

Reducing Onshore Natural Gas and Oil Exploration and Production Impacts Using a Broad-Based Stakeholder Approach – LINGO

DE-FC26-06NT42937

Goal

The objective of this research project is to evaluate practices that are common and key to moving oil and gas exploration and production forward by identifying and minimizing impacts from the most notable issues delaying or curtailing E&P activities. Reducing impacts from E&P activities by engaging in a broad-based stakeholder approach with organizations such as landowners, ranchers, farmers, and other concerned citizens, as well as State and Federal agencies and industry, is the approach. The goal is to lead to practices that ultimately overcome impedances or delays in development of new energy resources.

Performers

Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission (IOGCC), Oklahoma City, OK
ALL Consulting, Inc., Tulsa, OK

Results

Research has been conducted to gather and evaluate data pertinent to common practices and mitigation strategies. A wide range of documents and information sources have been reviewed that discuss environmental mitigation practices for various aspects of onshore oil and gas development, as well as those presenting issues of concern voiced by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This has allowed identification of many potential environmental issues for further research. Several professional meetings have been attended by project personnel, allowing discussions and interviews with numerous representatives of regulatory agencies, the oil and gas E&P industry, and interested NGOs. This has significantly contributed to the identification of issues appropriate for further research. Meetings attended include:

Sage Grouse Best Management Practices Workshop (sponsored by BLM) meeting in Casper, WY – A meeting to participate in the open discussion and identification of environmental impact issues facing the greater sage grouse as a result of oil and gas development throughout its range in the Rocky Mountain west.

Sage Grouse Summit (June 27 and 28, 2007) hosted by the Governor of Wyoming in Casper – A meeting to share current information among academia, industry, and NGOs.

Participated in BLM public hearings to identify and discuss public concerns associated with the Supplement to the Montana Statewide Oil and Gas Environmental Impact Statement and also the Miles City Field Office Resource Management Plan.

Meetings with three BLM Field Offices to discuss reclamation requirements, categorical exclusions, and adaptive management issues related to oil and gas development projects.

Meetings with various oil and gas producers to discuss air emissions, produced water, and wildlife issues.

Initiated research on greater sage grouse population trends within the Powder River Basin of Montana and Wyoming to examine trends in populations in areas impacted by oil and gas development versus those in areas unaffected by such development.

Information gathered and researched from existing sources, interviews, and meetings with interested parties during this reporting period have indicated the potential benefit of producing targeted reports discussing focused environmental impacts issues such as: 1 - wildlife, 2 - air pollution, and 3 - a range of issues related to surface damages. Through research and interviews (Phase I), the project performers will continue to identify case studies of oil and gas exploration and production environmental mitigation activities for further evaluation under Phase II of the project.

Benefits

Development of the Adverse Impact Reduction Handbook addresses the key objective of this research, which is to overcome the issues of impedance or delays for E&P activities. Ultimately, this activity could lead to more effective and efficient production of domestic crude oil and natural gas and minimizing unnecessary lawsuits and surface owner complaints.

Background

In many instances, efforts to reduce impacts resulting from E&P activities do not include input from organizations representing landowners, ranchers, farmers, and other concerned citizens. Lacking this avenue of input can result in practices that ultimately do not achieve the desired result. With that in mind, the proposed research effort will strive to gain input from a broad variety of sources—including NGOS, local governmental bodies (e.g., conservation districts), farmers/ranchers, industry, State and Federal agencies, and others. Through the project activity, the research team will evaluate practices that are common and key to moving development forward and that also cause the most notable issues relative to delaying or curtailing E&P activities. This will include exploration/exploitation activities, such as seismic, to development activities, such as installing gathering and flow lines, and would continue through reclamation. The result of the project will be a handbook that summarizes through case studies those issues that offer the most significant impacts relative to impedances or delays to onshore E&P activities. The handbook will suggest approaches to minimizing or mitigating impacts. Practices and variations will be outlined and detailed. Further, the researchers' goal is to provide benefit analysis of various practices to serve as a starting point for choosing practice options and perhaps also for non-industry people to understand the advantages and disadvantages of various approaches.

Summary

The scope of work for this project consists of five tasks conducted in three phases over a 24 month period. The tasks are overseen by a PAC made up of oil and gas agency directors, State and Federal agency representatives, and industry representatives. The approach to conducting the research in Phase I is to gather and compile information via the Internet and other published sources, leverage existing DOE and other agency studies, and through personal contacts with State and Federal agency personnel, industry representatives, and other stakeholders via e-mail, telephone interviews and field visits. The resulting comparisons and summary documents will be evaluated and analyzed by senior staff at the various oil and gas agencies and by Bureau of Land Management and Environmental Protection Agency personnel participating on the PAC. The final phase will be the documentation of the findings in a handbook and the development of a Web site to host the report, associated interim documents, and related project resources. Conclusions will also be shared publicly through a series of reports, technical presentations, and workshops.

Current Status (July 2007)

The first PAC meeting was held in Austin, TX, in conjunction with IOGCC's Annual Meeting in October 2006. The project has just completed the third quarter of its first year.

Project Start: August 21, 2006

Project End: August 20, 2008

Anticipated DOE Contribution: \$370,125

Performer Contribution: \$97,600 (20 percent of total)

Contact Information

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