

# Atlantic Rim Meeting

## November 10, 2010

Dennis Carpenter, acting Field Manager, open the meeting by greeting the participants and welcoming them to the fourth Atlantic Rim review team meeting.

Introductions went around the table as participants introduced themselves.

### Performance Goals

#### Big Game

Frank Blomquist – reviewed Wildlife Performance Goals accomplishments and developments to date.

Frank reported that to date the BLM and the big game monitoring team (MT) has focused primarily on mule deer. Mule deer crucial winter range and migration routes can be at highest risk due to forthcoming development proposals. The MT plans to develop pronghorn monitoring in association with the Continental Divide / Creston project to the west. Elk habitat is located on the east side of project area and currently no development proposals are expected.

Mule Deer studies have focused on a multi-phase study. Mule deer collaring studies have been conducted in the project area since 2006. Migration routes have been identified by two phases, phase one concluded in 2008. A report is available.

The current study will be complete in 2011 when a final set of collars is retrieved and the data downloaded West, Incorporated, the study contractor. Both studies were funded by Anadarko, and Warren Resources. Wyoming Game and Fish and the BLM have contributed expertise, labor, equipment and staffing to the project. BLM also funded a portion of the second phase study.

Phase III – funding received to study vegetation components within migration corridors – Hall Sawyer conducted a Browning Bridge Assessment – to look at feed sources within the loafing and resting areas in the migration corridors. Funding was available to look at spring portion only. Additional funding would allow us to look at fall portion of the study area.

Triggers- the team has identified triggers to initiate enhanced monitoring and adaptive management when adverse effects are found. The triggers are listed in the hand out Frank passed out: 11\_2010 big game talking points”

We are still gathering information and looking for information on crucial winter range. More work needs to be done.

Concern: We would lose crucial winter range and in turn; lose a lot of animals if crucial winter range is affected. Browse transects within the crucial winter range would be useful to help us monitor range condition.

There was a concern raised that the triggers exceed the scope of the performance goal. The MT feels they are adequate as a first step to assess changes in migration corridors or crucial winter range in the area.

Sidebar: Can all of these reports from the BLM be put on BLM website to look at information and each agency could share this information. Rawlins Field Office (RFO) management feels this is desirable and will make it happen. We already have a prototype web page put together for Atlantic Rim.

The BLM would like to monitor deer's with collars in the future but funding is lacking. The BLM is trying to figure out how to obtain funding. There is a draft proposal to continue this research.

Fencing at Atlantic Rim is an issue with the MT. We're prioritizing which fences need conversion to modern standards. Elements include fence location, type, age, and positioning to migration corridors and crucial winter range. Some fencing replacement is happening out there based on priorities.

Question: Is the Atlantic Rim area meeting the requirements of the Record of Decision's performance goals?

BLM response: At this time they are.

### **Sage-Grouse – Frank Blomquist**

Handed out a document that detailed the monitoring for sage grouse at Atlantic Rim. "2010 performance goal meetings".

Atlantic Rim is outside the State of Wyoming's sage-grouse Core Areas, for the most part.

The BLM, working with Jeff Beck from the University of Wyoming is looking at sink and source habitat areas where the birds do well. This will be useful information to let the BLM know where the best habitat areas are for the birds are in the Atlantic Rim area.

Question: who determines the location and status of sage-grouse leks?

The department of Game and Fish is the ultimate to supply maps of the LEKS and what the best site is for the birds. The Sage Grouse map / database has recently been updated with the newest information.

Ravens on the Atlantic Rim – there was a recent study by Utah State University that was funded by the Department of Agriculture. They also helped with the vegetation analysis. Anadarko also provided some funding for this study during the past year.

Brad Fedy of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) submitted a proposal to assist with sage-grouse population monitoring including a procedure to compare population trends within the project area to trends within the overall state of Wyoming.

BLM considers this an important aspect of sage-grouse monitoring but no funding source has been identified for implementation. A proposal has been presented and the MT feels it would be an effective way to monitor and understand sage-grouse population dynamics at Atlantic Rim.

Objective of Raven Predation Study looks at affects on sage-grouse eggs and chicks. This may be a major problem for the Sage Grouse, the study will help us figure that out.

Triggers – LEK Counts and surveys. Looking for a change in habitat monitoring. Handout mentioned before had more information on sage-grouse triggers

### **Song Birds – Frank Blomquist**

Last year the BLM instituted a new form SDSB monitoring. Anadarko conducted the historic BBS surveys and BLM worked with the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) to conduct a new survey, a GRID survey. It is more targeted towards habitat types and not anchored to roads biases, as opposed to the GRID survey. The MT has received the first year's data and is in the process of analyzing it. Need to have two years of information to make any comparisons. We will compare this year's BBS survey to see if it is telling us anything.

The BBS survey has been conducted three times and provides some useful information. The GRID survey has been described and conducted. The MT thinks it will provide better information in conformance with other GRID surveys around the state. The GRID survey is newer science than the BBS. We don't feel we are losing the prior year's surveys but rather tying into better science to supplement the original surveys.

### **Muddy Creek Monitoring – discussion opened by Patrick Lionberger.**

Patrick handed out a write-up "Muddy Creek\_Performance\_Goal\_update2010".

There was a discussion on monitoring responsibilities for the Muddy Creek Atlantic Rim working group. Anadarko agreed with the group to monitor "upper Muddy Creek" several years back. However, the working group also identified a need to monitor lower Muddy Creek and the upland tributaries within Atlantic Rim. Currently the BLM is monitoring lower Muddy Creek but the MT feels there is a need to monitor the uplands within Atlantic Rim.

