

Public input meetings

Big Piney, Feb. 20, 2008: Two participants

Only two participants, but top-notch discussion. Major issues concerned commercial permitting on public lands, air quality, groundwater quality and cultural resources. As the result of these discussions, the following revisions are suggested:

Sublette County supports streamlining and expediting the permitting process for commercial recreation permits on public lands in the county.

Sublette County supports and encourages the permitting of commercial business enterprises on public lands that reflect the custom and culture of the county in terms of recreation and outdoor lifestyles/uses.

Sublette County supports requiring baseline water quality sampling and cataloging of that data for all industrial water wells (including injection wells) drilled on public lands.

Sublette County supports the Environmental Protection Agency's recommendations in cases where the agency determines there are significant risks to human health from a proposed project on public lands.

Sublette County supports protection of the county's groundwater quality as an issue of utmost importance.

Sublette County supports receiving official notification, as in interested party, of all voluntary remediation of contaminated sites on public lands in the county.

Sublette County supports a quarter-mile protective buffer for historic trails on public lands in the county in which no new disturbance would be allowed except where existing improved roads and pipelines currently cross the trail, and no construction activities would be allowed unless screened from the trail by topography.

Pinedale, Feb. 21, 2008: Seven participants

This roundtable discussion began with the citizens noting that three county commissioners can't know enough about all the topics the county needs to address when it comes to public lands management, and the suggestion that the commission develop a register of interested individuals who would be willing to provide input to the commission on relevant matters as needed. This discussion evolved into a recommendation that the county develop a standing public lands committee to review public land management proposals as needed, and make recommendations to the commission.

The amount of oil and gas development in the county was an over-riding concern for this group, and there was some concern the county commission endorses business activity over all other uses and concerns (regardless of environmental degradation).

Topics of concern from members of the group include:

- Waste water disposal pits should be located within industrialized areas of public lands and away from water sources.
- The lack of ability to track implementation of management provisions to ensure the county's interests are being protected.
- A recommendation that the county look at items on a broad-scale; perhaps the development of a regional impact policy.
- A recommendation that there be areas set aside as wildlife reserves, where human uses (OHV) be restricted
- A need for cooperative law enforcement efforts on public lands
- The need to control weeds on public lands was discussed, as was the amount of beetle-kill of trees expected in the next few years.
- The need for sediment control
- Use the best science on permitting reinjection wells
- The need to address the disconnect/disenfranchisement between decision-makers (both within agencies and within industry) from community expectations and community responsibility.

There was much support expressed for collaborative efforts between agencies, from small-scale planning efforts to large-scale undertakings.

There was some disappointment expressed that members of the oil and gas industry were not in attendance at the meeting. It was suggested that perhaps the county commission facilitate a public meeting of stakeholders in the future so that as this policy is developed, each group could hear the concerns and needs of other groups.

Bondurant, Feb. 22, 2008: Three participants

Much of the discussion at this meeting centered around the Plains proposal for wells in the Noble Basin.

Issues/recommendations include:

- There needs to be a more accurate analysis of full-field development potential at an early stage in the process.
- Water quality/spring runoff
- Socio-economic concerns
- Habitat data/vegetation used in some analyses is a decade old, and in some cases 30 years old/
- Rim far too important for wildlife and watershed to be developed for minerals
- Needs to be more emphasis on multiple use, not just development
- Complaint of no compliance enforcement with livestock grazing problem (cattle bog)
- Local federal officials should have more power to deal with issues, rather than dictates from elsewhere
- Wildlife/water/recreation are long-term resources, as is quality of life here.
- Slow down the pace of development in the county.