



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Region 8, Southern Region  
Supervisor's Office  
National Forests in Alabama

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Thank you for your comments regarding proposed oil and gas leases on the Talladega National Forest. I sincerely appreciate your interest and concern for National Forest lands in Alabama. The response from the community has been overwhelming and I assure you that we take these comments seriously. We work hard in Alabama to restore native ecosystems, provide excellent recreation opportunities, and support local communities and we will continue to work with the public to ensure there is a balance between conservation and resource extraction.

National Forests are managed for a broad range of multiple uses to effectively meet the nation's needs. Oil and gas exploration is important to economic and social development as these products are essential for modern living. Under the federal government's Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970, the Forest Service is directed to provide commodities for current and future generations. Although, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) holds the responsibility for administering subsurface mineral leases on federal land, we remain engaged to accomplish this while continuing to sustain the long-term health and biodiversity of ecosystems. Ordinarily land and surface resources can be protected by proper stipulations; therefore Forest Service policy states that there should be few requests for withdrawals.

Here in Alabama, the determination of which lands would be made available for leasing was included in the Forest's Land and Resources Management Plan that was completed in 2004. The effects of any potential leases were analyzed in the environmental impact statement accompanying the Forest Plan. Additionally, the Forest Service conducts a site specific analysis to evaluate and mitigate environmental effects, after an application for permit is received by BLM from the lease holder and prior to any drilling activities occurring. At that stage the Forest will contact you with project details, and solicit additional comments.

The National Forests in Alabama has offered mineral leases for sale on almost every Forest within Alabama since 1969. Many of these leases have been offered in the past with no bidders. Statewide we currently have 77,305 acres under oil and gas leases and three active wells on National Forest lands. The Forest Service has a long history of working closely with the BLM on all oil and gas leasing decisions, as well as positive and productive community dialogue. We are committed to maintaining these successful partnerships.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Steven M. Lohr*  
STEVEN M. LOHR  
Forest Supervisor

