

Horn River Basin Shale Gas Producers Group Minimizing Environmental Impact a Key Priority

The Horn River Basin is a remote wilderness area that has seen limited seismic and drilling activity until recently. Now, as oil and gas companies begin exploring the forested area for natural gas in shale, there will be more industrial development. The Horn River Basin Shale Gas Producers Group is determined to minimize its environmental footprint in the area.

This eleven-member group includes Apache, Devon, EnCana, EOG, Nexen, Quicksilver, Stone Mountain/Ramshorn, Imperial Oil/ExxonMobil Canada, ConocoPhillips, Suncor, and Pengrowth.

The group has created an Environmental Committee to work on specific initiatives for the area. In 2009, an Area Operations Protocol was completed that addresses key issues including land access, wildlife and water management. This document will guide development in the area in a responsible manner.

“The protocol does not replace regulatory requirements, it’s in addition to them,” explains Shad Watts, committee chair. “It outlines best management practices for the area.”

Another project that began in 2009 is a wildlife sighting program. Field staff working throughout the area are given cards listing local species and asked to check off the ones they see. The Horn River area is

home to many animals including deer, moose, caribou, elk, and bears. Data from the project is tracked by the producers and submitted to the B.C. provincial government.

To address stakeholder concerns about water usage, the Producers Group is participating in two water-related studies. One deals with surface water availability while the other looks at underground sources in partnership with GeoScience B.C.

“We are looking to build the right baseline information,” says Shad. “We hope to have a university or other third party initiate a surface water project in 2010 to help us understand general availability and flows. Water is an important resource and we need to quantify it to enable effective and efficient management.”

In addition, working with GeoScience B.C., the Producers Group is mapping sub-surface water in the Horn River area to determine possible water sources for shale gas development. “In some places there is more water than others,” explains Mark Taylor of EnCana and co-chair of the Producers Group Operations Committee. “The mapping has recently been completed, and we are starting to work with the results.”

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*This document was prepared and endorsed by the
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