

CHAPTER 2 - ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

2-1 ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

As described in detail in table 1-1, this step in the oil and gas leasing process is not a site-specific, project-driven, ground-disturbing analysis. However, this step does determine whether certain publicly-owned lands, and the oil and gas resources found beneath 4,634 acres of the Wayne National Forest, are available for leasing (see Appendix 12 for regional and tract maps).

A range of alternatives was rigorously explored and objectively evaluated by the Wayne National Forest resource management specialists (ID Team) to include a broad spectrum of leasing scenarios - in accordance with NEPA's implementing regulations at 40 CFR 1502.14. Issues were identified based on comments from the public and from internal team discussions. From the range of alternatives, a reasonable number was identified for further analysis in the document (a reasonable alternative is one that meets the Purpose and Need statement as outlined in Chapter 1).

Alternatives that meet certain screening criteria are eligible for further analysis in the document. A certain number of alternatives were determined, by the ID Team preparing this document, not to be reasonable and therefore eliminated from further analysis. These include:

- an alternative location for oil & gas leasing,
- alternate equipment and methods for exploration and development,
- alternative energy and energy conservation,
- existing wells and producing areas only.

Locations of mineral resources, such as oil and gas, are limited by the geologic setting and size of the resource. Equipment and technology used by operators are based on market demands and supplies. Alternate location, type and methods of drilling and access are, therefore, limited in their application by the nature of the local situation on the ground.

Public comments during the 1998 scoping process for the Proposed Action, suggested that development of an alternative that: "administratively withdraws all federally owned subsurface oil, gas and mineral rights in all management areas from oil and gas leasing completely." This alternative was considered and deleted from further analysis because the issue of administrative availability was

considered in detail as Alternative A in the analysis for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Plan Amendment #8 to the Wayne Land and Resource Management Plan of August 6, 1992. The reasons for not selecting this alternative were explained in the Record of Decision of August 6, 1992.

Four reasonable management alternatives were identified for further analysis by the Interdisciplinary Team using internal agency review and public comments. The determination of reasonable alternatives is made within the framework of the Wayne National Forest Plan of 1988 and Amendment #8 of 1992 and is based on a Reasonable Future Development Scenario (RFDS) that would depict a close proximation of what is expected in terms of surface disturbing activities that would support oil and gas exploration and development on the 4,634 acres. This process conforms with Step 2 of the planning process as discussed in Chapter 1. All alternatives, except the No Action Alternative, include standard stipulations (see appendix 7 table 7) and Best Management Practices (BMPs-see appendix 9) from the 1992 Amendment #8.

2-2 ALTERNATIVES DESCRIPTION

Alternative A: 1998 Proposed Action (Consent to Leasing 63 Tracts with Standard Stipulations)

Consent is given by allowing surface access and use for oil and gas exploration and development to all of the 4,634 acres (63 tracts) using standard lease stipulations developed in the 1992 Amendment #8 process and the June 2001 Environmental Assessment.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative

No Consent is granted for surface access and use for oil and gas exploration and development i.e. none of the 4,634 acres (63 tracts) contain an area where oil & gas development can occur and impacts can be mitigated (even when using standard lease stipulations the 1992 Amendment #8 process) .

Alternative C: Consent to Leasing 63 Tracts (with standard and new stipulations, plus the Biological Opinion's Terms & Conditions)

Consent is given by allowing surface access and use for oil and gas exploration and development to all of the 4,634 acres using standard lease stipulations (developed in the 1992 Amendment #8 process and the June 2001 Environmental Assessment) and new stipulations developed through this EA (see appendix 7 table 8b). In addition, terms and conditions provided by the September 2001 Biological Opinion (B.O.) would be applied.

Alternative D: Consent to Leasing 50 Tracts (with standard and new stipulations, plus the Biological Opinion's Terms & Conditions).

Consent is given by allowing surface access and use for oil and gas exploration and development on 3,579 acres (50 tracts) using standard lease stipulations (developed in the 1992 Amendment #8 process and the June 2001 Environmental Assessment) and new stipulations developed through this EA (see appendix 7 table 8b). In addition, terms and conditions provided by the September 2001 Biological Opinion (B.O.) would be applied.

2-3 REASONABLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO

In order to analyze the environmental effects that could occur as a result of alternative leasing decisions under each of several leasing scenarios, hypothetical projections of the kind and amount of activity that could be reasonably anticipated were made. The regulations, at 36 CFR 228.102 (c) (3 and 4), require the Forest Service to “project the type / amount of post-leasing activity that is reasonably foreseeable as a consequence of conducting a leasing program consistent with that described for each alternative and analyze the reasonable foreseeable impacts of post-leasing activity under (c)(3) of this section as a part of the analysis. The purpose of the Reasonable Future Development Scenario (RFDS) is to attempt to quantify and depict the type of surface disturbing activities associated with oil and gas development on the Wayne National Forest that is likely to occur if the lands are offered for oil and gas leasing. This would serve as a future planning tool that would assist in gauging the type and level of potential impacts to forest resources and determine whether environmental impacts can be minimized and mitigated to an acceptable level or adversely and irreversibly impacted.

Appendix B of the 1992 Amendment to the Wayne National Forest Plan describes a reasonable future development scenario (RFDS) for the three distinct geographic areas contained within the Wayne National Forest: the Ironton Ranger District and the Athens Ranger District (with the Marietta and Athens Units). Appendix B, of the 1992 Amendment, discusses the three major oil and gas targets within the Wayne. These geologic targets are referred to as: the Berea Sandstone, the Ohio Shale and the Clinton-Medina. As outlined in the Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenario (RFDS) in Appendix 1, if leasing occurs, it is projected that up to 4 wells would be drilled to develop the Federal mineral interest. These 4 wells would result in a maximum 8 acres of surface disturbance (2 acres per well including access roads, pad, production facilities, tanks/storage and pipeline corridor).