



File Code: 1570
15-02-00-0065-219
Date: May 11, 2015

Christopher G. Seldin
Assistant County Attorney
Pitkin County
530 East Main Street, Suite 302
Aspen, Colorado 81611-1948

Dear Mr. Seldin:

On February 6, 2015, you filed an objection on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners of Pitkin County regarding the White River National Forest's *Oil and Gas Leasing Decision*. The legal notice for that project was published in the *Glenwood Springs Post Independent* on December 12, 2014, which initiated the 60-day objection period. Your objection was timely. This letter is my written response to that objection, as required by 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 219.56(g).

To satisfy 36 CFR 219.57(a), an objection resolution meeting was held with the objectors in Glenwood Springs, Colorado on April 27, 2015. You attended that meeting along with other objectors. I was in attendance as was Scott Fitzwilliams, Supervisor of the White River National Forest and staff from both the forest and the Rocky Mountain Regional Office. We were unable to resolve your objections at that meeting.

Project Subject to Objection

The White River National Forest proposes to make portions of that forest available for oil and gas leasing, to adopt stipulation requirements for use on those lands, to close other portions of the forest to oil and gas leasing, and to amend the White River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP).

Three alternatives were considered in detail in this project's final environmental impact statement. (FEIS) Those alternatives included:

- Alternative A – No Action (current management);
- Alternative B (Scenario 1 & 2) – No New Leasing;
- Alternative C (Scenario 1 & 2) – Proposed Action.

Scenario 1 assumes the 39 leased/undeveloped parcels would expire or terminate and subsequently be closed to future leasing through management direction (Alternative B) or a combination of closed to future leasing through management direction and available for lease (Alternative C).

Scenario 2 assumes the 39 leased/undeveloped parcels would not expire and would be developed under the 1993 WRNF Oil and Gas Leasing stipulations and/or stipulations they were leased under.



As detailed in the Draft Record of Decision (DROD) for this project, a combination of Alternatives B and C was selected for implementation.

Objection Responses

Following are summaries of the objection issues, paraphrased from the actual objections filed by the addressee. The agency response then follows each summarized issue.

Objection Issue 1: Your objection alleges that there is no analysis specific to the selected alternative.

Objection Response – The FEIS contains extensive analysis of the expected effects of implementing either Alternative B or Alternative C. (FEIS Chapter 3) The selected alternative falls between Alternatives B and C in scope and effect. The expected environmental consequences were, therefore, completely analyzed. However, the effects of the selected alternative, which falls within the range of Alternatives B and C, are not clearly displayed.

Suggested Remedies:

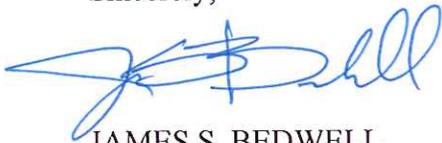
In your objection, you suggested that the FEIS be updated to describe the selected, combined alternative and to evaluate the specifics of that alternative.

Conclusion:

Based on my review of your objection, the FEIS, and objection record, I find no violation of law, regulation, or policy. However, I agree that the Forest Service should better describe the selected alternative, better describe how the expected effects of the alternative were considered, and determine if there are any unique effects created by combining parts of two alternatives that require further analysis. By copy of this letter I am instructing the Responsible Official, Forest Supervisor Scott G. Fitzwilliams to address this issue by more clearly displaying the effects of the selected alternative in the Final ROD. As required by 36 CFR 219.58(a), Forest Supervisor Fitzwilliams cannot sign a decision for this project until all instructions have been addressed. This response is not subject to further administrative review by the Forest Service or the Department of Agriculture pursuant to 36 CFR 219.57(b)(3).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this response, please contact Nancy Miller at 303-275-5373 or njmillers@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,



JAMES S. BEDWELL
Acting Deputy Regional Forester
Reviewing Official

cc: Scott Fitzwilliams, Sarah Hankens, Wendy Haskins