DECISION MEMO

for

Clovelly Oil Co., LLC
Source Hole Drilling Project
United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Southern Region, R-8

National Forests in Mississippi
Bienville Ranger District
Smith County, Mississippi

Decision

I have decided to authorize Clovelly Oil Co., LLC to conduct source hole drilling to facilitate a 3D seismic exploration project. Clovelly Oil Co., LLC is responsible for clean-up and damage repair in the project area. The work consists of deployment of recording equipment; geophone placement; sourcehole drilling; production of a source signal (by vibroseis truck or explosive charge); and maintenance of recording equipment. Work on this project is expected to begin on or about ????, 2013. The project area encompasses approximately 3,680 acres located in the southeastern part of the Forest in Sections 1,8,11, and 12 of Township 3 North, Range 8 East and Sections 2-4, and 7-12 of Township 3 North, Range 9 East of Smith County, Mississippi.

Rationale for Categorical Exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

A proposed action may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if:

a. The proposed action is within one of the categories established by the Secretary at 7 CFR part 1b.3; or

b. The proposed action is within a category listed in sections 220.6 (d) and (e). (36 CFR 220.6(a))

The Chief of the Forest Service has determined, based on a history of implementing similar activities, that this type of action normally does not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment and therefore, may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment.
I have determined that this action is within 36 CFR 220.6(e)(8), as follows:
FSH 1909.15, chapter 30, section 32.2, *Category (8) Short-term (1 year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads.*

I have considered the following resource conditions in my determination of the presence of extraordinary circumstances and whether the extraordinary circumstances that are related to the proposed action warrant further analysis and documentation in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement:

a. **Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds**

   Portions of this project area contain wetlands. However, activities taking place in this project will not involve use of heavy equipment or cause ground disturbance in or near wetland areas.

b. **Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas**

   The project area contains no congressionally designated areas.

c. **Inventoried roadless areas**

   The project area is not within an inventoried roadless area.

d. **Research natural areas**

   The project area is not within or near any research natural area.

The mere presence of one or more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion. It is the degree of the potential effect of a proposed action on these resource conditions that determines whether extraordinary circumstances exist.

No extraordinary circumstances exist that may cause the action to have significant effects. Therefore, this action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment.
Public Involvement

A scoping/30 day comment notice was mailed to 19 individuals and organizations with expressed interest specifically in the Bienville National Forest for requested notice on projects of this nature. Scoping/30 day comment notices were mailed on April 6, 2012. No comments were received.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

1. These actions are consistent with the Land and Resource Management Plan. My review indicates that the actions are in compliance with the forest standards and guidelines and is consistent with all pertinent direction found in the plan.

2. These actions show consideration of best available science. My conclusion is based on a review of the record that shows a thorough review of scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgement of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk.

3. The management practices associated with these actions does not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on the human health or the environment of minority or low-income populations. (Executive Order 12898, 2/11/94)

4. This decision is in compliance with the following laws and regulations as evident by information contained within this document or in the project record. (See above section on Rationale for Categorical Exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act)
   - Endangered Species Act
   - Sensitive Species (FSM 2670)
   - National Historic Preservation Act
   - Archeological Resources Protection Act
Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunity

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.

Implementation Date

Implementation of this decision may begin immediately.

Contact Person

For questions or additional information related to this decision, contact Marc Weathersby, NEPA Coordinator, Bienville NF; 3473 Highway 35 South; Forest, MS 39074-8811; 601-469-3811.

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Michael T. Esters          Date
District Ranger