



Working Group doesn't work

By members of the Pinedale Anticline Working Group

The Pinedale Anticline Working Group (PAWG), a Public Advisory Committee appointed by the Secretary of Interior is dead. Again.

The Pinedale Bureau of Land Management (BLM) failed to renew the terms of service before their expiration for seven PAWG members, although when the same thing occurred in 2004, the Secretary renewed the charter within a month, allowing the PAWG to continue its work. BLM could do this again, but now refuses to enable the PAWG to consider the recommendations that are a result of extensive work conducted by the volunteer members of the Task Groups.

It is clear that the BLM no longer wishes to hear recommendations for Anticline management from the participants in 'cooperative conservation' mandated for the agency by an Aug. 2004 Presidential Executive Order. The result of this is that drilling will

continue without consultation from the State of Wyoming, ranching community, Town of Pinedale, oil and gas operators, adjacent landowners, and conservation groups. There will be no participation in monitoring and mitigation on the Anticline, and our water, air, cultural resources, and wildlife will be the victims.

The BLM area manager has suggested that the next PAWG meeting be convened with only two members present, neither of whom will actually attend. The remaining constituencies will no longer be legally represented.

The PAWG and its member Task Groups have existed thus far in service to an ideal, one that attempts to find common ground among a disparate group of representatives in a politically-charged climate. All volunteers have worked extremely hard to agree on a remarkable set of recommendations for monitoring the intense natural gas development of the Pinedale Anticline. Groups traditionally at odds, such as oil and gas operators and conserva-

tionists, have reached agreements for monitoring, but because of the BLM's dysfunctional management have not been able to move forward proactively. While BLM touts the success of cooperative conservation, the BLM itself is the biggest impediment to realization of this potential.

Only a small fraction of the monitoring recommendations, or even the monitoring required by the Record of Decision has been acted upon by the agency. Monitoring funding has been but a trickle compared to what is needed to adequately understand the full impacts of development on the wildlife-rich Mesa and in the surrounding watersheds, airsheds, and human communities.

Much of the monitoring data is hidden, inaccessible to the public or re-interpreted to meet BLM's public agenda. And now that it's clear that mitigation is immediately needed to offset impacts to declining wildlife and air quality, BLM is unwilling to take the steps necessary to follow its own guidelines.

This final, dismissive gesture to an 'adaptive management' Working Group is indicative of BLM's monumental failure to assume responsibility for its care of public lands that affect Sublette County's wildlife, air quality, and quality of life.

Anticline Working Group and Task Group members have toiled to serve their community with hundreds of volunteer hours. Apparently BLM does not feel compelled to recognize either that effort or the dedication to a place and an ideal that brought everyone but the agency itself to the cooperative table. It's a travesty of the trust that Americans place in their government: another broken, empty promise.

Pinedale Anticline Working Group members: Paul Hagenstein (livestock operators' representative) Susan Kramer (adjacent landowners' representative), Bob Barrett (public at-large representative), Nylla Kunard (Town of Pinedale representative), Linda Baker (conservation group representative) ■