



Proposal to directionally drill and produce up to seven wells from one surface location outside of the Big Thicket National Preserve in Hardin County, Texas

Project Scoping for Environmental Analysis

August 5, 2014

Dear Friend of Big Thicket National Preserve,

The National Park Service (NPS) is reviewing a proposal by Century Exploration Houston, LLC (Century) to directionally drill and produce privately held minerals at one surface location outside of Big Thicket National Preserve (Preserve), with bottomhole targets beneath the Preserve. Century proposes to directionally drill up to seven wells from the proposed well pad located approximately 60 feet west of the Beaumont Unit in Hardin County, Texas, with the bottomhole location being approximately 9,440 feet beneath the unit. Currently, one well, designated "BP-Yosemite Well No. 1," is planned; however, depending on the success of this well, an additional six wells may be drilled from the same well pad. Century also proposes to construct a flowline from the proposed well pad on private property located outside of the Beaumont Unit in Hardin County. The flowline would be constructed via trench and boring methods.

The proposed operation falls under regulations found at 36 CFR 9B. The proposal to directionally drill and produce privately held minerals at one surface location outside the Preserve will be analyzed for its qualification for an exemption under NPS regulation 36 CFR 9.32e. An exemption may be issued if the NPS determines that the operations pose "no significant threat of damage to park resources..." The scope of the 9.32e analysis is limited to the scope of the regulations which include only those activities occurring within the Preserve boundary.

The NPS is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of an EA is to evaluate the impacts of the proposed project on the natural environment, consider reasonable alternatives to meet the project objectives, and identify appropriate mitigation measures to minimize potential impacts.

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

Sincerely,

Douglas S. Neighbor

Overview of the Process

Project Milestones Include:

- **Public Scoping Period (Closes Sept. 5, 2014)***
- Preparation of environmental assessment
- Public review of environmental assessment*
- Analysis of public comment
- Preparation of decision document
- Announcement of decision on proposal

Bold indicates where we are now; * indicates opportunities for public comment

Alternatives Considered

The preliminary alternatives, including the proposed action, to be evaluated in the EA are:

- 1) **Alternative A: No-Action Alternative** This alternative represents the baseline for comparison of the proposed action and other alternatives. In this case, "No Action" means the proposed project would not take place;
- 2) **Alternative B: Proposed Action** Century would directionally drill up to seven wells from one surface location to produce privately held mineral rights beneath the Preserve.
- 3) **Alternative C: Drill and Produce the Reserve Minerals from Surface Locations Within the Beaumont Unit.** Century would develop one new surface location within the Preserve to drill and produce these minerals.

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 | ◆Environmental Justice |
| ◆Water Resources | ◆Visitor Use |
| ◆Floodplains/Wetlands | ◆Natural Soundscapes |
| ◆Vegetation | ◆Adjacent Lands |
| ◆Fish and Wildlife | ◆Socioeconomics |
| ◆Park Operations | ◆Lightscapes |
| ◆Catastrophic Incidences | ◆Visitor Use |
| ◆Species of Management Concern | |

***Please see page 3 for location map of the proposed project components.**

Ideas to Consider

Following are a few ideas to keep in mind as you develop your comments on this proposal:

1. Do you have any ideas to share about the alternatives and resources/concerns listed in the scoping brochure, or are there any other 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 EA?

How Do I Comment on This Project?

