

Date: 5 September 2007

News Release
South Unit Oil and Gas Development Project
Environmental Impact Statement

The Ashley National Forest is starting environmental analysis on a proposal from Berry Petroleum Company (Berry) to drill up to 400 oil and gas wells, within a 25,900 acre area of the South Unit of the Ashley National Forest. The bulk of the proposed development would occur on the northeastern end of the South Unit, between Sowers Canyon and Left Fork Antelope Canyon, within Townships T6S-R5W and T6S R4W, Uintah Special Meridian. Well pad construction would involve about 2.5 acres of surface disturbance per well pad. Approximately 100 miles of new access roads would be needed to reach the proposed well pad sites, in addition to upgrading approximately 21 miles of existing roads. The proposal calls for a 20-year construction and drilling period. The Forest Service must decide whether to allow development to occur as proposed or to allow implementation of a reasonable alternative to the proposed action. The selected alternative will establish the terms, conditions, and mitigations needed to protect surface resources during the proposed oil and gas development.

Because it is likely that the analysis will address controversial issues, and because implementation of the proposal could result in significant impacts, the analysis will be documented in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS for the proposal was published in the Federal Register on August 29, 2007 and may be viewed at the following web address: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/ashley/projects/>

The U.S. Forest Service invites interested and affected individuals to participate in the analysis process by submitting comments on the proposed action, resource issues, and alternatives to be considered. Comments should be received by October 12, 2007. Send your comments to:

David Herron, Project Lead, Ashley National Forest
355 North Vernal Avenue
Vernal, Utah 84078
Phone: (435) 781-5218
Email: comments-intermtn-ashley-duchesne@fs.fed.us.

Comments may also be hand delivered to the above address during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday, excluding federal holidays. Hand delivered comments must be time and date stamped at our office by close of business on October 12, 2007. It would be most useful for the Forest to receive your electronic comments in ms word (*.doc) or rich text format (*.rtf). Those using electronic means may submit a scanned signature. Otherwise another means of verifying the identity of the individual or organizational representative may be necessary for electronically submitted comments or comments received by phone.

The Ashley National Forest will also be hosting a series of public open house meetings to provide more information on this project, and to give the public an opportunity to submit their comments in person. Dates and locations of meetings are as follows:

September 24, 2007, 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Salt Lake City Library Downtown
Conference Room B
210 East 400 South
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111

September 25, 2007, 4:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Duchesne County Administration Building
Commission Chambers
734 North Center Street
Duchesne, Utah 84021

September 26, 2007, 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Western Park
302 East 400 South
Vernal, Utah 84078

For more information on this project, contact Dave Herron at the address and phone number above, or via email at daherron@fs.fed.us.