



**United States
Department of the
Interior**



**Office of Surface Mining
Reclamation and
Enforcement**

**1999 Broadway, Suite 3320
Denver, CO 80202-3050**



**Montana Department of
Environmental Quality**

**PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901**

January 5, 2018

Dear Interested Parties,

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) Western Region have prepared a joint Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Western Energy Company's (Western Energy) proposed new permit area (C2011003F), known as Area F (project or project area), at the existing Rosebud Mine, which surrounds the city of Colstrip, Montana. The proposed project area is located in Rosebud and Treasure Counties about 12 miles west of Colstrip (see attached figure). If DEQ approves the proposed permit and the DOI Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals (ASLM) approves the federal mining plan as proposed, then 6,746 permit acres would be added to the Rosebud Mine; however, Western Energy does not propose to increase the total annual production output of the mine.

Mining operations in the project area, which would commence after all permits and approvals have been secured and a reclamation and performance bond has been posted, would last 19 years, and about 70.8 million tons of recoverable coal would be removed. As with other permit areas of the Rosebud Mine, all coal mined in the project area would be sold and combusted at the Colstrip and Rosebud Power Plants. The area of disturbance within the project area would be 4,260 acres.

The EIS evaluates the environmental impacts resulting from the project, pursuant to the requirements of the Montana Environmental Policy Act and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The EIS analyzes in detail the proposed project, known as the Proposed Action (Alternative 2), along with No Action (Alternative 1). In addition, one action alternative (Alternative 3), which modifies the Proposed Action to include additional environmental protection measures above those required under the Montana Strip and Underground Mine Reclamation Act, is also analyzed.

The EIS will help DEQ managers make a more fully informed decision regarding two other Western Energy applications: 1) an application for a new Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit MT-0031828 for project area outfalls that would discharge into West Fork Armells Creek, and 2) an application to modify Montana Air Quality Permit #1570-07 to include Area F.

The EIS will help OSMRE prepare the Mining Plan Decision Document (MPDD) for the DOI ASLM recommending approval, disapproval, or conditional approval of the Area F mine plan. A MPDD will be prepared because Western Energy's proposed project constitutes a major revision to the current Rosebud Mine operations. The Bureau of Land Management is a cooperating agency on the EIS because it is the federal agency responsible for leasing federal coal lands under the Mineral Leasing Act.

The Draft EIS can be downloaded from DEQ's web page (<http://deq.mt.gov/Public/eis>) or from OSMRE's webpage (<https://www.wrcc.osmre.gov/initiatives/westernEnergy.shtm>). The document will be available to view at the DEQ Headquarters, the OSMRE Western Region, the BLM Miles City Field Office, the BLM State Office, and the Rosebud County Library (addresses and hours of availability are below). For additional information regarding the project or to request a CD version of the Draft EIS, please contact one of the project coordinators: (DEQ) Jen Lane, JLane2@mt.gov, (406) 444-4956; or (OSMRE) Logan Sholar, lsholar@osmre.gov, (303) 293-5036.

Montana DEQ Headquarters (Lee Metcalf Building)
1520 East 6th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-0901
Between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM Monday
through Friday (Closed Saturday and Sunday)

OSMRE, Western Region
1999 Broadway, Suite 3320
Denver, CO 80202
Between the hours of 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM Monday
through Friday (Closed Saturday and Sunday)

BLM Miles City Field Office
111 Garryowen Road
Miles City, MT 59301
Between the hours of 7:45 AM and 4:30 PM Monday
through Friday (Closed Saturday and Sunday)

BLM State Office, Billings, MT
5001 Southgate Drive
Billings, MT 59101
Between the hours of 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM Monday
through Friday (Closed Saturday and Sunday)

Rosebud County Library
201 North 9th Avenue
Forsyth, MT 59327-0007
Between the hours of 11:00 AM and 7:00 PM Monday
through Thursday; 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM Friday; 10:00
AM to 1:00 PM Saturday (Closed Sunday)

You are invited to direct your comments on the Draft EIS to: ATTN: Western Energy Area F EIS C/O: Nicole Bauman, ERO Resources Corporation, 1842 Clarkson Street, Denver, CO 80218 or electronically to <http://svc.mt.gov/deq/publiccomment> or emailed to western-energy-area-f-eis@eroresources.com; ensure the subject line reads: ATTN: Western Energy Area F EIS. All comments must be received or postmarked by February 19, 2018, to be considered. All comments become part of the public record associated with this project and are available for public review, along with the name(s) of the commenter(s). Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215.12.

A public meeting will be held on February 13, 2018, to allow the public to ask resource specialists questions and submit comments on the Draft EIS. The meeting will be held at the Colstrip High School Auditorium located at 5000 Pine Butte Drive, Colstrip, MT from 3 PM to 7 PM. The meeting will be conducted in an open house style format and will include informational displays and areas where attendees may record and submit written comments. At 5 PM, DEQ and OSMRE staff will explain the EIS public involvement process and provide a brief description of the proposed project. Following this introduction, attendees will have the opportunity to provide oral testimony until 6:15 PM. Oral testimony will be limited to three minutes per person. A transcriber will record the oral comments for the project record. Interpreters will be available, upon request. If you require reasonable accommodation to attend the meeting, please contact Logan Sholar or Jen Lane (contact information listed above).

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Shaeffer, Manager
Field Operations Branch
OSMRE Western Region



Tom Livers
Director
Montana Department of Environmental Quality

Enclosed: Project Map

