

BLM'S DEVELOPMENT OF AN APPROACH TO MONITORING REGIONAL-SCALE IMPACTS OF ENERGY DEVELOPMENT ON WILDLIFE

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The USDI Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) monitoring related to wildlife and energy development is generally focused on compliance and effectiveness monitoring at the local lease level. This focus brings efficiency and direction to local energy programs, but does not allow monitoring of species and habitats at larger scales. Because many species have habitat requirements or ranges well beyond localities where energy development occurs, analysis of monitoring information should occur on a corresponding scale. BLM's regional-scale monitoring activities must involve shared information and application over multiple planning areas, Field Offices or State Offices. Regional information alone will not be sufficient to determine effectiveness of local mitigation measures, improve cumulative impact analysis, or track landscape changes over time. However, a comprehensive regional approach that incorporates local monitoring information can improve understanding of the circumstances under which land-use changes influence health and condition of expansive or dispersed habitats and wide-ranging species. The BLM is developing a process to monitor regional effects of energy (primarily oil and gas) exploration and development on wildlife species and habitats. BLM has contracted development of two regional monitoring approaches—in northwest Colorado and on Alaska's North Slope; each will be independently developed from a common theoretical framework. After completion of the contracted products, BLM will select the strongest elements to assemble and implement a single national program for regional wildlife monitoring. This regional approach could also be utilized in addressing cumulative impacts and species conservation planning in support of decision-making in land use planning, NEPA documentation, and ESA compliance.