



Best practices database reduces impact of drilling, production

EFD project educates operators and citizens on management procedures for developments in the Intermountain West

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The Environmentally Friendly Drilling Systems Program (EFD) — co-funded by the Research Partnership to Secure Energy for America (RPSEA), industry, and environmental organizations — works to integrate advanced technologies into systems in order to significantly reduce the environmental and social impact of drilling and production. One of the projects of the EFD program, the Intermountain Oil and Gas BMP Project, is coordinated by staff of the Natural Resources Law Center (NRLC) at the University of Colorado Law School.

The focus of the BMP project, accessible at: <http://www.oilandgasbmeps.org>, is a comprehensive, free-access, web-based database of oil and gas best management practices for the Intermountain West. The database currently includes over 6,000 BMPs for addressing impacts to a wide variety of surface resources — air and water quality, visual aesthetics, health and safety, wildlife, and others. It includes practices currently in use, required, or recommended for responsible resource management in Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming and can be searched by resource (e.g., air quality or wildlife species), location (region, state or field), or phase of development (e.g., drilling, production, reclamation, monitoring, etc.). The database can also be searched by keywords for specific topics of interest (e.g., practices applicable to stream crossings, offsets from sage grouse leks, installation of power lines, roads, reserve pits, etc.) For the BMP search function, see <http://www.oilandgasbmeps.org/advsearch.php>.

The database has been developed in cooperation with partners in industry, various levels of government, and environmental groups to facilitate the use of best practices to reduce environmental and social impacts of development. The BMP database is not intended to represent a consensus on what the best practices are for specific applications, nor to advise users on the current legal requirements for specific locations. Rather, it describes each practice and documents the source of the practice (who requires or recommends it in what specific applications) and links the user to the source document. Where possible, it provides supplemental information, including construction specifications, illustrations, pictures, maps, monitoring reports, cost-benefit analyses, and evaluations of the potential of the practice for mitigating impacts of development.

In addition to the searchable database, the website includes a variety of resources pages including applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, an introduction to the oil and gas development process; and background information on air quality, water quality, wildlife, vegetation, reclamation; and GIS applications as they relate to oil and gas. A Community Resource page identifies tools for communities to work with industry and governments to maximize the benefits of development while controlling the impacts on their communities. A searchable bibliography, <http://www.oilandgasbmps.org/bibliosearch.php>, provides users with easy access to agency guidelines, environmental impact statements, scientific reports and many other documents on best management practices.

Database searches can help industry, environmental organizations, regulators, and concerned citizens identify and integrate appropriate practices into oil and gas operations. NRLC Project staff are available to help users with data queries and reports. They also welcome information from operators and consultants on innovative practices and technologies being implemented in the Intermountain West.

For more information on the project or to submit information (BMPs, critiques of BMPs or case studies) for addition to the database or website, contact Kathryn Mutz at kathryn.mutz@colorado.edu.