The MT identified a need to initiate an upland monitoring project to identify erosion hazards within the project area and stop erosion before it gets to Muddy Creek. The BLM developed a protocol in cooperation with the MT but it hasn't been implemented yet. Anadarko has stated that this monitoring plan is similar to their SWPPP. RFO wants to compare data collected from the SWPPP monitoring so we can determine if the SWPPP is adequate for the MT's needs. The biggest issue is not to duplicate work that is already being done under the companies Storm Water permits. One of the challenges is that Anadarko only has hard copies of the SWPPP data. Anadarko is open to working with the BLM on providing SWPPP data.

Anadarko funded the third year of the Muddy Creek study this year. At this time, we have three complete annual reports for Muddy Creek monitoring. Bank stability, sediment levels and stream course changes are all part of the monitoring. The next population survey for upper Muddy Creek is planned for 2013.

Dave Applegate (Anadarko) presented the data collected from the third year of monitoring changes to Muddy Creek. Muddy Creek is a highly erosive system. The bottom of the stream is staying the same (sediment) while there is a gradual widening of the stream that will make it more stable in the future. Based on the three years of data, Anadarko proposed to discontinue monitoring Muddy Creek until construction activities resume. Anadarko feels that the information collected is sufficient baseline data. The MT still needs to review the third year report and determine if there is adequate baseline information. The MT will get together in the winter and discuss if reducing monitoring frequency is appropriate.

BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Toxicity Study – The study is looking at chemicals in fish tissue. Muddy Creek has a high level of Selenium at the gauging station in Baggs, Wyoming. Selenium is toxic to aquatic biota and a concern of the BLM, USFWS, and the WGFD. Three years worth of data have been collected from Muddy Creek and currently a portion of that data is being analyzed by the USGS. Additional funding is needed before all data can be analyzed.

Water quality monitoring was an additional need by the MT. A USGS gaging station was installed this year by the USGS in cooperation with the BLM near the upper Muddy Creek Bridge. BLM provided a handout with the website location and parameters collected at the station.

## **Adaptive Management, Future Planning & Reclamation**

**Adaptive Management** – discussion opened by Dave Simons.

Anadarko has a disturbance tracking process in place. They like it and want to stay with it.

BLMs reclamation tracking system was developed to meet our needs. If Anadarko has a system to meet their needs, that's okay with the BLM but we still require the information detailed in the Atlantic Rim RoD and the Rawlins RMP. Perhaps a patch or some form of crosswalk can be found.

Dave passed out a three page handout (“adaptive management 2010”). Two pages are pictures of Atlantic Rim showing ditches and well pads in reclaimed state. Third page was a bullet list of observations and possibilities for reclamation and some adaptive management ideas.

**Reclamation Database** – discussion opened.

The BLM and Anadarko seem to have differences about the Reclamation Database. Anadarko's argument is that they do not want to duplicate their work on their database. They claim to have a database that already gives them the data they need. There seems to be more discussions on this issue to follow.

**Disturbance Cap Rollover** – discussion opened by (Dave Simons and Pam Murdock).  
Looked at number of wells this year, both from Anadarko and Double Eagle. The BLM used a rule-of-thumb that acceptable reclamation could be accomplished in 5 years. Units proposed for rollover are generally two years old and look good.

Slender Wheat Grass (SWG) is doing very well in these areas. It is planted very densely. The companies might be able to ease up on the amount of SWG to plant. In a sense SWG could be considered an organic mulch that stabilizes erosion and buffers environmental conditions on the site. Too much SWG keeps the native grasses, forbs and shrubs from developing. We expect the SWG will gradually die out on the reclaimed sites and natural species will move in. The best news is that the sites looked at were uniformly stable and no obvious erosion can be seen.

**Adaptive Management** – discussion opened by (Dave Simons).  
 Get site specific seed back as top soil on the site might have a faster recovery for the soil.  
 Significant difference between weeds, invasive weeds and noxious weeds and the methods we can use to control them. Where weeds are found on a site, controlling them tends to kill the regenerating native shrubs and forbs keeping us from diversifying the vegetation like we would like to do.

#### **2010 Developments 2011 Planning** - Company presentations.

##### Anadarko

29 wells at Doty Mountain and 15 wells at Sun Dog were recompleted this year. No new wells were created this year.

Water management is crucial. Re-injection aquifers are filling up in some areas.

Doty Mountain and Sun Dog natural gas production continues to grow.

During 2011 there may be a 40 to 70 well program at Sun Dog.

Jack Sparrow has 56 wells approved by the BLM to start drilling during 2011.

3 PODS (30 wells total) are waiting for BLM approval.

##### Double Eagle

In 2010 Double Eagle did not drill any wells but did do some well enhancements to improve well natural gas production.

In 2011 Double Eagle plans to plan to drill 12-20 coal bed natural gas wells, 2 injection wells, mostly in Pod D and E with a couple of possible wells in Pod G and I if their EA is ever finished and the APD's are approved. Also in 2011 we will submit about 20 locations for interim roll over on reclamation.

## **Review Team MOU**

### **Atlantic Rim MOU**

Originally the BLM wanted to develop a Charter for the Review Team. Review and consultation with the BLM's Solicitor (attorney) lead to the decision on BLM's part that an MOU between the governmental agencies and the companies would be the best way to go. A draft MOU has been review by the governments and has been submitted to the companies for review and comment.

### **Meeting Suggestions** – (Closing suggestion).

It was mentioned that maybe the Review Team participants should meet at least twice a year in order to discuss any problems that may arise. This will keep all the parties informed as to what is new and what is taking place.

(Many thanks to Harry Craft for taking and preparing the notes)