



Agency Priority Goal Action Plan

# Improve Processing of Drilling Applications

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# Overview

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## Goal Statement

- Extracting oil and gas resources on public lands improves our energy security, drives economic growth, and provides revenues collected on behalf of the American public. By September 30, 2019, the Bureau of Land Management will eliminate its backlog of fluid mineral Applications for Permits to Drill (APDs) that have been pending for 3 years or more.

## Challenge

- Most BLM-related processing delays involve incomplete NEPA, staffing shortages, litigation, incomplete cultural or biological surveys, or lease suspensions. Gaining concurrence from other federal Surface Management Agencies (SMA) has historically required more than 3 years to process.
- Approximately 64% of the pending APDs aged over 3 years involve another SMA such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) or the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The BLM is required to consult with Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on Threatened and Endangered Species and with the state agencies regarding historic preservation (SHPO) and depletion of water resources. This often takes an extended period due to many factors such as priorities in workload, tribal consultation, need for an EIS, or pending litigation.
- Approximately 36% of the pending APDs aged over 3 years are awaiting action from the BLM.

## Opportunity

- Eliminating the APD backlog would authorize the operators to drill and produce oil and gas resources sooner thereby increasing energy security, generating revenues for the American public, increasing operator confidence in development on public lands and drive economic growth and jobs.
- Eliminating the APD backlog will lead to improved and repeatable cross agency processes to prevent future APDs from becoming backlogged. Additionally, eliminating the backlog could reduce the number of lease reinstatements required, eliminating added workload.

# Goal Structure & Strategies

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BLM will refine and update the Automated Fluid Minerals Support System (AFMSS), create Rights-of-Way (ROW) Strike Teams, establish APD targets, and increase interagency coordination

- Designate a BLM liaison to monitor and coordinate SMA progress in coming to final disposition; provided partner SMAs with reports listing APDs needing their concurrence.
- Formed an Energy and Minerals Task Force (Task Force) that will work with the USFS to revise the 2006 MOU and assess and prioritize resource needs for the five busiest BLM oil and gas offices to connect resource shortages with available capacity for addressing the backlog of APDs and ROW applications.
- Created AFMSS 2 reports to track average APD processing times, details about the changing status of APDs, timeliness of 30-day initial decision notification and tracking status of deferred APDs. These reports are used to monitor APD processing and report monthly on backlogged APD status.
- Continue to enhance AFMSS 2 to reduce industry burden and increase efficiency for permit processing.
- ROW strike teams – identified the five busiest offices with ROWs pending for creating ROW strike teams to address the backlog in grant applications.
- APD 90-day processing targets set – Starting in April 2017, 90-day processing targets were set for each field office to assist in identifying bottlenecks and delays to keep permits from becoming backlogged.
- Streamlining NEPA Reviews per Secretarial Order (3355) and Executive Order (13807) – These recent orders directed the BLM to set page and timing limitations for Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and Environmental Assessments (EA), to consider additional categorical exclusions, and to create an action plan to remove impediments to major infrastructure projects including some energy projects.

# Summary of Progress – FY18 Q4

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- **Level of Results Achieved**
  - Reduced backlogged (>3 years) pending APDs by 263, from 551 to 288 (-47%) from 12/07/2017 – 09/30/2018.
- **Likelihood of Success**
  - Medium – Some backlogged APDs require continued coordination with States and other Surface Management Agencies (SMAs), with some at risk for litigation which may delay the final decision of the APD.
- **Basis for the Assessment**
  - Considering progress made through the first 10 months, the BLM is on track to significantly reduce the inventory of backlogged APDs by the end of FY 2019.
  - BLM has designated a liaison to monitor and coordinate APD progress with States and other SMA in coming to a final disposition.
- **Actions planned to ensure achievement of the goal**
  - The BLM will continue to produce and provide semi-monthly pending APD reports for collaboration and coordination with other SMAs and states.

