



Project Scoping

June 8, 2005

Proposal to Drill and Produce the Vastar Unit 2A Well No. 2 from a Site Outside the Boundaries of Big Thicket National Preserve, Orange and Hardin Counties, Texas

The National Park Service is reviewing a proposal from Peoples Energy Production (Peoples) to drill and produce the Vastar Unit 2A Well No. 2 from a surface location approximately 700 feet from the boundary of the Beaumont Unit. As shown in the attached figures, the well would be directionally drilled to reach a bottomhole location under the Unit. (The proposed well is shown in yellow, and the Preserve boundary is shown in green.) If the well is produced, a production facility would be constructed on the site and a sales pipeline would be constructed from the well to an existing natural gas pipeline. When the well is plugged and abandoned, the landowner would decide on the best use of the site.

The purpose of the analysis is twofold: 1) carry out compliance responsibilities under various statutes including the National Environmental Policy Act, and 2) determine whether the directional well qualifies for an exemption under NPS regulations at 36 CFR 9.32(e). An exemption may be issued if the NPS determines that the operation poses "no significant threat of damage to park resources...." The scope of this latter inquiry is limited to the scope of the regulations which includes those activities occurring only within the Unit boundary.

As the superintendent of Big Thicket National Preserve, I invite you to participate in this scoping process.

Sincerely,
Art Hutchinson

Overview of the Process

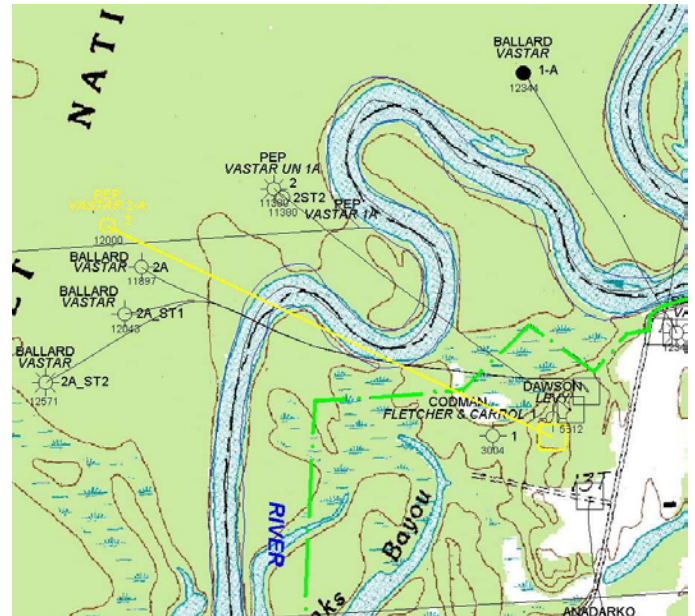
Project milestones include:

- Public scoping period (closes June 23, 2005)
- Preparation of environmental assessment
- Public review of environmental assessment
- Analysis of public comment
- Preparation of decision document
- Announcement of decision on Peoples' proposal

Resources and Concerns

Initial internal project scoping identified the following resources and other concerns for consideration in the environmental assessment (EA).

Air quality	Cultural resources
Geology and soils	Lightscapes
Water resources	Visitor use
Floodplains/wetlands	Natural soundscapes
Vegetation	Adjacent landowners
Fish and wildlife	Socioeconomics
Species of special concern	



What does the scoping period mean? Scoping is done in the initial phase of a project to seek input from a variety of sources. The input is used to identify issues, areas requiring additional study, and topics that will be analyzed in the EA process. This is an opportunity for you to provide us with your suggestions, comments, and concerns regarding this oil and gas project at Big Thicket National Preserve.

Is scoping my only opportunity to comment on the project? No, once the EA is developed, the document will be made available for public review for a 30-day period.

Alternatives

The preliminary range of alternatives, including the proposed action, to be evaluated in the environmental assessment are:

- 1) No-Action Alternative. This alternative represents the baseline or benchmark from which to compare the impacts of permitting the proposed project to proceed. In this case, "No-Action" means the project would not take place;
- 2) Proposed Action. Under the proposed action, Peoples would drill and produce the Vastar Unit 2A Well No. 2 from the proposed sites outside the boundaries of the Preserve;
- 3) Surface Location Inside the Boundaries of the Preserve. Under this alternative, the Vastar Unit 2A Well No. 2 would be drilled and produced on a site inside the boundaries of the Preserve; and
- 4) Acquire the minerals interests which are part of the proposal.

Please let us know by June 23, 2005:

1. Do you have any ideas to share about issues/concerns, or are there any issues/concerns about the project that you think we should consider?
2. Are there any other alternatives that you think should be considered?
3. Do you have other comments and suggestions for us to consider in the environmental assessment?

If you wish to comment on the scoping brochure or on any other issues associated with the project, you may submit your comments in the following ways:

- This scoping brochure will be posted to the NPS new Planning Environment and Public Comment system or PEPC. You can access the system at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>.
- You may submit written comments to:
Superintendent, Big Thicket National Preserve
3785 Milam Street
Beaumont, Texas 77701
- You may also comment via electronic mail (e-mail) to BITH_Superintendent@nps.gov. *Please submit e-mail comments as a text file, avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. Please also include your name, e-mail address and return mailing address in your e-mail message. If you do not receive confirmation that we have received your e-mail message, please contact Dusty Pate at 409 951-6822.*
- Finally, you may hand deliver comments to Big Thicket National Preserve.

If you wish to be added to the park's mailing list for this and other announcements, please be sure to indicate that in your response.