Please submit your comments online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/bith>

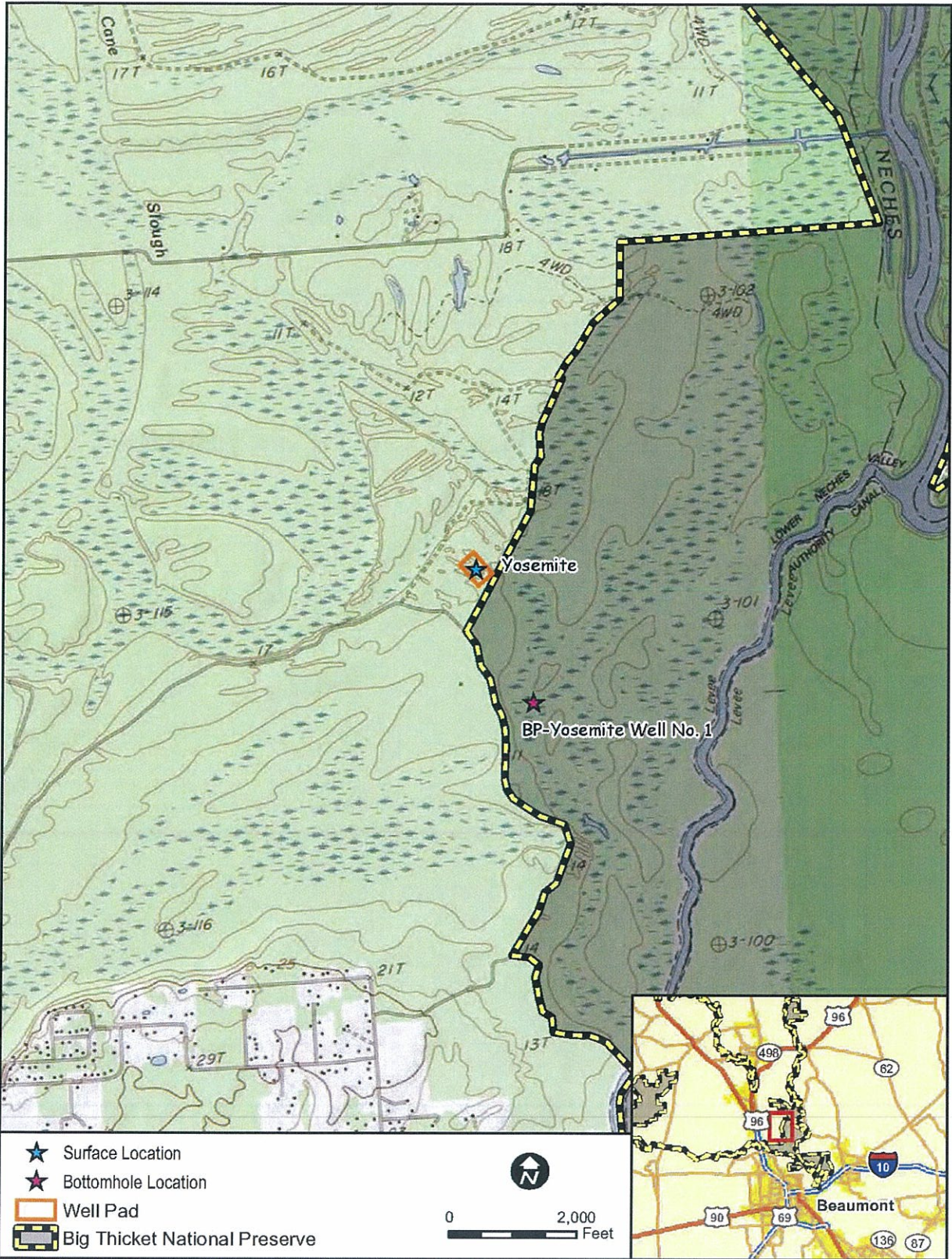
Please provide all comments by September 5, 2014. If you wish to be added to or removed from the Preserve's mailing list for future correspondence, please indicate that in your response.

If you are unable to submit comments electronically through this website, then you may also submit written comments to:

**Superintendent
Big Thicket National Preserve
Attn: Ken Hyde
6044 FM 420
Kountze, TX 77625**

You may also hand-deliver written comments to the visitor center at Big Thicket National Preserve.

Project Map



Path: P:\GIS\Client\Century Exploration\BigThicket_YosemitePad\Maps\ENV\Public\Yosemite_Pub2.mxd

