Big Thicket National Preserve
Texas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

BP America Production Company Proposal to horizontally drill and produce up to nine wells from six surface locations outside of the Big Thicket National Preserve in Hardin County, Texas

Project Scoping for Environmental Analysis

Dear Friend of Big Thicket National Preserve,

The National Park Service (NPS) is reviewing a proposal by BP America Production Company (BP) to horizontally drill 9 wells from 6 surface locations outside of the Big Thicket National Preserve (Preserve) to reach bottomhole targets approximately 12,000 feet beneath the Preserve and produce privately-held minerals. The proposed well pads would be located 40 to 600 feet north and west of the Jack Gore Baygall and Neches Bottom Units in Hardin County, Texas. All infrastructure and access for the wells would be located entirely on private property with no use of Preserve surface.

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 wells qualify 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 exemption determination is limited to those activities occurring within the Preserve boundary.

The NPS is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that 1) explores a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluates potential impacts to park resources and values, and 3) identifies mitigation measures to minimize those impacts.

The NPS encourages public participation throughout the NEPA process during which the public has two opportunities to comment on this project; once during initial project scoping and again following release of the EA. We are currently in the scoping phase of this project, and I invite you to participate. Your comments will be considered during preparation of the EA.

Sincerely,

A. Wayne Prokopetz

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

Overview of the Process

Project Milestones Include:

- **Public Scoping Period (09/11/15- 10/11/15)***
- 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:** ***Acquire the Mineral Estate*** The NPS would acquire the mineral rights which are part of the proposal;

3) **Alternative C:** ***Proposed Action*** BP would horizontally drill up to nine wells from six surface locations outside the Preserve to produce privately held mineral rights beneath the Preserve;

4) **Alternative D:** ***Drill and Produce the Reserve Minerals from Surface Locations within the Jackgore Baygall and Neches Bottom Units.*** BP would develop six new surface locations 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
- ♦Geology and Soils
- ♦Water Resources
- ♦Floodplains/Wetlands
- ♦Vegetation
- ♦Fish and Wildlife
- ♦Park Operations
- ♦Catastrophic Incidences
- ♦Species of Management Concern
- ♦Cultural Resources
- ♦Environmental Justice
- ♦Visitor Use/Recreation
- ♦Soundscapes
- ♦Adjacent Lands
- ♦Socioeconomics
- ♦Lightscapes
- ♦Energy Resources

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 October 11, 2015. 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: Ryan Desliu
6044 FM 420
Kountze, TX 77625

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

Project Map

MAP NOT TO SCALE