

Coalbed methane development gets initial OK

By The Associated Press

GILLETTE - The Bureau of Land Management has determined that proposed coalbed methane development within the Fortification Creek elk range in northeast Wyoming would not cause significant environmental effects.

The environmental assessment is available for review and public comment until July 8. The assessment is available online at blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/bfodocs/Augusta-Zeta.html.

The BLM's final decision on the conditions under which the area can be developed will be prepared and distributed after the comment period.

The proposed CBM development by Anadarko Petroleum Corp. involves 134 wells on 10,220 acres in parts of Campbell and Johnson counties. The area is within the 123,000-acre Fortification Creek elk range, which encompasses parts of Campbell, Johnson and Sheridan counties.

Anadarko spokesman John Christiansen said it is difficult to determine when activity would start because of the number of steps in the regulatory process, but he doesn't expect any work to begin this summer. He said it would depend on how quickly and smoothly the regulatory approvals come.

"We would be in a position to be ready to move forward with the project once we have all the necessary regulatory approvals in place," Christiansen said.

Christiansen said he thinks it is an important project, not only for the economy in Wyoming, but also as the country works to develop its own domestic resources for energy security.

A separate management plan amendment under consideration by the BLM for the Fortification Creek area has drawn opposition from some who fear energy development will hurt the elk herd.