

# Rand's Butte Project Scoping Notice

## Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management Pinedale Field Office (BLM) is soliciting public assistance to identify resource issues associated with support facilities for the Cimarex Energy, Inc (Cimarex) Rand's Butte Project (RBP) in southwestern Sublette County, Wyoming. The RBP is a natural gas and helium gas resource development project involving state, private, and federal land.

In early August, Cimarex was granted a Wyoming Special Use Lease for development of a new Methane and Helium Recovery Facility (M&HRF) to be located on State of Wyoming land within the project area and is seeking approval of Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) and a variety of rights of way (ROWs) from BLM in support of the project. The Project would implement and test new technological advances in processing the complex gas mixture composed of hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S), carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), natural gas, and helium from the Madison formation. The life of the Project is estimated to be 40 years.

Specific project components proposed on BLM-administered lands would include the directional drilling and completion of four (4) raw gas supply wells and one (1) H<sub>2</sub>S/CO<sub>2</sub> injection well from an existing well pad; as well as the construction and operation of a high voltage 230-kV electrical transmission line, natural gas and helium pipelines, a buried fiber optics data transmission line, upgrading an existing road system, and the installation of an air quality monitoring and weather station. The project would also include the installation and operation of a continuous monitoring and emergency shut-down system for all well, pipelines, and gas processing plants. No new roads or drilling pads would be constructed for the proposed project. The project would utilize existing upgraded and two-track roads for access to the proposed pipeline and overhead transmission line ROW's, wells, and other facilities. One of the APDs has been approved for Cimarex to drill a single well bore into the Madison Formation for additional data gathering purposes in support of the NEPA analysis and the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission injection well permitting processes. The intent of this initial well bore is to collect additional formation structure and pressure data to better refine the formation's capability for re-injection of H<sub>2</sub>S/CO<sub>2</sub> gasses.

In addition to the gas processing facility, a helium liquefaction plant would be located on private land and would be constructed and owned by entities other than Cimarex Energy. A water disposal well would also be developed on State land in conjunction with the processing facility. The M&HRF, helium liquefaction plant, and water disposal well are considered interconnected actions that will be included in the NEPA analysis, although the decisions regarding these actions are outside of federal jurisdiction. The final resulting capacity of the M&HRF would be approximately 200 Million Standard Cubic Feet per Day (MMSCFD), producing both processed and dehydrated natural gas and helium gas for the national markets.

## Project Area

The study area for the Rand's Butte Project is located in entirely within Sublette County, Wyoming, in an area west of Big Piney. The proposed raw gas supply wells would be located on the existing in Township 29 North, Range 114 West, Section 17, which lies approximately 1½ miles east of the Bridger Teton National Forest Boundary. The ROWs would be located between Section 17 and existing facilities near Calpet Road and U.S. Highway 189. Collectively, the federal ROW applications are for approximately 400 acres; however, the total area of the project is approximately 618 acres. The following sections would be intersected by one or more project components: Township 29N, Range

111W (Section 19); Township 29N, Range 112W (Section 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24); Township 29N, Range 113W (Section 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18) and Township 29N, Range 114W (Section 13, 14, 15, 16, 17).

### **Decision to be Made**

The decision to be made by BLM is for the approval of Applications for Permits to Drill for the proposed natural gas and injection wells, as well as the proposed access road, powerline, fiber optic line, the air monitoring station, and natural pipeline and helium pipelines. BLM has no jurisdiction over the facilities proposed to be developed on state or private lands and minerals; however these facilities would be considered interconnected and interrelated actions. As such, these non-federal actions will be considered in the NEPA analysis in order to fully evaluate potential impacts from the entire proposed project. In addition, the analysis will evaluate potential effects from reasonable foreseeable federal and non-federal actions in the general project area.

### **Project Purpose and Need**

The Purpose and Need of the Project is to:

- Implement and test new technological advances in processing the complex sour gas mixture found in the Madison formation.
- Help meet the public's need for a steady new supply of helium and for a dependable and affordable supply of natural gas.

The primary purpose of the Project is to implement and test new technological advances in processing the complex gas mixture composed of hydrogen sulfide, carbon dioxide, natural gas, helium, and other gases found in the Madison formation underlying the project area. The project would test a new cryogenic gas processing technology to separate economical gases from carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulfide. It would also test the process of immediately re-injecting the unwanted acid gases back into the Madison formation without further processing.

