

# Los Padres National Forest Oil and Gas Leasing Study

## Quick Facts

### March 2004

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- The Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987 (FOOGLRA), and its implementing regulations, directed the Forest Service to identify lands with potential for oil and gas leasing, and determine if the lands are suitable for leasing, and under what conditions (stipulations which place requirements on operations). Los Padres NF began its required analysis in 1995, and the study has been underway since then. ([Oil and Gas DEIS](#))
- The Forest Service regulations related to FOOGLRA requires the Forest Service to evaluate all lands in Los Padres NF that are *not legally withdrawn* from mineral leasing. Approximately 57% of the 1.76 million acre-Los Padres NF is legally withdrawn from mineral leasing. Withdrawn areas include all ten Congressionally-designated wildernesses (about 875,000 acres), the Sespe Condor Sanctuary, the Sisquoc Condor Sanctuary, the entire Santa Ynez River Watershed and the Big Sur Coastal Zone.
- Of the remaining 760,000 acres required to be studied, approximately 140,000 acres have been identified as having High Oil and Gas Potential (HOGPA), due to the areas' geology, past oil and gas production, proximity to known oil fields and other factors. Most of these HOGPAs are adjacent to producing oilfields north of Santa Paula and Fillmore in Ventura County, and an area south of the Cuyama Valley in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, also near producing oil fields.
- The Los Padres National Forest's current oil and gas leasing study evaluates, as is required by law, a full range of alternatives, ranging from no additional leasing to the maximum leasing allowable by law. One of the options under consideration is "no leasing" or leasing with "no surface occupancy" in all inventoried roadless areas.
- Leasing with "no surface occupancy" means that no surface disturbance or operations, e.g. construction of roads or drilling of wells, are allowed in the area covered by the stipulation. Any oil or gas extracted from the area would need to come from wells directionally drilled from off-site.
- It is important to understand that the area leased does not equate to the surface area that may be developed. For example, if 250,000 acres were to be recommended for leasing with surface occupancy, it is reasonable to expect, based on the professional judgment of knowledgeable geologists, that there would be 63 wells drilled resulting in a total of 45 acres of actual surface disturbance. Thus, the leasing of 250,000 acres with surface occupancy would likely result in a total of 45 acres of surface disturbance. Another example might result in 60,000 acres being recommended for leasing with surface occupancy, which would likely result in the drilling of 30 wells with a total of 20 acres of associated surface disturbance. In other words, leasing of 60,000 acres with surface occupancy would likely result in a total of 20 acres of surface disturbance. Surface disturbance would include well sites and all associated access roads, pipelines, and powerlines.
- The current Los Padres study will not directly result in any drilling or other ground disturbing activities. It is important to note that any possible future activity would require additional site-specific environmental analysis, including public review, and would be required to be in compliance with all applicable laws, including the Endangered Species Act and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act.

- A draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) was issued for public review in December 2001. ***We expect the Final EIS to be completed, and a decision announced, in late spring 2004.*** The decision will determine which lands are available for leasing, and under what terms and conditions the leases could be issued. The Forest Supervisor will forward his or her decision to the USDI Bureau of Land Management (BLM) who will decide which areas to offer for lease based on the amount of interest expressed.
- Oil and gas has been produced from Los Padres National Forest for more than 100 years. There are 21 oil and gas leases on 5,600 acres that contain about 180 wells and associated facilities. The Sespe, Upper Ojai, and Cuyama oil fields are historic and currently active producers of over 500,000 barrels of oil per year from federal lands. We manage these fields in cooperation with the BLM.
- The technology and environmental protections associated with oil exploration, production and land rehabilitation has improved greatly in the past several decades.
- Los Padres National Forest is managed primarily for its watershed and recreation resources, wilderness, and habitat for plants and wildlife, including T&E species. However, as with all national forests, the Los Padres is managed for *multiple uses*; examples of multiple uses are mineral resources, livestock grazing, utility rights-of-way and communications/electronics sites that support neighboring urban areas.
- With its diverse geology and associated mineral resources, Los Padres National Forest has a long history of mining for a variety of resources including gold and mercury; oil and gas; high quality metallurgical, chemical and cement grade carbonate rocks, borates, phosphates; and mineral materials such as clay, crushed sand, gravel and landscape rock.
- Unless withdrawn from mineral entry, national forest system lands are open to location and mineral claiming under the General Mining Law of 1872 and the Mineral Leasing Act. The Department of Interior and Congress have the authority to withdraw NFS lands from locatable mineral entry. Congressional approval is required for withdrawals larger than 5,000 acres. Withdrawals are subject to valid existing rights at the time of the withdrawal.