

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

Flathead National Forest
Kalispell, Montana 59901

File

Want for

2800
March 10, 1975

RECEIVED

MAR 13 1975

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



Environmental Quality Council
State of Montana
Capital Bldg.
Helena, Mt 59601

This past fall the State Office for the Bureau of Land Management in Billings informed me that applications to lease oil and gas had been received for certain National Forest lands here on the Flathead. The applications were made by Texas Pacific Oil Co., Inc., Dallas, Texas; John W. Batts and Maxine C. Amick, both of Billings, Montana. The areas involved are primarily in the North Fork and South Fork of the Flathead River and cover about 250,000 acres. The enclosed maps show the areas involved.

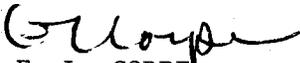
This letter is to make you aware of the importance of these applications, how the Flathead proposes to handle them, and to request your assistance.

To begin with, an introduction to some of the legal requirements concerning leasable minerals on Federal lands might be helpful. The BLM is the agency responsible for issuing mineral leases on National Forest lands. The Mineral Leasing Act of February 25, 1920, as amended and supplemented, is the basic authority. Normally, applications to lease oil and gas on National Forest lands are received by BLM: then referred to the Forest Service (in this case, the Flathead) for report and recommendation. In recent years, the policy of the BLM has been to reject oil and gas lease applications when an adverse recommendation is made by the Forest Service unless it is contrary to precedent decisions of the Interior Department's Board of Land Appeals. Where recommendations by the Forest Service are favorable, the applicant must consent to the inclusion of reasonable stipulations for the protection of the surface, as required by the Forest Service. All operations for oil and gas exploration or development must be conducted in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Interior, the provisions of the lease, and the stipulations of the Forest Service.

It's important to note the applications overlap, to one degree or another, portions of the Forest that contain new wilderness study areas, other inventoried roadless areas, key winter elk range, grizzly bear habitat, and small parts of the Wild and Scenic River proposal presently pending. At the same time the nation-wide need for domestic energy resource development, as well as current International economic and political trends, must have appropriate consideration. Because of these critical factors and the complexities of management they pose, I believe it's necessary that we prepare an E.I.S. (Environmental Impact Statement) for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act prior to making any recommendation for or against the applications.

A tentative schedule for completing the E.I.S. has been prepared. Between now and June 1, I have assigned individuals to assemble the resource information we think is needed to make a proper analysis. By June 30, we hope to have a draft E.I.S. available for public review. We need your thoughts and ideas by April 15, preferably in writing, to be included in the draft E.I.S. The Rangers of the three districts the applications cover will welcome the opportunity to meet with you individually or in groups to discuss the specifics in more detail. The District Rangers and their areas of responsibility are as follows: Ron Prichard, North Fork of the Flathead: Chuck Brooks, lower end of the South Fork of the Flathead: and Rollie Saylor, upper end of the South Fork. Of course, any group or individual concerned will have a second opportunity for input when the draft E.I.S. is published. We hope you will participate at both stages--the preparation of the draft E.I.S., as well as the final E.I.S. We're aiming for the final E.I.S. in the Fall of 1975, and this will be the basis of our recommendation to the Bureau of Land Management for the oil and gas leases.