BLM has identified the need for implementing and testing new technologies for development of Madison formation mineral reserves in order to protect the public from hazardous gas exposure, reduce land disturbance normally associated with gas drilling and production, and to reduce emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases during gas processing and transport. The Madison formation is a large proven resource for natural gas. Development of large reserves of natural gas and helium from the Madison formation has been hampered by the presence of high concentrations of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, and toxic hydrogen sulfide gas that are difficult and costly to separate, treat, and dispose of safely. Re-injection of hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide needs to be tested to determine if it can reliably protect human health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions traditionally associated with development of the Madison formation.

The secondary purpose of the project is to provide natural gas and helium products to the consumer. The project is needed to bring a steady new supply of commercial helium and natural gas to market to meet current and future demands for scarce natural resources. Helium, which is currently in short supply nationally and internationally, is an inert gas essential to aerospace and research industries. The world's supply of helium is primarily recovered from natural gas reserves in the federal mineral estate, and is managed by the BLM Helium Reserve Program. Helium is a significant component of the gas trapped within the Madison formation and the project may produce approximately 200 MMSCF per year of industrial helium to market, in keeping with the mission of the BLM Helium Reserve Program.

The proposed development would provide additional natural gas to help meet public need. Drilling and production from the proposed wells was been previously authorized in the Riley Ridge Gas Development EIS and Record of Decision (1984), and the Pinedale RMP (1988). The project would result in a maximum production of 200 million cubic feet per day (MMSCD) of processed natural gas.

### **National Environmental Policy Act Compliance**

The proposed project would be analyzed in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). To comply with NEPA and applicable Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations that implement NEPA, the BLM is required to prepare an environmental analysis. The environmental assessment will serve the following purposes:

- to provide the public and governmental agencies with information about the potential environmental consequences of the project and alternatives;
- to identify all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the project and alternatives; and
- to provide the responsible official with information upon which to make an informed decision regarding the project.

One element of the NEPA process is “scoping.” Scoping activities are initiated early in the process to:

- identify reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental analysis;
- identify issues of environmental concern related to the proposed project; and
- determine the depth of analysis for issues addressed in the EA.

This Scoping Statement has been prepared to enable governmental agencies, the general public, and other interested parties to participate in and contribute to the analysis process. Public input is important in establishing the scope of analysis for any NEPA document, and the BLM encourages public participation.

### **Relationship to Existing Plans and Documents**

The document that directs management on federal lands within the PFO is the 1988 approved Record of Decision (ROD) for the Pinedale RMP, as amended. Specific management objectives for ROW applications for electrical transmission lines and pipelines are not specified in the Pinedale RMP except as standard practices, Best Management Practices, and guidelines for surface disturbing activities. Oil and gas development is addressed in the Pinedale RMP. The ROD states that:

The BLM will evaluate industry-proposed measures to protect health and safety through the drilling permit process. Of particular concern will be the requirements of approved contingency plans for hydrogen sulfide release. Requirements of operator could include conducting dispersion analyses to determine ambient hydrogen sulfide concentrations during well blowouts, collecting onsite meteorological data, preparing detailed evacuation plans, and placing offsite warning signs.

The Riley Ridge Project Monitoring Program will be continued. Further monitoring will include gathering of geological data in the Deadline Ridge-Graphite Hollow crucial elk winter range to aid in preparation of the proposed activity plan. Monitoring will be coordinated with other resource monitoring programs such as wildlife, surface and ground water quality, grazing, and cultural resources, as appropriate (BLM, 1988: 16).

The development of the Rand's Butte Project Area is in conformance with the Pinedale RMP and subject to all applicable standard practices, conditions of approval (COAs), Best Management Practices, and mitigation.

The Pinedale RMP is currently under revision with a ROD expected during review period for the Rand's Butte NEPA document. Therefore, the environmental analysis for the Rand's Butte Project would also consider and incorporate any relevant decisions, terms, and conditions of use as described in the revised Pinedale RMP and Record of Decision, when it is made available.

