

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Bakersfield Field Office**

**Environmental Assessment
Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

**Holmes Western Oil Corporation
Ten Applications for Permit to Drill in Midway Sunset
DOI-BLM-CA-C060-2024-0060-EA**

Background

On 10/17/2022, Holmes Western Oil Corporation (Holmes Western) submitted ten (10) Applications for Permit to Drill (APD) to drill Wells: USL 17-143, USL 17-146, USL 17-147, USL 17-148, USL 17-149, USL 17-151, USL 17-152, USL 17-153, USL 17-154, and USL 17-155 on federal mineral lease CALA0164691 in Section 17, T11N, R23W, SBBM, in Kern County, CA. The proposed project would occur on public lands containing Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered mineral estate within the Midway Sunset Oilfield. Project implementation would include the drilling of ten new wells and the installation of associated power poles and pipelines. No new disturbance is anticipated for this project as the proponent would utilize existing well pads and access roads.

The purpose of the proposed action is to respond to the APDs. The need for the action is established by the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 as amended, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and other applicable laws and policies which require BLM to allow reasonable access to develop a federal oil and gas lease.

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); relevant federal and applicable state laws and regulations; and BLM policy.¹ The purpose of this document is to disclose and analyze potential environmental consequences of the proposed action. The BLM will use this analysis to decide whether to approve, approve with conditions, or deny the APDs.

¹ The BLM is aware of the November 12, 2024 decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. Federal Aviation Administration*, No. 23-1067 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 12, 2024). To the extent that a court may conclude that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA are not judicially enforceable or binding on this agency action, the BLM has nonetheless elected to follow those regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500– 1508, in addition to the DOI’s procedures/regulations implementing NEPA at 43 CFR Part 46, to meet the agency’s obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached EA and supporting documents, I have determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required (40 CFR 1501.3(c)).

The environmental effects are not significant (40 CFR 1501.3(d)) and do not exceed those effects as described in the 2014 Bakersfield Approved Resource Management Plan (ARMP) and Record of Decision (ROD). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the effects of the action project as described below.

Context

“Agencies shall analyze the significance of an action in several contexts. Agencies should consider the characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to unique or sensitive resources or communities with environmental justice concerns. Depending on the scope of the action, agencies should consider the potential global, national, regional, and local contexts as well as the duration, including short-and long-term effects.” 40 CFR 1501.3 (d)(1).

The proposed project is located on BLM administered lands in Section 17, T11N, R23W, SBBM, in Kern County, CA. Short-term effects include noise, air pollutant emissions, increased human activity, and the presence of heavy equipment during construction activities. Long-term effects include production of fluid mineral resources which, when burned, contribute to greenhouse gas quantities. The EA details the effects of the action alternatives.

Intensity

I have considered the following in my evaluation of the intensity (40 CFR 1501.3(d)(2)) of the effects from the proposed action:

- 1. The degree to which the action may adversely affect public health and safety.** The proposed project is comparable to other similar activities and projects already undertaken on BLM-administered lands within the Bakersfield Field Office and nationwide with no unusual health or safety concerns. All operators are subject to the standards outlined in the California Occupation Safety and Health Plan, and the State must conduct inspections to enforce its standards and must operate occupational safety and health training and education programs. Also, operators must comply with federal safety regulations outlined in 43 CFR 3160 and the Onshore Oil and Gas Orders. Implementation of measures to meet these standards and regulations would minimize risks to public health and safety; therefore, any impacts to public health and safety are not considered significant.
- 2. The degree to which the action may adversely affect unique characteristics of the geographic area.** No unique characteristics would be adversely affected as the action is proposed within an existing high-density oilfield.

3. **Whether the action may violate or be inconsistent with federal, state, tribal, or local law protecting the environment.** The alternatives do not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. Coordination and consultation with state, local and tribal interests was conducted as described in the EA. In addition, the project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs. The proposed action is fully consistent with the 2014 Bakersfield Resource Management Plan. The EA is in full compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and is consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended.
4. **The degree to which the potential effects on the human environment are highly uncertain.** Since the BLM routinely analyzes similar projects, the effects of the action are considered by the BLM to be reasonably well understood.
5. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect resources listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).** The action is not expected to adversely affect properties listed or eligible for listing on the NRHP.
6. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect endangered or threatened species or their habitat.** The proposed action does not include disturbance to federally listed species potential habitat. No federally listed species would be expected to be adversely impacted.
7. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect communities with environmental justice concerns.** Low-income or minority populations would not be disproportionately affected by the decision.
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect rights of Tribal Nations that have been reserved through treaties, statutes, or Executive Orders.** Notification letters were mailed to relevant Tribes which included an invitation to initiate consultation regarding the proposed action and a request for information about any sites or resources important to the tribe which could be affected. No comments or concerns were received from any of the recipients.

Prepared By: MATTHEW THOMAS Digitally signed by MATTHEW THOMAS
Date: 2024.12.18 12:35:18 -08'00'
Project Lead

Approved by: JOHN HODGE Digitally signed by JOHN HODGE
Date: 2024.12.18 13:49:07 -08'00'
Assistant Field Manager – Minerals