

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

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

**California Resources Elk Hills, LLC (CREH)
6 APDs in Buena Vista Hills
DOI-BLM-CA-C060-2021-0049-EA
Programmatic Project #115**

Background

California Resources Elk Hills, LLC (CREH) has submitted six Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) to drill wells: 1-4H-3D, 4-6H-6D, 5-8H-7D, 6-7H-6D, 7-2H-1C, & 8-8H-26B on federal mineral leases CAS0019577, CAS0019343, & CAS0019396B in Section 1, T32S, R23E, Section 3, 6, & 7 of T32S, R24E, and Section 26, T31S, R23E, MDBM. The proposed project would occur on private and public lands containing BLM administered mineral state within the Buena Vista Oilfield. Project implementation would include the grading of new and existing well pad locations, installation of associated power poles and pipelines, and the drilling of six new wells.

The purpose of the proposed action is to respond to the APD submitted by California Resources Elk Hills, LLC to drill six new oil wells and stage associated facilities required to increase production on federal mineral leases CAS0019577, CAS0019343, & CAS0019396B.

The need for the action is established by BLM's responsibility under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 as amended, the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, the National Materials and Minerals Policy, Research and Development Act of 1980 and the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987 to allow reasonable access to develop a federal oil and gas lease.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant federal and state laws and regulations. The purpose of this document is to disclose and analyze the environmental consequences that are anticipated from the grading of new and existing well pad locations, installation of associated power poles and pipelines, and the drilling of six new wells on existing federal mineral leases (CAS0019577, CAS0019343, & CAS0019396B) in the Buena Vista Oilfield. BLM will decide whether to approve, approve with conditions, or deny the six APD's submitted by CREH.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I find that the project is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance based on the potentially affected environment and degree of the effects as defined in 40 CFR 1501.3(b) and furthermore, no environmental effects exceed those effects described in the Bakersfield Resource Management

Plan, approved in December 2014. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared. This finding is based on consideration of the potentially affected environment and degree of effects of the project as described below:

Potentially Affected Environment

“In considering the potentially affected environment, agencies should consider, as appropriate to the specific action, the affected area (national, regional, or local) and its resources such as listed species and designated critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend only upon the effects in the local area.” 40 CFR 1501.3 (b)(1).

The proposed project is located on BLM administered lands in Section 1, T32S, R23E, Section 3, 6, & 7 of T32S, R24E, and Section 26, T31S, R23E, MDBM. The proposed activity is a site-specific action with minor localized effects on air quality and soils. The EA details the effects of the action alternatives. None of the effects identified are considered to be significant and none exceed the effects described in the Resource Management Plan.

Degree of Effects

I have considered the potential degree/severity of the impacts anticipated from the approval of the proposed action: the grading of new and existing well pad locations, installation of associated power poles and pipelines, and the drilling of six new wells on an existing federal mineral lease (CAS0019577, CAS0019343, & CAS0019396B) in the Buena Vista Oilfield. The following discussion is organized around 40 CFR 1501.3 (b)(2).

1. **Short- and long-term effects of the selected alternative.** 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.
2. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** The selected alternative would result in emission of air pollutants, contributions to greenhouse gases, soil disturbance, and destruction of habitat for federally listed species. Contributions of air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions are indiscernible from ambient conditions at the local, state, and national levels. Animals may alter their movement patterns to avoid the project vicinity during the days of construction, but this impact would be expected to dissipate once construction concludes. None of these impacts would be significant at the local scale or cumulatively because of the small scale of the project and Design Features/Conditions of Approval (COAs) that would reduce impacts to immeasurable levels. Air emissions would be below *de minimis* levels; soils would be preserved during construction and would be restored to the extent possible once the proposed action concludes and listed species habitat destruction would be minimized and compensated for according to the terms of the applicable biological opinion. Beneficial impacts include the development of the fluid mineral lease including resulting royalties and employment opportunities for area residents. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA are considered significant,

nor do the effects exceed those described in the Bakersfield Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement.

3. **The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or 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.

4. **Whether the selected alternative would violate a federal, state, local, or tribal 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.

Prepared by: _____
Project Lead

Approved
by: _____
Assistant Field Manager- Minerals