

**Pinedale Anticline Project Office Board of
Directors Meeting
July 9, 2026, 1:30 pm
Virtual Option Available**

Name	Organization		Name	Organization
Craig Smith	WGFD	Board Member	Mark Thonhoff	BLM
Amber Potts	DEQ	Board Member		
Kris Kirby	BLM	Board Member	Kacey Baldwin	BLM
Joe Budd	WDA	Board Member	Michael Henn	WDA (SCCD)
Janessa Saxton	Sublette County		Sarah Brown	DEQ
Ben Smith	BLM		Wyletta Sheldon	BLM
Brad Purdy	BLM		Frank Keeler	BLM
Brandon Scurlock	WGFD		Kelsey Smith	BLM
Chris Wichmann	WDA			
Jacqueline Alderman	BLM		Linda Baker	public
Dave Richey	BLM		Carmel Kail	public
Madison Harper	JHLT		Kerry Shultz	JHLT
Jennifer Fleuret McConchie	BLM		Sonja Hunt	BLM
Keith Guille	DEQ		John Lund	WGFD

Welcome and Introductions

Chairwoman Kirby

Meeting called to order by Kris Kirby at 1:30pm.

Approval of Agenda

Chairwoman Kirby

Amber Potts moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Craig Smith, motion passed.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chairwoman Kirby

Kris Kirby moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Craig Smith, motion passed.

Agency Updates

**Dave Richey, BLM
Brandon Scurlock, WYGF
Amber Potts, WDEQ
Chris Wichmann, WDA**

- **Oil and Gas Development Status:** Dave Richie reported that the BLM Pinedale field office currently has one drilling rig running, generating 15-20 spuds per year, which is significantly

lower than historical activity. The office takes in \$7,500 per spud, and the reduced pace of development has led to budgetary challenges and fewer staff.

- **Wildlife Monitoring Results:** Craig Smith shared that sage grouse lek monitoring showed a 12% decrease in average male attendance, pronghorn populations are recovering slowly after the 2022-23 winter, and mule deer herds are in good condition. The governor recently designated a pronghorn migration corridor, affording stricter protections to bottlenecks and high-use habitats.
- **Air Quality Redesignation Efforts:** Amber Potts and Sarah Brown explained that the Department of Environmental Quality is focused on collecting a future year inventory to support a demonstration that emissions will not return to non-attainment levels, aiming to finalize a maintenance plan for redesignation by the end of the year and begin formal redesignation in early 2027.
- **Personnel and policy updates :** Chris Wichmann explained that Holly Siebert is new in the policy shop. She oversees the north and east parts of the state, around Newcastle. WDA is looking at the grazing regs and support the proposed changes. a

PAPO Budget Update

Dave Richey/ Wyletta Sheldon

- **Account Balances and Obligations:** The JIO account has a balance of \$17,880.98 with no current projects drawing from it, while the PAPO account's checkbook balance as of March 31st is \$2.5 million, with \$1.735 million in obligations, leaving \$820,000 available for new projects.
- **Open Projects and Remaining Funds:** The board reviewed open projects, including habitat restoration, vegetation management, and wildlife monitoring, noting remaining balances for each. Some projects are nearly complete, requiring board approval to close out and reallocate small remaining funds.
- **Salary Funding Decisions:** For 2025 and 2026, only the Department of Agriculture continues to receive salary funding, with a remaining balance of \$75,000 for 2026. Other agencies have discontinued salary funding due to declining budgets.
- **Budget Cap and Future Projections:** Total spend to date is \$29 million, with an upper fund limit of \$36 million. Given current drilling rates, the board does not expect to reach the cap in the next decade, and future project funding will be limited by ongoing low spud fee revenues.

Future Monitoring Scenarios

PAPO Team: Mark Thonhoff

- **Monitoring Scenarios and Board Decision:** Mark presented three monitoring scenarios—status quo, hybrid, and sunset—with the board voting to adopt the hybrid option, balancing ongoing monitoring of key species and project funding over the next decade.
 - **Scenario Descriptions:** The status quo scenario maintains current monitoring and salary allocations, leaving only \$130,700 for mitigation after ten years. The hybrid option continues annual monitoring for mule deer and pronghorn, discontinues noise monitoring, and limits other species monitoring to every five years, resulting in \$1.8 million available for projects after ten years. The sunset option ends all monitoring and salary allocations, maximizing funds for projects.
 - **Decision to adopt the Hybrid Option** (see summary below): Craig Smith moved to adopt the hybrid option, seconded by Kris Kirby, motion passed. The hybrid option was recognized as providing a longer glide path for both monitoring and mitigation projects.

