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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Oil and Gas Leasing Availability Analysis Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the PSICC. Although it is important that this country develop its own oil and gas resources, it is necessary to conduct leasing and exploration in a manner that protects watersheds, wildlife habitat, timber, grazing and recreational values, including hunting and fishing. The values of the land for long term uses should be considered a priority in managing these short term oil and gas operations.

The Forest Service should consider the impact of all activities related to oil and gas operations, including exploration, drilling, road building, water demand and waste removal. These activities impact surface vegetation, wildlife, ground water, supply of fresh water, and neighboring human populations.

Unlike the proposed Alternative C, there should not be any leasing allowed within upper tier roadless areas or within existing and potential Research Natural Areas or Special Interest Areas. No Surface Occupancy stipulations should be applied to areas of high scenic value, lower tier roadless areas, municipal watersheds, slopes greater than 40%, and important wildlife habitat and corridors. Wildlife of concern within potential leasing zones that need to be protected include lesser prairie chicken, Mexican spotted owl, lynx, Preble's meadow jumping mouse, and Pawnee montane skipper.

Where exploration and drilling operations are allowed to occur, complete reclamation should be required after operations are completed, this includes roads and drillpads. The total footprint of oil & gas operations can be quite large and companies should be limited on the size of their impact which will also reduce the amount of reclamation required later. When evaluating potential leasing within the PSICC, federal agency representatives should consider the total impact of adjoining leasing operations, including operations on neighboring BLM, private or other National Forest lands.