### **Project Description**

Cimarex Energy proposes several interrelated actions that form the Rand's Butte Project. Project components include:

#### **Gas Wells**

Four new large bore wells would be directionally drilled and completed from an existing disturbed surface location adjacent to an existing well (Riley Ridge Unit (RRU) 17-34). These four wells consist of three new Madison producing wells (RRU 16-24; RRU 18-14; RRU 13-14) and one new Madison production/acid gas injection well (RRU 20-14). Directional drilling would be used to reach widely separated subsurface locations. A major rework and recompletion of the existing RRU 10-14 would be accomplished from the existing disturbed well pad. The four production wells and single gas injection well are the full anticipated extent of production drilling and/or recompletion proposed for the Project.

A water-based mud system would be used for the drilling operations. Drilling mud and cuttings would be placed in an earthen reserve pit with an impermeable synthetic liner to prevent seepage into the soil. A segmented reserve pit system would be used at the multi-well pad, allowing one segment to be used during the drilling of each well, then closed following well completion to reduce exposure of drilling fluids at the site. Reserve pits would be managed to deter wildlife, livestock, and bird entry. If present, hydrocarbons floating on the surface of the reserve pit would be removed as soon as possible after detection. Reserve pit fluids would be allowed to dry by evaporation and would be removed as soon as practical. Following successful completion of each well, the reserve pit would be closed using a method approved by the Wyoming Oil and Gas Commission (WOGC).

Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plans would be developed and maintained during drilling operations. The average water estimate for the drilling and completion of a well is 10,000 to 15,000 barrels which would be obtained from permitted municipal sources, private water rights, and other surface water sources. Drilling of a drilling water supply well is not planned.

Well completion would involve perforation or stimulation of productive zones. Such operations, if conducted, require heavy equipment to be brought to the well site. Hydraulic fracture stimulation of the Madison Formation is not anticipated. Well cleanup and initial fluid flowback would go directly to the central Methane and Helium Recovery Facility (M&HRF) using flareless flowback technology. Limited flaring of flowback gas using assist gas and in an elevated flare may be required at the M&HRF to ensure flow continuity from the formation to the gas recovery units and safe disposal of the limited startup gas flows.

Drilling operations would proceed at the rate of one well per year over a four-year period, with seasonal stipulations. Approximately 110 to 120 heavy truckloads of equipment and materials would be required to complete the drilling of each well. Total rig-up activities, including rig move to location and installation of ancillary facilities would take approximately 10 to 14 days to complete per well.

Directional drilling of the well would take approximately 138 days, with completion operations adding an additional 25 to 35 days. Remote monitoring technology would be used where feasible to reduce the amount of traffic associated with drilling. The extent of additional traffic would depend on the phase of the drilling operation, but would not exceed 50 total vehicles per day during peak activity during rig moving, with 20 to 30 truckloads anticipated for normal drilling and completion operations. No more than two drill rigs would be employed at any one time.

No condensate storage, metering or compressors would be installed at the well sites. Well production would flow in corrosion resistant alloy (CRA) flowlines from the well heads to the M&HRF for processing.

### **Acid Gas (H<sub>2</sub>S/CO<sub>2</sub>) Injection Well**

The Acid Gas Injection well would return 100 percent of the H<sub>2</sub>S and CO<sub>2</sub> back into the Madison formation. Acid gas re-injection is proposed to protect the public from exposure to sour gas, preserve reservoir energy; minimize drainage to offset units; and preserve federal options to produce, process, and sell carbon dioxide and/or hydrogen sulfide in the future.

### **Produced Water Injection Well**

The gas production wells are expected to produce approximately 25 gallons per minute (gpm) or 850 barrels per day (bpd)) of byproduct water that would exceed standards established by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) for livestock use. One new water injection well would be drilled on State lands at an existing and unused well pad, RRU 24-16, to a depth of approximately 13,100 feet, for disposal of Madison waters into the Nugget formation. Water would be removed from the produced gas and piped directly to the injection well without storage in reservoirs or ponds.

### **Well Flowlines**

The Project includes construction of well production flowlines, including a water injection pipeline to RRU 24-16 WDW, a gas injection pipeline/flowline to RRU 20-14, and service/utility pipelines for each of the five producing gas wells. Typical service circuits would be buried along with the production flow lines in corridors established along the side of existing access roads from the wells to the new Riley Ridge Methane-Helium Recovery Facility. Flowline ROWs would also include instrumentation, control and medium voltage electrical service circuits between the plant site and the wells, allowing continuous remote monitoring of the wells.