Hybrid Option

Monitoring and Salary	2026 Annual Cost	Total 10 Year Cost
Mule Deer & Pronghorn	\$ 54,000	\$ 163,000
Sage Grouse (noise)	\$ -	\$ -
Pygmy Rabbit *cost only in 2028 and 2033	\$ 0	\$ 266,875
Salary (one time cost 2026)	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000
Total	\$ 129,000	\$ 504,875
Assuming a deposit of \$112,500 a year from spud fees (15 spuds)	Project Dollars Available after 10 years	\$ 1,897,126
	Available Project Dollars 2027	\$ 932,868

- Board approved funding Mule Deer & Pronghorn monitoring funds would last for annual monitoring until **2034**. Monitoring frequency could be revisited at that time.
- Pygmy Rabbit monitoring to in 2028 and 2033 for an estimated \$125k, and \$145K respectively.
- Cease Prairie Dog monitoring
- BLM would take over noise monitoring for Sage Grouse
- Sage Grouse male lek attendance would continue to be monitored by agency staff.
- No further salary expenditures after this year.

PAPO Team supports the hybrid option.

PAPO Funded Projects Update

Kelsey Smith

- Mike Henn described ongoing mitigation projects, including work crews conducting restoration on both private and BLM-administered lands, funded by distributed mitigation funds. The project is focused on the low-tech mesic restoration within the PAPA.
- Willow Lake Fence Reroute lost IRA matching funds, but they weren't really needed. Project needs to be resubmitted for full amount.
- Sublette County invasives project is moving forward, and spraying will continue this fall.
- Pinedale North is a sagebrush mowing project that is on hold due to drought conditions this year. It's delayed until next year.
- Sage Grouse mitigation projects are going forward. A wildlife guzzler will be installed this summer.

Funds transfer request

- **Funds Transfer and Project Reallocation Discussion:** Kerry, with the Jackson Hole Land Trust, and board members discussed the reallocation of funds from the Ball Place Conservation Easement to the Haven Conservation Easement, ultimately deciding to table the request and review it alongside other projects in November, following established process.
 - **Reason for Reallocation Request:** Kerry explained that the Ball Place Conservation Easement did not close due to the landowner's decision, prompting a request to reallocate the approved funds to the Haven Conservation Easement, which had been previously submitted but not funded.
 - **Decision to Table Request:** Kris Kirby moved to solicit new projects for November and review the reallocation request at that time. Joe Budd seconded, motion passed.
 - **Clarification of Submission Requirements:** Kelsey D. Smith confirmed that the Land Trust's letter and application are sufficient for resubmission, and Kerry agreed that no additional materials are needed unless the board requests them.
 - **2025 Application Ranking Table on following page (corrected)**

2025 PAPO Application Summary and Team Recommendations								
Project Title	Total PAPO Request	PAPO % of Total	Project Summary	Project Location	Pros	Cons	Project Score	Recommendations
Targeted Fence Modifications in Crucial Ungulate Migratory Habitats (\$1,936,900 Total Required)	\$250,000	12.9%	Improve wildlife passage through fence conversions, crossings, and seasonal management of fences (e.g., lowering and raising fences and/or wires).	PAPO Off-site Mitigation Priority Area and WGFD Pinedale Region	Funds spent within the PAPA. Cultural not needed. Large inter-agency effort. Leverage of dollars. Addresses Pronghorn and Mule Deer.	May exceed mitigation dollars available (could be funded with the Beaver Creek Ranch WFF dollars 70,0000). Not on-site mitigation, however, the on-site opportunity is minimal due to completed	60.0	Recommend Fund and possibly use the \$70,000 Beaver Creek Ranch WFF funds
The Haven Conservation Easement (\$2,991,950 Total Required)	\$100,000	3.3%	Permanently protect 539.80 acres of ecologically valuable agricultural land along the New Fork River in Sublette County, Wyoming.	Less than 1 mile south of Pinedale, WY; contains about 0.7 miles of New Fork River; overlaps several critically important wildlife habitats. T33N, R109W, Sec 14,22,23.	90% in hand. On-site. Meets both mitigation triggers and PAPO priorities. Cultural not needed. Collared PH and SG that use the property. Main corridor for moose. Within the PAPA.	May exceed mitigation dollars available.	63.3	Recommend Fund with additional language to Section 3.6, p.8. "With regard to any new or replacement fencing on the Property, Grantor may construct or replace fencing on the Property for reserved agricultural uses or purposes or for the protection of any Conservation Value provided that fencing where applicable utilizes the current version of "A Wyoming Landowners's Handbook to Fences and Wildlife" for wildlife friendly fence specifications where livestock concentrations allow for permiable fencing on the Property.
Pygmy Rabbit Distribution and Occupancy in the Pinedale Anticline (\$85,208 total required w/ grant funding and in kind match?)	\$30,000	24.0%	In response to the USFWS petition for listing under the ESA 90-day review and 12-month status review, conduct an updated evaluation of pygmy rabbit occupancy to assess current population trends and inform conservation efforts.	Pinedale Anticline Project Area (PAPA) and Boulder, WY reference area.	Matrix species identified specifically in the ROD. Continues monitoring efforts. Cultural not needed. 100% Funding secured.	Ahead of five-year monitoring cycle (year 3 of 5) but warranted by USFWS petition for listing.	56.7	Recommend Fund
Antelope Flats Water Development (Reservoir) (\$24,000 Total Required)	\$12,000	50.0%	Construct a 3-surface acre reservoir to provide a reliable water source for livestock and wildlife.	South of Hoback Rim and 20 miles northwest of Pinedale, WY. T36N, R113W, Sec 24,25; T36N, R112W, Sec 25, 19, 30, 31; T36N, R111W, Sec 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, 32.	Cultural not needed. NEPA not needed. Off-site. Permits are complete.	Benefits to wildlife are not apparent as it is a new livestock water source in an area that is not water-limiting for wilflife. 0% funding secured.	33.3	No Recommendation

