

9/15/2009

Wildlife Task Group Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Lisa Solberg (agency), Theresa Gulbrandson (agency), Joy Bannon (Public), Aimee Davidson (operator) Peter Guernsey (operator), Tim Lingle (Public), Therese Hartman (agency-Chairperson), Linda Baker (Public), Bob McCarty (Public).

Members were asked to review the Pinedale Anticline Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan, approved March 31, 2009. Peter Guernsey indicated that this may not be the most appropriate time for Plan review since sufficient data from plan implementation has not been collected to provide for meaningful adaptive management change recommendations. Therese responded that the request for review was made by the conservation community and that due to the review and subsequent recommendation timing, Wildlife Task Group recommendations to the PAWG may occur at the appropriate time.

Peter Guernsey expressed a single Operator concern indicating that Operators had not to date had the opportunity to assist in the identification of third parties for draft report reviews (Section III. Proposal, third bullet). Therese Hartman indicated that this process has not yet been initiated, and that Operators would be involved.

Written comments were provided by Joy Bannon for the wildlife and conservation community (attached).

Comment A: recommends adding additional data collection to detect contributing factors other than field development impacting wildlife trends.

The wildlife and conservation community feel impact variables (i.e. drought, disease or man-made impacts other than energy development) should be included in monitoring for wildlife trends. In discussion it was explained, a concern is to insure mitigation responds to the direct cause of a population decline. Adding the recommended data could help evaluate cause and effect. Concern was raised that industry is not asking for proof of cause and effect, and this addition could delay mitigation, while we wait for and debate results.

It was stated a having more data could insure mitigation would be applied appropriately. Discussion covered the cost of adding additional data collection and what would be gained. A recommendation to add data collection to the reference areas was met with concern, because off-site mitigation is driven by willing surface ownership and suitable habitat. There are no guarantees that mitigation would be applied in the reference areas. The cost of gathering data field wide to cover all bases could be cost prohibitive.

The group discussed the TRC vegetation inventory currently being conducted on the Anticline. A report is due by end of year. Concern was expressed that we need to collect data in the reference areas as well. Concern was raised that vegetation data was not being collected uniformly across the Pinedale Field office.

An explanation was provided how the mitigation team is current collecting baseline data for JIO mitigation projects. This team, working for the JIO and PAPO, will be collecting baseline data for projects for the Pinedale Anticline Project Office. Focus areas for the JIO were identified using a model developed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The same model and baseline are being developed for the Pinedale Anticline Project Area (PAPA) and may address some of these data needs. There are expectations that focus areas may be the similar allowing the PAPO to utilize data collected for the JIO.

Comment B: the wildlife and conservation community believes that industries involvement in the development of the monitoring plan and subsequent monitoring contracts is a conflict of interest.

This recommendation was met with concern that this is outside the purview of this task group. It was recommended that the wildlife and conservation community take this issue to the BLM through the Adaptive Management process outlined in the Record of Decision.

It was decided that, as it had taken over an hour to discuss only one page of a 7 pg comment letter, we would defer additional discussion on this topic to our next meeting. The group was instructed to prepare written comments to the wildlife and conservation recommendations for further discussion during our October meeting.

The group discussed a fishery project recommended at a previous meeting. The project is proposed to monitor fish downstream of the PAPA. Tim Lingle volunteered to take the lead, preparing a draft proposal for the fish monitoring project. Tim will provide the group with an update during our October meeting.

The next meeting was scheduled for October 15, 2009 at the Pinedale BLM, Rendezvous room