



File Code: 2880-2

Date: May 8, 2008

**Notice of Opportunity to Comment  
Nucla North 2-D Seismic Survey**

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG) received a proposal from Veritas DGC Land Inc. (Veritas) to conduct a geophysical exploration survey on the Uncompahgre Plateau. The “Nucla North 2-D Seismic Survey” is generally located about 10 to 20 miles north and northeast of the town of Nucla in Montrose County, Colorado and includes portions of the Norwood, Ouray, and Grand Valley Ranger Districts (please refer to map attachment). The proposed area includes Forest Service, BLM, and private lands. Portions of the project occurring on private lands are not subject to Forest Service or BLM authorization.

This letter and attached map provide you with detailed information about the project and public involvement. This opportunity to comment will serve as both scoping under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, and the comment period required in 36 CFR 215.3.

**Purpose and Need**

The purpose of the Forest Service action is to facilitate exploration of energy resources on National Forest System lands. The project responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the GMUG Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) to encourage environmentally sound energy development (LRMP, page II-61), and to authorize geophysical operations on unclassified lands with terms and conditions to prevent or control adverse impacts on surface resources and uses (LRMP, page III-54).

The Forest Service has identified a need to authorize Veritas to conduct a gravity survey on portions of the Norwood, Ouray, and Grand Valley Ranger Districts, subject to terms and conditions of a USDI-BLM & USDA-FS ‘Authorization to Conduct Oil and Gas Geophysical Exploration Operations’.

**Proposed Action**

The project would include drilling approximately 700 shot holes (based on 220 foot spacing) to a depth of 40 feet along the source lines, using a buggy mounted or rotary drill rig. All drilling would occur on or adjacent to existing roads. No new road construction or reconstruction will occur.

It includes seismic source lines on seven road segments totaling about 30 miles along portions of Forest System Development Road (FSDR) corridors 402, 503, 505, 505.1A, 600, 663, and 663.1A as follows:

<u>FSDR</u>	<u>miles</u>
402	14.5
503	5.5
505	5.0
505.1A	0.5
600	1.0
668	2.0
668.1A	1.0



Approximately 2.5 miles of receiver line to record reflected sound waves will be hand placed in two separate lines oriented roughly north and south within T48N R15W, Section 31 and T48N R13W, Section 19; on the western and eastern ends of the project area respectively. Receiver related equipment will be dropped by helicopter prior to layout. All helicopter related activities will be approved by the Forest Aviation officer.

The project will occur in August and September of 2008, and will take approximately 25-34 days to complete. The estimated time required to complete individual steps follows: survey location of shot-hole and receiver locations, 5-7 days; shot-hole drilling, 14 -18 days; and finally the receiver line layout/recording/ and cleanup, 6-9 days.

### **Participation in the Planning Process**

At this time our review does not indicate that any extraordinary circumstances are present, or that the proposed action will result in a significant effect to the environment. We anticipate the environmental analysis will be documented as a categorical exclusion (CE). The action meets the criteria under category 8 section 31.2 as described in Forest Service Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook 1909.15, Amendment No.1909.15-2007-1.

Extraordinary circumstances include, but are not limited to, the presence of steep slopes or highly erosive soils; threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat; floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds; Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas; inventoried roadless areas; Research Natural Areas; or Native American religious or cultural sites, archeological sites, or historic properties or areas.

A Decision Memo documenting the decision will be issued after the CE has been completed. The Responsible Official for this project is Kendall Clark, Deputy Forest Supervisor for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests. A Legal Notice of Decision will be published at the time in the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel.

The opportunity to comment serves two purposes: 1) as scoping for this project under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and 2) as the comment period required at 36 CFR 215.3. The opportunity to comment on the Proposed Action ends 30 days following the date of publication of the legal notice of opportunity to comment in the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel. Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted. In order to be eligible to appeal the Forest Service final decision on this project, individuals must comment during this 30 day comment period per 36 CFR 215.6(a)(3). Only those individuals that submit timely comments will be accepted as appellants.

Mail your comments to:

Ouray Ranger District  
Attention: Warren Young  
2505 South Townsend Ave.  
Montrose, CO 81401.

Fax comments to: (970) 240-5367

E-mail comments to: [comments-rocky-mountain-gmug-ouray@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-rocky-mountain-gmug-ouray@fs.fed.us)

When responding to the proposal, please indicate if you wish to be put on the mailing list to receive further information on this project. Only those indicating a desire to be added to the mailing list will receive further mailings.

I appreciate your interest and involvement in the management of the Uncompahgre National Forest. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Warren Young, South Zone Minerals Administrator, at (970) 240-5411. If you have comments, please submit them in writing within the next 30 days.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Kendall Clark*  
KENDALL CLARK  
Deputy Forest Supervisor

Enclosure