



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Oregon State Office

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EMS TRANSMISSION 10/31/2007

Instruction Memorandum No. OR-2008-014

Expires: 9/30/2009

To: DMs, Staff and Branch Chiefs

From: State Director, Oregon/Washington

Subject: Wind Energy Testing and Monitoring Proposals in Sage-Grouse Habitat

Program Area: Right-of-Way Management, Wind Energy, and Special Status Species Management

Purpose: This Instruction Memorandum (IM) provides additional guidance to the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Implementation of a Wind Energy Development Program (2005) on processing right-of-way applications for wind energy projects on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) located in sage-grouse habitats. This IM specifically addresses the Best Management Practices (BMP) for site monitoring and testing relating to the installation of meteorological (MET) towers. This IM does not address the processing of a Plan of Development for wind energy production facilities.

Policy/Action: The location of MET towers shall be avoided within 2 miles of an active lek or known seasonal concentration area (i.e. roost areas, brood rearing areas) (Connelly, JW., MA Schroeder, A.R.Sands and C.E. Braun. 2000 Wildlife Soc. Bull 28(4): 967-985) unless they are out of the direct line of sight of the active lek or seasonal concentration area. A MET tower may be located within 2 miles of an active lek or seasonal concentration area if a visual obstruction is present to reduce the visibility of the tower in such a manner that reproductive activities are not adversely impacted. Self supporting MET towers are strongly recommended and use of towers requiring guy wires is discouraged. If guy wires are necessary, all wires shall have permanent markers (bird flight diverters) attached for their entire length to increase visibility. Additional BMPs may be required to mitigate negative effects of installing MET towers in sage-grouse habitats. Additionally, operators are to provide for monitoring of nearby leks or seasonal concentration areas as determined by the BLM. This information and associated requirements should be provided to prospective applicants for wind energy testing and monitoring authorizations at the preapplication meeting in advance of application filing.

Timeframe: This guidance is in effect immediately.

Budget Impact: Minimal

Background: The December 2005 ROD on Implementation of a Wind Energy Development Program and Associated Land Use Plan Amendments, Attachment A, provides a number of BMPs. Additionally, it specifies that the BLM will incorporate into the ROD, management goals and objectives specific to habitat conservation for species of concern such as sage-grouse. Specifically, the BMPs state that “MET towers shall not be located in sensitive habitats or in areas where ecological resources known to be sensitive to human activities (e.g., prairie grouse) are present.” However, such language is vague in providing protection to sage-grouse while supporting the National Energy Policy of 2001 and the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The absence of more specific language results in inconsistent application of restrictions concerning MET towers. The Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon recommends that turbines, power lines and wind farms should be constructed 8 kilometers (5 miles) from known/occupied habitat. No guidance is provided for MET towers. The Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon recommends that surface occupancy related to mineral and fossil fuel exploration and extraction be avoided within 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) of known/occupied sage-grouse habitats. MET towers are not specified, and no provisions are provided for line-of-sight exemptions.

The guidance provided herein supports the national energy policy and provides specific, consistently applicable guidelines for MET towers.

Coordination: Field office wildlife biologists and State Office program leaders reviewed relevant IMs (e.g., IM 2006-216, IB OR-2000-334), the ROD for Implementation of a Wind Energy Development Program and Associated Land Use Plan Amendments (December 2005), Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon (Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, 2005), Greater Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush-Steppe Ecosystems Management Guidelines (BLM, 2000) to provide procedural clarification.

Contact: If you have any questions, please contact George Buckner, Wildlife Biologist, at 503-808-6081.

Districts with Unions are reminded to notify their unions of this Instruction Memorandum and satisfy any bargaining obligations before implementation. Your servicing Human Resources Office or Labor Relations Specialist can provide you assistance in this matter.

Signed by
Michael S. Mottice
Acting, Associate State Director

Authenticated by
Paj Shua Cha
Records Section

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