Future of the PAPO Board

Chairwoman Kirby

- **Meeting Cadence and Process:** The board agreed to continue with two meetings per year, usually occurring in November and March, continuing to use available project dollars, and recognized that the hybrid monitoring option allows for longer-term planning and stability.

Public Comments

Chairwoman Kirby

- Members of the public raised questions about operator forecasting, monitoring results, and the importance of public accountability, with the board acknowledging past practices and planning to include operator input and monitoring recaps in future meetings.
 - **Operator Forecasting:** Public participants requested that operators present their anticipated drilling plans at future meetings, noting that operator planning meetings were previously held separately but have not occurred since COVID.
 - **Monitoring Recaps:** The board discussed the possibility of recapping monitoring results and matrix triggers at future meetings, with agency staff confirming that data is still being collected and can be released publicly.
 - **Public Accountability:** Comments emphasized the importance of revising the ROD for public accountability and codifying changes and using existing funds to pick up monitoring items that may have fallen to the wayside, such as PDMS, with the board agreeing to consider these issues in upcoming discussions.

JIO Account

- **Account Closure Process:** The board considered allocating remaining JO funds to approved projects and closing the account, but noted unresolved issues related to potential incoming funds from a conservation easement litigation.
- **Coordination with WWNRT:** The work group was tasked with coordinating with WWNRT to ensure all parties are aware of activities and potential fund transfers, and to report back to the board in November with recommendations.

Next Meeting Location and Dates

Chairwoman Kirby

- **Meeting Schedule and Project Submission Timeline:** The board set the next meeting for **November 10th in Pinedale with a virtual option**, established a project submission window from July 15th to September 15th, and clarified review and approval processes for upcoming projects.

- **Project Submission Timeline:** The project submission window was set for July 15th to September 15th, allowing the team time to review applications before the November board meeting, with guidelines to be posted publicly.

Adjourn

Chairwoman Kirby

Motion to adjourn by Craig Smith. Motion seconded by Joe Budd.
Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 3:26 pm.

Follow-up tasks:

- **Project Closeout and Fund Reallocation:** Review and propose closeout plans for projects with small remaining balances and obtain board approval to reallocate unused funds. (PAPO Team)
- **Groundwater and Vegetation Monitoring Data Accessibility:** Develop a plan to make groundwater and vegetation monitoring data publicly available and report back to the board. (Dave Richey)
- **Jonah Account Closure and Fund Allocation:** Coordinate with WWNRT to clarify the process for closing the Jonah account, including handling potential returned funds from litigation, and report back to the board. (PAPO Team)
- **Project Solicitation Process:** Prepare and distribute a call for project applications by July 15th and notify the board if the team cannot meet this timeline. (BLM team)
- **Haven Conservation Easement Application Review:** Include the Haven Conservation Easement reallocation request and supporting materials in the November project review, ensuring the board has the correct score sheet and application details. (PAPO Team)
- **Operator Forecast Inclusion:** Invite operators to present their future drilling plans and forecasts at the November board meeting. (Dave Richey)