

# USDA Briefing Paper

## Topic: EO 13783 Response Report Implementation – USDA Top 3 Priorities

**Issue:** In response to Executive Order 13783 of March 28, 2017, “Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth,” USDA reviewed more than 70 Forest Service actions, including regulations, policies, guidance, orders, agreements with partner agencies, and programmatic analyses at the Washington and field office levels of the agency to assess if they potentially burden domestic energy development. USDA’s final report includes recommendations regarding fifteen Forest Service actions that could either be revised or rescinded to support the Administration’s focus on increased energy development.

### Summary/Key Points:

- The fifteen recommendations include revising parts of three Forest Service regulations, five policies, four agreements with other agencies, one programmatic analysis, one order, and rescinding part of one policy.
- USDA selected three of the fifteen recommendations that would show early and measurable results as top priorities. The three recommendations are detailed below:
  - **Revise USDA/DOI MOU.** The Forest Service has seen increased activity in Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for geothermal development on National Forest System (NFS) lands. Currently, 118,000 acres are leased on NFS lands, producing over 360,000 megawatts of electricity valued at over \$22 million. Geothermal development requires little surface disturbance. Therefore, the Forest Service proposes the revision of the USDA and DOI Memorandum of Understanding Implementing Section 225 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 Regarding Geothermal Leasing and Permitting. The revision will clarify the roles and responsibilities of the two agencies to allow for increased geothermal development.
  - **Combine National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses for oil and gas leasing with Forest Plan revisions.** Combining the NEPA analyses necessary for an oil and gas leasing availability decision and a Forest Plan decision will accelerate the permitting process, saving both industry and the agency significant time and money. Currently, two Forests are conducting joint analyses, but the agency has over 2,500 EOIs for oil and gas leasing on 2.8 million acres that cannot be processed because the leasing analysis is outdated. If the processes were combined in areas where there is historical oil and gas development, much of this backlog would be eliminated. Therefore, the Forest Service recommends the revision of Forest Service Handbook Section 1909.12 Chapter 20 Section 23.23i to encourage oil and gas leasing availability decisions to be made concurrently with land management planning.
  - **Require national forests with high geothermal resource potential to consider geothermal leasing and development.** Finally, the Forest Service recommends the revision of Forest Service Handbook Section 1909.12 Chapter 20 Section 23.23i to include requirements from Sec. 222.4.d.1 of the 2005 Energy Policy Act that requires forest plans with high geothermal resource potential to consider geothermal leasing and development.ctu

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