# Key Milestones

Milestone Summary			
Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
Quarterly Deferral Report generated to identify progress in eliminating the APDs currently backlogged > 3 years and distributed to the BLM Liaison, Energy Task Force, high priority offices and SMAs to monitor progress.	Q1 FY 2018	Completed	Reduced >3 years pending by 30, from 551 to 521 (-5%) from 12/07/2017 – 04/04/2018
Staffing analysis for offices with backlog will be conducted by Task Force to ensure that appropriate staff is available to meet current operational needs as well as work backlogged permits.	Q2 FY 2018	Completed	Washington Office has identified offices with highest pending APD and Oil & Gas Right-Of-Ways (ROW) (NM, UT, WY)
The BLM will identify offices with the highest levels of backlogged APDs and finalize resource evaluation and allocations alternatives for those offices.	Q2 FY 2018	In-progress	BLM is identifying staffing needs, through Energy Task Force
The FY18 Annual Work Plan will direct offices to prioritize processing APDs and minimize the number of APDs that are deferred. Funding will be provided for ROW strike teams, Automated Fluid Minerals Support System (AFMSS) 2 priority changes, and additional funds to states needing to fill critical vacancies.	Q2 FY 2018	Complete	Funds received from Omnibus Distributed
Quarterly Deferral Report generated to identify progress in eliminating the APDs currently backlogged > 3 years and distributed to the BLM Liaison, Energy Task Force, high priority offices and SMAs to monitor progress.	Q3 FY 2018	Completed	Reduced >3 years pending by 132, from 551 to 419 (-24%) from 12/07/2017 – 6/26/2018
Quarterly Deferral Report generated to identify progress in eliminating the APDs currently backlogged > 3 years and distributed to the BLM Liaison, Energy Task Force, high priority offices and SMAs to monitor progress.	Q4 FY 2018	Completed	Reduced >3 years pending by 263, from 551 to 288 (-47%) from 12/07/2017 – 09/30/2018
Quarterly Deferral Report generated and issued	Q2 FY 2019		

# Key Indicators

- The BLM Washington Office will monitor the progress in improving processing times for APDs by reporting quarterly the number of APDs processed and the average time taken to process the APDs.

## Deferred APDs

Totals	31-90 days	91 days to 1 year	1-3 years	3 Years+	Grand Totals
BIA	9	13	37	36	95
USFS	1	6	20	45	72
BLM	10	15	71	157	253
Private Surface	52	76	74	46	248
State	0	0	2	4	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>674</b>

\*Data includes all available deferred APDs from legacy AFMSS 1 and AFMSS 2.

\*\*Not all pending APDs are accounted for in the above table, only those deferred were counted.

1) APDs that were submitted less than 30 days ago cannot have a deferred status and are not included.

2) Any APDs without date fields completed properly cannot be aged and are not included.

3) 1,624 APD's are pending non-deferred, and account for the remainder of the 2,298 APD's

# Key Indicators

- For the APDs that are pending with another Surface Management Agencies (SMAs), the BLM will report the number of these APD delays.

## APDs Pending (3+ Years) Awaiting SMA Approval

Agency	FY18 Q1	FY18 Q2	FY18 Q3	FY18 Q4
BIA	143	142	131	36
USFS	100	83	80	45
BLM	214	220	151	157
Private Surface	88	71	53	46
State	6	5	4	4
Totals	551	521	419	288

As of Oct 1, 2018

# Data Accuracy and Reliability

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- **Means used to verify and validate measured values:** Standardized reports and processes are used to track and report data using AFMSS and AFMSS 2. Data is reviewed relative to its historical trends and programmatic context for plausibility, and is personally presented for review by senior officials to Departmental leadership and colleagues on a quarterly basis.
- **Sources for the data:** AFMSS and AFMSS 2 databases including the Details and Deferral Reports.
- **Level of accuracy required for the intended use of the data:** Under AFMSS 2, improved metrics have been designed to capture workflow processes and application status. Hard data validation within the system controls data entry and improves data integrity.
- **Limitations to the data at the required level of accuracy:** Historic AFMSS data system requires data validation and cross checking with SMAs. Before any data migration to the new system, we are working with other SMAs and the field to ensure data accuracy and reliability.
- **How the agency has compensated for such limitations if needed to reach the required level of accuracy:** Work closely with other SMAs to update and improve accuracy of historic information. Continue to refine and standardize reports to ensure consistency of data and metrics measured. Data is personally presented for review by senior officials to Departmental leadership and colleagues on a quarterly basis.



# Additional Information

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## Contributing Programs

- Contributing Programs within DOI
  - BIA, Indian Energy and Economic Development Program
  - Bureau of Reclamation
  - Fish and Wildlife Service
  - US Forest Service, Minerals and Geology Management Program
  - Army Corps of Engineers
  - State governments

## Stakeholder Engagement

This initiative is based on addressing the following general concerns expressed by stakeholders from

- Petroleum Industry – provides certainty for planning purposes and confidence in the permitting process.
- Lease and operator – authorization is delivered in a timely manner.
- NGOs – better information on proposed development and potential resource concerns.
- Other Surface Management Agencies – resolution of pending authorizations on lands that they manage
- Administration and some congressional representatives – concern that the Department's land management practices are burdensome and hinder economic development.