

PAWG Reclamation Task Group Annual Report 2009

The Reclamation task group experienced a change in the attendees of its meetings and the frequency of those meetings as of April, 2009. The group began holding meetings approximately once a month, and real progress was made in drafting the suggestions for the “PAPA Monitoring for Reclamation Success.” Here is a very brief overview of the trend of comments brought up at each meeting and their progression into a final document to be presented to the PAPA in September.

April:

The group discussed the Pipeline Monitoring Baseline, which is either going to be included as an appendix or a separate set of standards. A meeting with Chuck Otto from the BLM will clarify this matter. There were concerns that pipeline monitoring should not be evaluated based on the same criteria as a well pad.

Comments were made concerning clearing up some of the used terminology, (i.e. “desirable” and “frequency”) which could be achieved with an included glossary. Within the group there has been some discussion to make sure we are all on the same page when using certain words and phrases, the glossary would ensure their consistent use in the future.

There was a concern among members regarding a density percentage comparison between the first and the fifth years on a site. Arguments cited that during dry years, the data might not show a significant improvement on the actual location, but with a qualitative monitoring sheet the monitoring plan would allow sites to mimic surrounding conditions from year to year. Quantitative vs. qualitative measurements continued to be a concern in successive meetings.

In trying to achieve the highest success on sites, specific data is going to be favored over a sweeping “One-size-fits-all” model. This group is also in agreement that a 2 year reclamation plan be adopted, rather than a 4 year, unless a site specific extension is requested.

The reclamation group decided to recommend that planting forbs in the interim, near sage grouse habitat should be decided on a site by site basis. If a location is not in a critical range for pronghorn or grouse, and is going to be redisturbed in less than 2 years, perhaps annual forbs could be planted on

that site.

One of the final recommendations of this meeting was in regard to maintaining topsoil viability. The priority in which we would encourage soil usage whenever possible, is as follows:

- 1) Direct Haul-On Pad
- 2) Direct Haul-On Lease
- 3) Direct Haul-Off Lease
- 4) Storage at < 1 meter deep w/ deep rooting plants
- 5) Stockpile and Stabilization-Revisit ASAP

Also, ideally, soil would only be stored during drilling on location.

May:

The meeting commenced with a brief discussion about the reclamation recommendation comments that have been collected thus far which will be compiled into the suggestions to go to the PAWG.

A rough draft of the “Monitoring for Reclamation Success” plan will be out for BLM review by June 1st. The Task Group will have comments and review of this plan by May 28th. The Jonah Field Reclamation Criteria public comments website might be helpful to look at for reference when drafting the monitoring plan for the Anticline.

The group feels perhaps suggesting a threshold percentage of undesirables, would be a good idea, provided that threshold is low enough that retreating locations would not become an issue.

When implemented, the documentation would be similar to what is currently required in the Jonah. There will be a database to enter the collected information, photographs etc. On larger well pads an overall photo, one close up and one in each cardinal direction, along with 1 transect every 5 acres would be required, unless an adaptive management plan was approved. Pipelines would most likely need 1 100 yard transect every ¼ mile, or at each change in soil type. The pipeline requirement is still largely in discussion at this point.

While everyone agrees that good records are vital to the success of future monitoring and reclamation, the concern was brought up that at some point there may be either too much data for the proposed database to handle, or there will be data that is largely unused. Striking a balance between good science and collection overkill will be important.

Next, we discussed some new suggestions on storage of topsoil, which would layer the soil more deeply in some areas, so as to reduce the disturbance to established reclamation. Another option might be to use burms, if they did not create a visual disruption to the final reclamation.

In addition to the glossary suggested at the last meeting, an appendices could list the threshold percentage of undesirable species and provide further clarification on any points of confusion.

June:

Some of the key points we discussed included a no-sage component along right of ways, and including a higher rate of sage & forbs within a 2 mile radius of sage grouse instead. Other corrections were made to the suggestions as well.

Sandy Taylor gave an informative presentation to the group on the problem the overlapping pipeline right of ways are facing. In addition to this dilemma, the first year study area would be huge, and there are no records dating earlier than 2000.

The question was then brought up why there was a need for several smaller pipes to be laid in the same trench, and why the area of disturbance was so large, if the pipe only measures 42 inches at most. Between Sandy and DeeJ we learned that this is largely due to the amount of pressure a well produces, which helps move gas within a pipeline (more compressor stations are not going to be feasible with current air quality issues). When constructing a pipeline it can be done in a confined space, however this becomes more dangerous and cost prohibitive. Finally, commingling of these minerals requires an additional amount of paperwork, which is unlikely to go through at this time.

The group brought up the consideration that since the PAPO is going to be in existence for as long as there is production (and afterwards) funding needs to be considered now rather than later.

The final version of the Monitoring for Reclamation Success suggestions will be due to the PAWG September 12th.