### **Methane & Helium Recovery Facility (M&HRF)**

A Special Land Use Permit has been obtained from the State of Wyoming for a M&HRF to be constructed and operated by Cimarex Energy. The facility would be located on a 30-acre leased parcel of State Land, approximately 17 miles west of Big Piney, Wyoming, at Zone 12 UTM 547468.8; 4705517.4. The recovery facility would occupy approximately ten-acres of State Land.

Facility development, including all buildings and foundations, would coincide with the completion of two production wells and one injection well. Production would begin while drilling continues on the final two wells. Initial production from the M&HRF is estimated to be 100 MMSCFD. Additional compression and processing capability would be added at the facility as the final two production wells are completed to meet increased processing requirements. The final processing capacity of the facility would be approximately 200 MMSCFD.

The facility would have seven buildings, with possible future added structures, depending on design. Currently planned buildings include a Control Room/Office/Shop; two Motor Control Centers;

Compressor Building; Process Building; Sour Gas Building; and an Injection Pump Building. A warehouse and/or electrical substation switchgear/control building may also be required. A domestic water well would be permitted to service normal plant operations. Steel monopoles or other high-voltage transmission structures would provide incoming 230-kV power. A dual train electrical high voltage substation would be installed to step-down incoming power.

The M&HRF includes, but is not limited to, the following systems: An inlet area with corrosion resistant equipment for the handling of production fluids; a proprietary cryogenic nitrogen rejection and crude helium recovery process including cold boxes and heat exchangers to separate nitrogen, helium and methane gases; a propane refrigeration system to assist in cryogenic processing and other process uses; a proprietary sour gas removal process; a molecular sieve gas dehydration system ensures continuous operation of the dehydration process; and a heat transfer fluid heater would provide all process heating in the plant. Various above ground storage tanks with containment dikes and process pressure vessels would be present on the site.

General process features include: Inlet Separation; Dehydration; Propane Refrigeration; sour gas removal; cryogenic processing; communications and data infrastructure; and various electric motor driven pumping and compression services. The M&HRF would also have an emergency flare stack with pilots; an emergency generator and other service and utility systems. The Facility would be served by the 230-kV transmission line with a dual train electrical transformer to power various large electric motor-driven compression systems to deliver processed methane and helium to sales gas lines, and drive the internal recycle compressors. Following cryogenic treatment and separation of economic gas streams, produced water would be separated and pumped into the water injection pipeline and the carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulfide would be pumped into the acid gas injection system.

One emergency flare stack would be installed, with lighted pilot burners intended to ignite and burn off gas only in emergency and in limited startup flaring situations. The flare stack would be designed as smokeless and would use plant sales gas to assist in thermal destruction of sour gas during any limited sour gas flaring.

Communications infrastructure may include a microwave tower and/or radio antennas; small satellite communication dishes or boosted cellular phone systems, and security fencing with a minimum of 8 foot chain link with 3 strand security wire and gates would surround the developed facility. Access roads would employ extensive signage to warn the public of ongoing sour gas operations. In the event of a power failure, an emergency generation system would provide power to critical control systems so that operations could be safely stabilized and, if necessary, shutdown.

The boundary of the M&HRF would be security fenced and access controlled at all times. All aboveground components would be painted a BLM-accepted environmental color that blends with the surrounding landscape, except for structures that require hot or cold insulation and subsequent metal cover and structures that require safety coloration to comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations.

### **Electrical Transmission Line**

A 230-kV 3-phase power line would be constructed on federal, state, and private land from the high-voltage substation located within the M&HRF to the Chimney Butte Substation located south of Calpet Road (Sublette County road 134), near U.S. Highway 189. The permanent ROW width would be 150 feet. No permanent access road would be maintained within the ROW. The transmission line would be constructed, owned, and operated by Rocky Mountain Power.

The single-circuit 230 kV power line would be constructed above ground on wooden H-frame structures. Typical structures would be approximately 70 to 100 feet-tall, located at intervals of 600 to 1000-feet. Angles in the line may require a guyed triple-pole configuration for reinforcement. Steel monopole or A-frame structures may be required at designated locations

Three-phase power would be installed on three conductor lines constructed and energized as a single-circuit 230kV. An electrical relaying and protection system would be installed to serve and protect the electrical transmission line. The transmission line would have appropriate beginning- and end-of-line circuit breakers and other protective devices and would be constructed using standard practices and raptor protection features.

