

# Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <i>Abbreviations</i> .....                                      | iii |
| <b>1 Purpose of and Need for Action</b> .....                   | 1   |
| Proposal .....  | 1   |
| Project Area.....   | 3   |
| Decisions to be Made .....                                      | 3   |
| Issues Identified and Selected for Analysis .....               | 3   |
| Biological Issues.....  | 3   |
| Socioeconomic Issues.....                                       | 5   |
| Issues Not Selected for Detailed Analysis.....                  | 5   |
| National Wildlife Refuge System and Authorities .....           | 6   |
| Related Actions and Activities .....                            | 6   |
| Habitat Protection and the Easement Acquisition Process .....   | 6   |
| <b>2 Alternatives, Including the Proposed Action</b> .....      | 7   |
| Alternative A (No Action).....                                  | 7   |
| Alternative B (Proposed Action).....                            | 7   |
| Alternatives Considered but not Studied.....                    | 8   |
| Voluntary Landowner Zoning.....                                 | 8   |
| County Zoning.....  | 8   |
| <b>3 Affected Environment</b> .....                             | 9   |
| Biological Environment.....                                     | 9   |
| Climate.....  | 9   |
| Geological Resources .....                                      | 9   |
| Habitat.....  | 10  |
| Wildlife.....   | 11  |
| Cultural Resources .....  | 12  |
| Socioeconomic Environment .....                                 | 12  |
| Agricultural Resources .....                                    | 12  |
| Landownership.....  | 12  |
| Property Tax.....   | 14  |
| Public Use and Wildlife-dependent Recreational Activities ..... | 14  |
| <b>4 Environmental Consequences</b> .....                       | 15  |
| Effects on the Biological Environment.....                      | 15  |
| Climate Change .....  | 15  |
| Adaptation, Mitigation, and Engagement.....                     | 16  |
| Wildlife Habitat .....  | 17  |
| Water Resources .....   | 18  |
| Effects on the Socioeconomic Environment.....                   | 18  |
| Landownership and Land Use .....                                | 18  |
| Value of Intact Ecosystems .....                                | 19  |
| Oil and Gas Exploration and Development—Alternative A .....     | 20  |
| Oil and Gas Exploration and Development—Alternative B .....     | 20  |
| Wind Energy Development—Alternative A .....                     | 20  |
| Wind Energy Development—Alternative B .....                     | 20  |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Public Use—Alternative A.....   | 20        |
| Public Use—Alternative B.....   | 20        |
| Economic Impacts—Alternative A.....   | 20        |
| Economic Impacts—Alternative B.....   | 20        |
| Unavoidable Adverse Impacts.....  | 21        |
| Alternative A.....  | 21        |
| Alternative B.....  | 21        |
| Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitments of Resources.....  | 21        |
| Alternative A.....  | 21        |
| Alternative B.....  | 21        |
| Short-term Use versus Long-term Productivity.....   | 21        |
| Alternative A.....  | 21        |
| Alternative B.....  | 21        |
| Cumulative Impacts.....   | 22        |
| Alternative A.....  | 22        |
| Alternative B.....  | 22        |
| <b>5 Coordination and Environmental Review.....</b>   | <b>25</b> |
| Agency Coordination.....  | 25        |
| Contaminants and Hazardous Materials.....   | 26        |
| National Environmental Policy Act.....  | 26        |
| Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.....  | 26        |
| Distribution and Availability.....  | 27        |
| <i>Appendixes</i>   |           |
| A List of Plants and Animals.....   | 29        |
| B List of Endangered and Threatened Species.....  | 33        |
| C List of Preparers and Reviewers.....  | 35        |
| D Finding of No Significant Impact.....   | 37        |
| E Environmental Action Statement.....   | 41        |
| F Environmental Compliance Certificate.....   | 43        |
| G Section 7 Biological Evaluation.....  | 47        |
| H Director’s Approval to Expand the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Area.....                                   | 53        |
| I Public Involvement.....   | 57        |
| <i>Bibliography</i> .....   | 67        |
| <b>Figures</b>  |           |
| 1 Crown of the Continent ecosystem.....   | 2         |
| 2 Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Area expansion project area.....  | 4         |
| 3 Landownership in the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Area.....  | 13        |
| 4 Relative native and restored benefits of ecosystem goods and services.....                                      | 19        |
| 5 Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative<br>with Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Area expansion..... | 26        |
| <b>Tables</b>   |           |
| 1 Summary of annual operating costs and salaries associated with alternative B.....                               | 21        |
| 2 Summary of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service projects<br>for the Crown of the Continent ecosystem.....         | 23        |