

Upper Green River Valley Coalition

Air Quality and the Jonah Infill

The Thickening Mess in the Upper Green's Skies

Seeing Through The Technical Haze

In August 2005 the Pinedale Bureau of Land Management released a supplemental analysis of air quality impacts for the proposed Jonah Infill project and other development in Wyoming's Upper Green River Valley. This document—the Jonah Infill Drilling Project Air Quality Technical Supplemental Document—predicts significant degradation of the area's pristine air if changes aren't made to the pace of development and control measures imposed. The degradation is expected to be widespread and will include impacts to Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks.

This project will result in:

- Decreasing visibility
- Increasing human health concerns
- Acidification of mountain lakes

Visibility

When the Jonah Infill Project is taken into consideration with other development in the Upper Green River Valley, the town of Pinedale will have its views of the nearby Wind River Mountains obscured by haze for nearly four months—113 days specifically—of the year.

Other areas will also see noticeable degradation such as:

- Boulder, Wyo. 131 days per year
- Daniel, Wyo. 88 days per year
- Big Piney, Wyo. 85 days per year
- Bridger, Fitzpatrick and Popo Agie Wilderness Areas, 61, 11 and 23 days per year respectively.¹

Much of the Wind River Range, as well as Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks, has been designated a Class I Airshed under the Clean Air Act. This designation is intended to protect the nation's most pristine air. The BLM's analysis predicts the pure air in the Wind Rivers will be noticeably hazy on more than 30 days per year while Grand Teton and Yellowstone will have eight and three days of oil and gas induced haze annually.

Human Health

The supplemental analysis shows standards for protecting human health against ozone and particulate pollution will come perilously close to being exceeded in the Jonah Field if the project moves forward as planned. Ozone levels are projected to reach 98 percent of the standard considered safe while particulate matter (dust and soot) will reach 99 percent of that threshold.²

- Ozone can reduce lung function and make it difficult to breathe. It aggravates asthma and other respiratory disorders and can increase susceptibility to lung infections.
- Particulate pollution is a mixture of solids and liquid droplets small enough to get in lungs where it can aggravate heart and lung problems and increase susceptibility to respiratory disease.

¹ Taken from the Jonah Infill Drilling Project Air Quality Technical Supplemental Document.

² Ibid

Water Quality

The supplemental analysis show that deposition of nitrogen will reach levels of concern in the Wind River Mountains if this project proceeds as planned. Nitrogen causes acidification of lakes and can harm the Wind Rivers' popular trout fisheries. Sulfur deposition is also a potential problem for the same reasons as nitrogen. The BLM expects sulfur to reach levels of concern in Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks as well as in the Bridger Wilderness Area. In addition to problems with acidification, both sulfur and nitrogen are fertilizers, which cause algae blooms that further jeopardize the health of fisheries.

Containing the Mess: Staged Development and Honest Analysis

Oil and gas development in the Upper Green River Valley is the most important contributor to air pollution originating in the valley itself. Its impacts can be mitigated by the following:

1. To understand how air quality is changing in the valley and in surrounding national parks and wilderness areas, we need a **cumulative analysis** of all emissions affecting the area's air. This tool will enable us to make a true assessment of impacts and devise strategies to minimize the negative effect of oil and gas development on our pristine air. The supplemental analysis fails to provide this accurate cumulative analysis.
2. The Pinedale BLM is failing to control the pace of development in the Upper Green River Valley. An effective way to control emissions, as well as to reduce unwanted impacts to the area's quality of life and wildlife, is to **phase-in development** over time rather than rush to drill everything immediately.
3. As it registers record-breaking earnings, the oil and gas industry has the resources needed to use the **best drilling technologies and techniques** available to minimize impacts on air quality. Some companies in the Upper Green have voluntarily implemented cleaner technologies on a limited basis. The BLM should require industry use these practices in all situations.
4. A **cap on air pollution emissions** will allow industry to develop the oil and gas resource while ensuring the protection of other important values such as visibility, human health and the health of mountain lakes.

Our goal is clean air, clear skies, clean water and healthy people.

To see a detailed analysis of the Jonah Infill Air Quality Supplemental Analysis or for more general information, see www.uppergreen.org or please contact:

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