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First name: Courtney
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Organization: National Park Service
Title: Regional Environmental Officer
Comments: Dear Mr. Johnson:

The Department of the Interior (Department) has reviewed the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for Oil and Gas Leasing/ Dakota Prairie Grasslands in North Dakota ("project"). The DSEIS supplements the 2001 Northern Great Plains Management Plans Revision Final Environmental Impact Statement. The Department offers the following comments and recommendations for your consideration.

The National Park Service (NPS) is a cooperating agency on this project, and provided resource and visitor use information that was incorporated into the document. The DSEIS gives readers an accurate representation of Theodore Roosevelt National Park's affected environment, visitor use, potential impacts, and resource preservation efforts. The only change suggested for the final document would be that the NPS refers to the three distinct Theodore Roosevelt National Park areas as units, not districts (North Unit, South Unit, Elkhorn Ranch Unit).

The project would allow for future oil and gas development opportunities near Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The park analyzes all North Dakota Industrial Commission Oil and Gas Division permit applications that may impact the park's resources and visitors. Park managers directly engage individual companies in voluntarily addressing park recommendations including: flaring reduction, use of electric power instead of diesel generators, use of existing roads and infrastructure, locating energy infrastructure to eliminate visual intrusions, light pollution, noise pollution, and timing drilling activities to have the least effect on visitor enjoyment. This proactive method has been highly successful and addresses many of the concerns that may be raised by future activity surrounding the park. The NPS will continue to work with the energy industry and other agencies to reduce impacts and improve recreation as stated in the DSEIS.

Each project application in proximity to the park will require individual mitigation measures, company engagement, and agency involvement. The NPS can provide technical expertise and specialized knowledge in preserving park resources and providing an exceptional visitor experience. Communication and cooperation will be essential and should be formalized through an agreement. The NPS looks forward to collaborative ecosystem stewardship with the United States Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management on this topic.

The Department has a continuing interest in working with the project sponsors to ensure impacts to resources of concern are adequately addressed. For issues concerning Theodore Roosevelt National Park, please contact Wendy Hart Ross, Superintendent, P.O. Box 7, Medora, North Dakota 68645, wendy_ross@nps.gov, or by telephone at 701-623-4466.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.