

Community Issues and Recommendations Concerning Future Energy Development

Overview Summary of Reports Prepared for Campbell County, Johnson County and Sheridan County

“The purpose of the summary is to identify relevant community issues and recommendations that can be addressed and integrated into the future strategies and actions of the Wyoming Energy Commission.”

Common Issues for Campbell, Sheridan and Johnson Counties

“Coalbed methane development is scattered throughout most of Campbell County.... Community leaders of Campbell County view the impacts of (coal bed methane) development as more pervasive and more significant to its affected communities.” (In comparison to other existing energy development.)

1. Infrastructure

- A. Twelve to fifty percent of the roads throughout the counties have been impacted by CBM development. “Increased road usage by CBM and new residents is reducing the facility life of these roads and increasing the cost of road operations and maintenance.”
- A. Dust is a significant problem due to increased traffic (especially water trucks) on the roads. Dust suppression has been a serious funding consideration due to the cost of gravel (and labor) to suppress the dust. There should be a study of dust emissions.
- A. Lack of workforce for needed infrastructure changes to accommodate CBM activities.

Solutions/comments

- A. Mandate assistance from coal bed methane companies to help pay for road upkeep and dust suppression. “The County has developed user agreements with some of the companies to: repair road damages that are beyond normal wear and tear; restore roads to condition that existed prior to their usage; and provide labor and materials for road repairs.” The county bears the cost of repair and upkeep in any “unclear” instance as well if they have not established a user agreement. Likewise, “Private landowners should establish road user agreements with coal bed methane companies that include provisions for road restoration and safety issues.”

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- A. Improve roads that will be especially impacted by increase of truck and other traffic.
- A. Establish a State Industrial Siting Act that includes funds to counties based on cumulative impacts and that gives communities “impact funds in advance of the consequences generated by future energy development.” Consider making this available for cities and communities to receive state impact funds.

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1. Police Services

A. Increase in calls to local dispatcher. “As a direct result of CBM development, the County Sheriff has seen an increase in larceny, destruction of private property, family violence and child abuse.” The increase in arrests is associated with assaults and drug abuse violations. Disorderly conduct arrests rose along with aggravated assault crimes and burglary. “More breaches of peace, property destruction and fraud arrests.” “A significant cause of the increase in crime stems from the heavy amount of shift work in both CMB development and the service economy.” One of the Sheriffs links the increase in crime to coal bed methane activities and the increase in population. Increase in traffic and speeding on country roads due to increase of resident population. A 26% increase in traffic violations occurred in one year. “There is a lack of law enforcement and social services to deal with increase of problems.”

A. Capacity of county jail maxed. Need more jail space.

Solutions/comments

- A. Add new jail cells.
- B. Increase labor pool.
- C. Provide needed social services.

1. Fire Services

A. Fire department understaffed. Increased development will increase demands on the fire and EMT departments.

A. Need to adopt operational standards for CBM drilling in and around populated areas. No safety standards applied in the CBM industry exploration and production areas.

A. Communication of county fire services and CBM developer to exchange safety and emergency response plans/abilities.

A. A 40 % increase in fire related calls in three years.

Solutions/Comments

A. The County fire and Rescue Department has made an effort to “maintain greater preparedness for potential responses to energy development activities.” Good relations and communication is important between the CBM companies and the Fire Department. A gas facilities training program was offered by fire department. The local fire departments and EMT rescue workers were encouraged to tour facilities to become familiar for any emergency needs.

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- B. Increase labor pool.
- C. Create operational and safety standards for CBM companies.

1. Social services

Solutions /Comments

- A. Provide housing, food and social services for low-income persons and families. Make Section 8 vouchers available to low-income persons seeking housing.
- A. Make social services available to residents, including rehab centers, crises centers, shelters, and food banks.

1. Public safety

- A. Rise in petty theft, domestic violence and other criminal behavior.

1. Labor Force

- A. There is competition for high paying jobs and competition for county and city Jobs. The wage rates are much higher than normal because of the competition by CBM job rates
- A. Lack of adequate labor force to keep up with growing needs.

Solutions /Comments

- A. Government Infrastructure: "...need more personnel to handle the increase in administrative services... (such as)...recording of numerous land transactions and...vehicle registration services."

1. Education

- A. 15 percent increase in students in area closest to CBM activity.

8. Housing

- A. Cost of living has risen due to tight housing market with the influx of people to the county to work in the energy industry. The new residents primarily represent employees of "the coal bed methane companies, contractors, or related service company."

Solutions /Comments

- A. Zoning has encouraged development within the limits of maintaining community character yet encouraging housing development for incoming residents. "...community leaders...take comfort in their adoption of more stringent housing standards." There is a concern that the "boom" will "bust" once the energy development is done.

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- B. Provide sufficient low-income housing by making more section 8 housing vouchers available to lower-income individuals.

Suggestions

1. “Future coordination of anticipated energy projects”
 - A. “Recognize a need for state agencies...to better coordinate authorized energy development projects with local government. State officials need to share information concerning future energy development projects that enables county and municipal government to become better prepared to address community impacts.” They recommend what this information would include. Likewise, it is suggested that “ an advanced evaluation process for proposed energy development projects should be established in local government...(permitting) companies and communities (to) work together more effectively to mitigate anticipated community impacts.”
 - A. “ Affected counties and municipalities should be provided copies of state permits from energy companies performing exploration and production activities in Johnson County. Existing permitting processes should include a requirement for energy development companies to make some kind of contact with representatives of affected counties and municipalities. ...the County Clerk could review leases, documents and right-of-ways that it records to determine the type of energy development occurring and what companies are involved.”

1. Funding of impacts: Considerations for the State, City and Bureau

- A. Although the county is generating the most income for the state from CBM development, there is not adequate funding for the extensive amount of impacts on the county. The funds “to address immediate expansions of infrastructure and public services” are not available when they are needed, but up to two years after they are needed.
- A. State Industrial Siting Act Funds: CBM companies have not had to make financial contributions to community impacts. It is suggested that unless this changes, there will be insufficient funds to pay for the “anticipated consequences of future energy development.” “ The Industrial Siting Act need(s) to ...enable affected communities to receive impact funds in advance of anticipated projects.” “...energy development companies...should be required to provide some funds to help communities deal with impacts.” “A lower threshold (in the Industrial Siting Act) should be established so that consequences from future energy development projects, e.g., coal bed

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methane, can be mitigated by some additional State funds in advance of project development.” “There needs to be a mechanism where counties can receive some type of funds to help them address the cost of infrastructure improvements and the expansion of county services.”

- A. “The State should consider the following recommendation in order to help municipalities and counties receive impact funds for energy projects earlier. The State should take a proportion...of their share of severance taxes to set aside for impacted communities. The State Lands Investment Board (SLIB), or some other funding entity, would handle the distribution of funds, not the Legislature.” (It goes on to explain the process that may work.)
 - A. “...require energy companies to contact local government representatives as part of Oil and Gas Commission permit process.” “The State should provide or establish reserve funds that local government can use at their discretion to address community impacts.”
1. “The State Legislature should create a mechanism for monitoring larger energy development projects. Using a set threshold, the Legislature should divert a portion of the use tax, collected by the state, to affected local communities or state agencies to mitigate infrastructure and human service problems.”
 2. Set bonding requirements high (50,000 is not sufficient in Sheridan County) to ensure adequate reclamation to occur. Place compressor stations away from communities and houses so people are not impacted by the sight or the sound.