Sincerely,


E. L. CORPE
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures

R 25 W R 24 W R 23 W R 22 W

CANADA

PRINCE OF WALES HOTEL

Waterton Lakes

T 37 N

OIL & GAS LEASE APPLICATIONS

NORTH FORK FLATHEAD RIVER

T 36 N

T 35 N

T 34 N

T 33 N

T 32 N

T 31 N

T 30 N

T 29 N

T 28 N

T 27 N

T 26 N

T 25 N

T 32 N

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T 30 N

T 29 N

T 28 N

T 27 N

T 26 N

T 25 N

T 32 N

R 12 W

Mt. Milliman

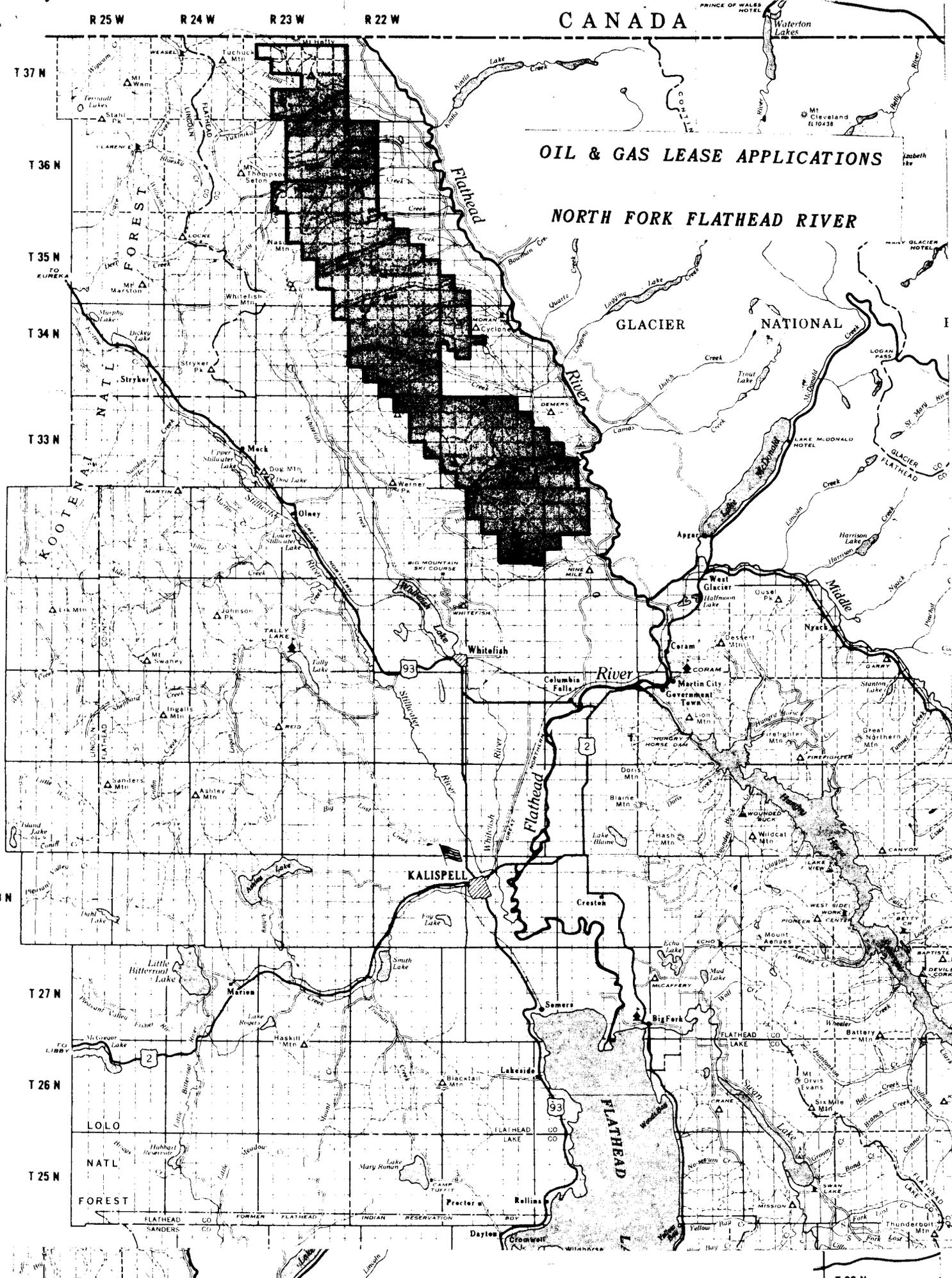
FOOTENAIL NATL. FOREST

GLACIER NATIONAL

KALISPELL

FLATHEAD

SOUTH FORK FLATHEAD RIVER



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL
ROUTE SLIP

BAHLS Because of the
BOURKE am land use and
BRANDES water quality
BROWN implications of
FRIZZELL this proposed
PERLMUTTER development,
PORTER the expertise of
REUSS Loren and Chuck
SCHLEYER would be app
TOMLINSON useful, and
FILE because we have
been asked
specifically,
appropriate in
this matter of
draft EIS pre-
paration.

COMMENT DEADLINE:

APRIL 15

COMMENTS: _____