The construction of the high-voltage transmission line would follow a general sequence with structure site clearing and grading, pole pad construction, hole auguring and pole setting, followed by conductor cable installation and tensioning. The authorized ROW would be used to reach pole locations and pulling/tensioning and guard structures inaccessible by existing roads. At each pole structure site, 50 by 50 foot pads would be constructed to facilitate the safe operation of equipment. The pads would be cleared of vegetation only to the extent necessary for surveying, vehicle and heavy equipment safety, and conductor clearance. After line construction, all pads would be graded and reseeded to mitigate surface disturbance. Pole setting would occur simultaneously at a number of sites on different sections of the line. Conductor would be strung using powered pulling equipment at one end and powered braking or tensioning equipment at the other end. Sites for tensioning equipment and pulling equipment would be approximately 2 miles apart depending on the terrain and line angles. Transmission line construction is expected to take 12 weeks, require 150 to 200 heavy truckloads, and utilize a work crew of 30 to 35 people.

### **Helium Pipeline**

A crude helium (helium mixed with nitrogen) dry gas pipeline is proposed to transport crude helium from the M&HRF to a helium liquefaction facility (HLF) to be constructed, owned, and operated by Air Products on private land south of Big Piney, WY, near the intersection of Calpet Road and US Highway 189.

The helium pipeline would operate at 500 to 700 pound-force per square inch gauge (psig) with a pipeline design pressure of 1480 psig at 100 degrees Fahrenheit (F). The operating temperature of the helium pipeline would average 60 degrees F. The helium pipeline would be constructed of 6-inch diameter carbon steel pipe, with the outside diameter increasing to 8-inches for a segment between Rand's Butte and the Air Products Helium Liquefaction Facility. The crude helium pipeline would not carry toxic or flammable substances and would only transport a crude helium and nitrogen gas mixture. The crude helium pipeline would be buried at a minimum depth of 3-feet and a maximum depth of eight-feet to top of pipe.

The permanent width of the helium pipeline ROW would be 50 feet, with a 50-foot adjacent ROW for temporary access and staging. The crude helium pipeline and natural gas sales pipelines may be located in overlapping or adjacent ROW to minimize surface disturbance.

### **Natural Gas Pipeline**

A new natural gas sales pipeline would transport processed natural gas from the M&HRF to a delivery point generally east of the plant at the Williams Natural Gas Company (WNG) Hare's Ear Compressor Station, approximately 7 miles west of Big Piney.

The natural gas pipeline would operate at 1000 to 1200 psig with a pipeline design pressure of 1480 psig at 100 degrees Fahrenheit (F). The operating temperature of the natural gas sales pipeline would average 60 degrees F. The natural gas pipeline would be constructed of 12-inch diameter carbon steel, with an outside diameter that may increase to 16-inches for a segment between Rand's Butte and the pipeline terminus at the William's pipeline ROW, pending final design.

The natural gas sales pipeline would not carry toxic substances and would only transport dry processed natural gas. The pipeline would be buried at a minimum depth of three-feet and a maximum of eight-feet to top of pipe. The permanent width of the natural gas pipeline ROW would be 50 feet, with a 50-foot adjacent ROW for temporary access and staging. The crude helium pipeline and natural gas sales pipelines may be located in overlapping or adjacent ROW to minimize surface disturbance.

Pipeline construction would use adjacent or overlapping ROWs wherever possible, and the fiber optic line and helium pipeline would share the same trench. Bulldozers and/or road graders would first clear vegetation and topsoil. All available topsoil would be removed, stockpiled, and placed where it can be retrieved easily, but does not impede watershed and drainage flows. Pipeline construction is expected to take 6-12 weeks, require 150 to 200 heavy truckloads, and utilize a work crew of 50 to 100 people.

### **Fiber Optic Data Transmission System**

A Cimarex fiber optic data transmission system would be buried within the pipeline ROW between the Ambient Air Monitoring and Weather Station (AAM&WS), each production wellhead, each injection well, the M&HRF continuous monitoring and emergency shut-down.

Fiber optic cable would also be installed for communication and data transfer between the M&HRF and Calpet Road. A permanent ROW width of 50-feet is requested, with expected overlap of this ROW and trench sharing between the fiber optic cable and the helium pipeline. Backup/emergency infrastructure or splicing & cable junction shelters may also be located within this ROW.

