

Notice of Decision
Big Piney Ranger District
Ozark-St Francis National Forests

I have decided to allow Southwestern Energy Company (SWN) to conduct 2-D geophysical exploration (seismic testing) on approximately 5 miles of National Forest lands at the following location; Township (T) 9 North (N), Range (R) 16 West (W), Sections (S) 6, 7, & 18, and T 10 N, R16 W, S 6, 7, 18, 19, 30 & 31. Terms and conditions of the approved NOI and the associated operating plan shall be adhered to by the company during the process. The action approved pertains only to Forest Service lands within the project area.

The proposed action falls within the following category of Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Section 31.2 (8) – Short-term (one year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than one mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads.

Project analysis and scoping did not identify any extraordinary circumstances associated with this project and these actions do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. It was determined that there would be no adverse effects to Threatened and Endangered Species or Their Critical Habitat, Floodplains, Wetlands or Municipal Watersheds, Congressionally Designated Areas, Native American Religious or Cultural Sites, Archaeological Sites or Historic Properties or Areas through approval of the NOI. Because of these findings, this project is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A Heritage Categorical Exclusion and Biological Evaluation have been completed.

The Big Piney Ranger District would like to thank all those who participated in the public involvement process by submitting comments. The comments received and agency responses can be viewed in the Decision Memo posted on the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests website at the following web address:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/osfnf/landmanagement/planning/?cid+stelprd521222>

This decision is subject to appeal by those who are eligible pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11 and the following court ruling; [Sequoia ForestKeeper v. Tidwell, 11-cv-00679-LJO-DLB (E.D. Cal.)] March 2012. If no appeal is received, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may not occur for 15 business days following the date of appeal deciding officer's decision. (36 CFR 215.9)

For further information on the specific activities authorized with this decision or the appeal process contact Mike Mulford at the Jasper district office by phone at 870-446-5122 ext. 5136 or Steve Duzan, Forest Appeals Coordinator, Ozark-St. Francis National Forest, 605 West Main Street, Russellville, AR 72801. Phone (479) 964-7200;