How will the Forest Service determine if there is a potential for oil and gas production on National Forest system lands?

The Forest Service already has a 2008 study by BLM that did not predict any development activities for oil and gas within the next 10 years. The Forest Service will ask the BLM to provide updated information regarding mineral potential.

If no oil and gas reserves are identified, will hydraulic fracturing still take place?

No, if there are no oil and gas reserves, there is no need to utilize processes like hydraulic fracturing to extract those reserves because they do not exist.

How will the Plan address hydraulic fracturing?

Due to no current oil and gas production in western North Carolina and no predictions of oil and gas reserves, the Forest Service does not see a need to make any decisions regarding oil and gas leasing availability or any subsequent activities like hydraulic fracturing in the revised Forest Plan, and will, instead, reserve that right if and until any interest in leasing for oil and gas is expressed. If such interest materializes in the future, the Forest Service would conduct intensive environmental reviews, including opportunities for public comment, prior to making any decisions that would open Forest Service lands to oil and gas leasing.

If the Forest Plan is silent on hydraulic fracturing isn't that the same thing as implying that hydraulic fracturing could occur?

No, it simply means that the time is not ripe for a decision because there is no interest and, based on existing information available, there is little to no potential for any activity in the future. If that situation changes in the future, and it is determined that potential does exist and interest in exploration or development activities is expressed, then at that time the Forest Service will conduct an analysis to determine which lands, if any, would be available for leasing and subsequent exploration/development activities. No exploration/development activities can take place until the Forest Service conducts the leasing availability analysis.