### **Transmission line and Pipeline Junction Facility**

Junction facilities would be designed within the approved ROW to minimize future ground disturbing activities by allowing access to Project pipelines and transmission line infrastructure for inspections, future upgrades, or connections. Emergency shutdown valve stations; check valves, emergency vent valves and other devices such as inspection device launching and receiving stations may be installed within the proposed ROWs for both the crude helium and natural gas sales pipelines and/or at the terminal points of such pipelines. Steel A-frame or other structures may be installed at designated locations along the transmission ROW.

### **Road Access**

The project would utilize existing upgraded and two-track roads for access to the all proposed pipeline and overhead transmission line ROW's, all production and injection wells, and the M&HRF, AAM&WS, and helium liquefaction facility. Use and maintenance of these access roads has been previously permitted, and all roads would be maintained using standard equipment and techniques.

Some existing road segments may require upgrading for safe passage of equipment and personnel during the course of construction and operations. Improvements may include minor spot upgrading and ditching to maintain positive drainage away from the travel way, and engineered changes due to horizontal/vertical curves in some areas. Public hazard warning signs would be placed on public roads, and existing locked gates.



Access road initial maintenance is expected to take 3 to 8 weeks, require 70 to 120 heavy truckloads, and utilize a work crew of 10 to 20 people. This work would take place concurrently with the construction of other project components. Road closure for initial road maintenance is not anticipated.

Upon completion of construction activities, Cimarex would conduct maintenance and necessary upgrades on access roads to return them to a working condition similar to or better than the original condition. When maintenance causes damage to existing roads, restoration procedures following completion of repair work would be similar to those during construction.

### **Helium Liquefaction Facility**

A new Helium Liquefaction Facility (HLF) would be constructed on a 10-acre parcel of private land near Calpet Rd. and U.S. Highway 189, south of Big Piney, Wyoming. It would be constructed, owned and operated by Air Products, Inc. In the HLF, nitrogen is separated from the crude gas mixture to purify the helium for sales using cryogenic treatment to liquefy the gas for specialized truck transport. The HLF would contain a truck loading facility. The HLF is designed for initial processing capacity of 200 MMSCF per year of helium. The HLF would not process any toxic or flammable gases. The plant would process only the dry crude helium product.

### **Ambient Air Monitoring and Weather Station (AAM&WS)**

Cimarex would construct, operate, service, and monitor a new AAM&WS to be owned by Cimarex Energy and other Working Interest Owners of the RRU. The AAM&WS would provide a regular link to either the Interagency Monitoring of Protected Environments and/or WDEQ air quality monitoring program real-time data programs. The location would be approximately 500 feet west of the Multi-Well Pad at RRU 17-34. The station would consist of scientific equipment and a small structure, within a permanently enclosed area approximately 400-foot square surrounded by a chain link fence. A permanent ROW width of 50 feet would be required for an electrical service line and communication/data line buried in the centerline of an unimproved access road. Construction of the AAM&WS is expected to take 4 weeks, require 2-5 heavy truckloads, and utilize a work crew of 10-20 people.

### **Snow Control Structures**

A snow control plan including snow fence design and recommendations for improved winter access is being prepared for Cimarex by a recognized expert in the field and registered professional engineer. Snow fencing would be installed adjacent to specific access roads, well pads, and the M&HRF to reduce drifting of snow, reduce requirements for snow removal, and improve winter operations and access.

### **Construction Practices**

Construction would commence following APD or ROW approval and Notice to Proceed, subject to stipulations and/or conditions of approval. Approximately 28 months of continuous construction is anticipated in order to complete all components of the project. The construction period may be extended to account for seasonal stipulations. Drilling and construction of many of the interrelated project components and facilities would take place concurrently. As many as 150 construction workers may be present on the project area during certain periods of intensive construction, although they would be dispersed among various locations in the 19-mile Project corridor. Industry standard construction management strategies would be employed to track and manage several construction crews and ensure strict adherence to the all environmental commitments and permit terms and conditions. Additional drilling and minor construction activity would continue for approximately two additional years as the gas processing is tested and final wells are drilled and completed, involving crews of 25 to 50 persons working primarily at the well pads and within the M&HRF.

Drilling would be conducted in compliance with all Federal Oil and Gas regulations and Onshore Orders, all Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission rules and regulations, and all applicable local rules and regulations. Surface disturbing activities would include trenching, blading, auguring, boring, grading, and vegetation clearing utilizing standard equipment. BLM Best Management Practices would be implemented during all construction phases.

Temporary staging, work, and access would either use BLM ROWs, would require temporary use permits, or may be located on private or state lands. Such areas would be identified in advance and included in the BLM review and permitting process.

Erosion and sedimentation would be controlled by promptly revegetating all disturbed areas in the fall or spring season following construction activity, and by providing surface water drainage controls, such as berms, sediment collection traps, diversion ditches, and erosion stops, as needed. Reclamation efforts would be ongoing, until such time as written approval is received from the BLM. All disturbed areas would be reclaimed and reseeded during frost-free periods in the spring or fall. Topsoil would be conditioned to ensure revegetation, and surfaces recontoured to their pre-construction condition. Seeding would be completed with seed mixtures of plant species indigenous to the area and approved by the BLM or applicable Conservation District.

### **Facility Operations**

Gas production would continue as long as the wells are capable of commercial production and a demand for the gases exist, with maximum natural gas processing capacity approximately 200 MMSCFD, and helium processing capacity at the HLF approximately 100 MMSCF Year.

Above ground production facilities would be painted a BLM-accepted environmental color that blends with the surrounding landscape, except for structures that require safety coloration to comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations. Perimeter fencing with hazard warning would be employed around production facilities, and locked gates at public access points would be employed to reduce public access. Well site pressure control would not be required for this project. Wells, pipelines, and transmission line, and other infrastructure would receive regularly scheduled inspection and maintenance.

The M&HRF would be operated 24 hours per day, 365 days per year and maintained by a crew of approximately 15 to 20 personnel on site during day shifts. The personnel would travel from local communities to the plant site daily. Snow control structures and snow removal programs would be required for winter access. Continuous remote monitoring of the production wells would be maintained from within the M&HRF, with remote emergency shutdown capability. Continuous remote monitoring of the gas recovery and processing equipment would be maintained both within the M&HRF and from the Cimarex Project Office in Big Piney, with remote emergency shutdown capability at either site.

### **Preliminary Resource Management Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities**

The following issues and concerns have been identified by an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists. The issues identified below are not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather a starting point for public input.

- Potential effects to cultural, historical, and paleontological resources
- Potential effects to human health and safety.
- Potential effects to the socioeconomics of Sublette County.
- Potential effects to surface water quality.

- Potential effects to groundwater resources, including springs and wells.
- Potential effects related to reclamation of disturbed areas and control of invasive plants.
- Potential effects to wildlife habitats and populations within the project area, including big game, raptors, and sage-grouse.
- Potential effects to elk crucial winter range and migration corridors.
- Potential effects to threatened, endangered, or candidate plant and animal species.
- Potential conflicts between industrial development activities and recreational opportunities.
- Potential drainage effects within the Riley Ridge Unit fluid mineral estate.
- Potential effects to visual resources.
- Potential cumulative effects of development activities when combined with other ongoing and proposed developments.
- Potential effects to air quality.
- Potential effects to grazing and livestock use.

### **Interdisciplinary Team**

Based upon current understanding of issues, concerns, and opportunities, an interdisciplinary team (IDT) comprised of the following resource specialists has been identified:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • IDT Leader                                      | • Wildlife Biologist                     |
| • Soil Scientist                                  | • Fisheries Biologist                    |
| • Rangeland Management Specialist                 | • Botanist                               |
| • Archaeologist                                   | • Socioeconomic Specialist               |
| • Realty Specialist                               | • Natural Resources Specialist           |
| • Visual Resources and Outdoor Recreation Planner | • Planning and Environmental Coordinator |
| • Hydrologist                                     | • Writer/Editor                          |
| • Petroleum Engineer                              |  |

### **Public Involvement**

Public input is important in establishing the level and scope of the analysis necessary. The public is encouraged to participate in the environmental analysis process to help identify the issues or concerns that should be analyzed, mitigation opportunities, and any other comments or ideas to help ensure the completeness of the analysis process. It would best serve the needs of the BLM for a concentrated analysis if you would submit written scoping comments by close-of-business on October 10, 2008.

### **Scoping Meeting**

A public scoping open house concerning the proposed project will be held at the Marbleton Town Hall, 10700 Highway 189, Marbleton, WY from 3:00 PM to 7:30 PM on Monday, September 29, 2008.

Please submit your written comments to:

Chuck Otto, Field Manager,  
BLM Pinedale Field Office  
PO Box 768

Pinedale, Wyoming 82941  
Fax: 307-367-5329  
Email: pinedale\_wymail@blm.gov

### **Initial Mailing List**

The initial mailing distribution for this Scoping Notice includes the following agencies, organizations, and media, in addition to leaseholders and individuals.

#### Federal Agencies

BLM Helium Reserve Office	U.S. EPA, Region 8
BLM State Reservoir Management Group	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
USDA Bridger-Teton National Forest Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	USDI Bureau of Reclamation
Federal Aviation Administration	USDI Minerals Management Service
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	USDI National Park Service-Long Distance Trail Office
National Trust for Historic Preservation	USDI Office of the Regional Solicitor
Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance	Western Wyoming Resource Conservation & Development
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	
U.S. Department of Energy	

#### State Agencies/Boards

Air Quality Advisory Board	Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
Game and Fish Commission	Planning Office
Department of Agriculture	State Forestry Division
Department of Environmental Quality	State Historic Preservation Office
Game and Fish Department	State Lands and Investments
Department of Revenue	State Parks and Cultural Resources Trails Business Council
Department of Transportation	Livestock Board
State Engineer's Office	Wyoming Outfitters and Guides Association
State Geological Survey	Wyoming State Library
Groundwater Advisory Committee	
Natural Gas Pipeline Authority	

#### Local Government

Sublette County Commissioners  
Sublette County Conservation District  
Sublette County Emergency Response  
Sublette County Extension  
Sublette County Weed and Pest  
Town of Big Piney  
Town of Marbleton  
Town of Pinedale

#### Educational Institutions, Universities, and Museums

Sublette County Library	Univ. of WY Natural Diversity Database
Library-University of Wyoming	Western Wyoming Community College

Wyoming Assoc. of Professional  
Historians  
Wyoming Assoc. of Prof. Archaeologists  
Friends of Fort Bridger  
Greater Yellowstone Coalition  
Land and Water Fund for the Rockies  
Medicine Butte Wildlife Association  
Mormon Trails Association  
National Pony Express Association  
(NPEA)  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
National Wildlife Federation  
Overland Trail Corp.  
People for the USA  
Project for the West  
People for Wyoming  
Public Lands Foundation  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Safari Club International  
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

Southwest WY Mule Deer Foundation  
Stop Drilling-Save the Bridger-Teton  
The Alliance for Historic Wyoming  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Wilderness Society  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation  
Partnership  
Trout Unlimited  
Upper Green River Valley Coalition  
Western Watersheds Project, Wyoming  
Western WY Mule Deer Foundation  
Wildlife Management Institute  
Wyoming Advocates for Animals  
Wyoming Conservation Voters  
Wyoming Outdoor Council  
Wyoming People for the USA  
Wyoming Sportsmen Association  
Wyoming Wilderness Association  
Wyoming Wildlife Federation

Native American Tribes:

Eastern Shoshone Tribe  
Northern Arapaho Tribe  
Northern Ute Tribe  
Shoshone-Bannock Tribe

State Elected Officials

Governor Dave Freudenthal  
Representative Kathy Davison  
Representative Monte Olsen

Trade Groups

Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States  
Petroleum Association of Wyoming  
Public Lands Advocacy  
Southwest Wyoming Industrial Association  
Southwest Wyoming Mineral Association  
Wyoming Business Alliance

Federal Elected Officials

U.S. Representative Barbara Cubin  
U.S. Senator John Barrasso  
U.S. Senator Mike Enzi

Media

Casper Star-Tribune  
Green River Star  
Kemmerer Gazette

KPIN  
Pinedale Round-up  
Rock Springs Daily Rocket Miner  
Sublette County Examiner

Livestock Operators

Milleg Partnership (Bill Milleg)  
JF Ranch (Jay McGinnis)  
Budd and Sons Land Co. (Dan S. Budd)  
Cross Lazy 2 Land and Livestock (Robert V & Timothy S. Thompson)  
Rocking Chair Cattle Co. (John J. Chrisman)  
Miller Land & Livestock Co. (Mike Miller)  
Harry and Pamela Hamilton  
Cumberland & Western Resources, LLC