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SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

VOLUME 112, No. 33, August 18, 2011

THERMOPOLIS, WY 82443

USPS 627-300

75¢

CO2 injection a hot topic related to RMP

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners, along with representatives from other counties and various conservation districts, met with Jeremiah Riegan, Rob Hurless and Aaron Clark from the governor's office last Thursday to discuss enhanced oil recovery in the Big Horn Basin.

The basis of the meeting was to discuss the use of CO2 injection into oil wells in the Big Horn Basin, a process which is not covered in the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) draft Resource Management Plan (RMP).

CO2 injection, known as flooding, was first used in the early 1970s to reduce the viscosity of oil, making it easier to get it to the wellhead. It enables companies to pull oil out of the ground that may be too thick otherwise to come out of various types of strata.

Flooding is the second most common recovery technique used in the world and may be used by large or small operations. In addition, it can be used to resurrect old oil wells that have either stopped or slowed production.

About 300,000 surface acres in Hot Springs, Park, Washakie and Big Horn counties have been identified as prime areas for flooding, with the potential for many more areas in the four-county region.

With oil production in the area lower than it has been in decades, the use of flooding could create an increase in production from old wells as well as new ones, adding to the economy in terms of jobs as well as income from production.

The BLM estimates approximately 11 million barrels of oil are being pumped from the ground right now, and the RMP says the downtrend will continue, dropping production to about 5 million barrels by 2027.

Based on an average \$80 per barrel, that will decimate state revenues, taking them from about \$52 million down to \$20 million or less by 2027.

BLM needs information

According to Clark, the governor's office doesn't see any malice on the part of the BLM, "they just don't have the information."

"Oil and gas has changed significantly since they did their initial scoping," he said. "There will be a big demand in the Big Horn Basin."

Clark said the University of Wyoming developed a plan with areas prime for CO2 recovery, ones they feel the industry will want to invest in in a big way.

Several of those areas are in Hot Springs County, including Grass Creek, Hamilton Dome, Buffalo Basin, Gebo and Murphy Dome.

One question raised during the meeting was whether pipeline was already in place to move the oil once extracted.

Clark said the routes look good, and actually hit all of the areas in question with the exception of

Hamilton Dome. However, the pipeline only misses that area by about four miles.

"We could change the curve to an upward swing if we can get this going right away rather than waiting until the middle of the RMP projection to correct it," Clark said.

Clara Mae Yetter with the Meeteetse Conservation District said they are dependent on the oil income.

"We need this RMP to be rock solid for people to build their future on," Yetter said. "Currently it's not."

"This is something Hot Springs County has been talking about as an integral part of the future of the county," commissioner Mike Baker said. "We used to be a mass producer, but our fields are old. This would boost things significantly."

"Forty percent of all the oil in Wyoming comes from right here in the Big Horn Basin."

There are also the costs associated with infrastructure to consider.

"We need to look at this as the future," commission chairman John Lumley said. "Local governments can look at it and plan ahead. Flooding needs to be recognized in the RMP to allow for planning by communities."

Revised RMP draft

So where do we go from here?

Clark said the governor's office would be meeting with the BLM to convince them this is actual science, not just theory.

"We're working with them now to get it in without having to ask for a supplemental to the plan," he said. "A revised draft would be so much easier. If we wait for an addendum, who knows how long that will take."

The good thing, according to Clark, is the environmental groups have no problem with the existing fields. That's not to say additional wells won't be added in the future, though.

"We don't want to deny the local, independent drillers the opportunity the big boys have," Clark said.

The big concern is getting to the right people, the ones who can actually make decisions within the BLM. With just three weeks left in the comment period, the group agreed they would have to run hard, meet with the BLM and get the word across.

"If we lose this opportunity now," Clark said, "we'll never get it back."

Even with just three weeks left in the comment period, it could take a couple of years before the BLM implements its final plan.

Right now, there are a lot of purchased leases that aren't being used because the drilling permit is being held until the RMP is finished.

"Would the industry agree to a two-year delay?" Clark asked. "They aren't thrilled about it, but they can see the eventual benefit."



Firefighter John Fish rushes to stop flames from a burning garage from spreading to a truck and other pieces of machinery in a storage yard south of the Hot Springs County Veterinary Clinic on Thursday afternoon. — J.D. Stetson photo

Flames engulf old garage

Hot Springs County firefighters were called to a storage yard south of Hot Springs County Veterinary Clinic on Sixth Street Thursday to confront a fully engulfed garage on property owned by BNSF Railway.

A salvage crew cleaning up the property had used a chop saw and sparks ignited grass on the property, causing the

fire to spread to the building, said Fire Chief Mark Collins.

One firefighter was transferred to Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital to be treated for smoke inhalation. He asked his name to not be released, Collins said.

Collins said the firefighter was one of the first responders who thought the fire was a grassfire and he did not have

a breathing apparatus. The firefighter was released from the hospital the next day, Collins said.

On Monday, firefighters also dealt with a downed power line, a motorcycle wreck and an acre-and-a-half, lightning-sparked grass fire on Copper Mountain. Both the wreck and the downed power line were due to strong winds.

Derby driver seeks to keep prize money in Thermopolis

by J.D. Stetson

For the past four years, 24-year-old Stephen Flynn has tested his metal in the arena at the Hot Springs County Fairgrounds during the annual Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce Demolition Derby.

Last year, Flynn's 1965 Chrysler Plymouth won the first heat of the derby and took fourth in the main event. In that derby, the first-place prize went to a Casper man, while the second-place prize went to a driver

from Gillette.

Flynn's goal this year is to see the \$2,000 grand prize and the \$1,000 runner-up award stay in Thermopolis.

"I'd like to see a Thermop guy win, that's all I'm concerned with," Flynn said.

This year, Flynn has chosen a 1968 Dodge Coronet, modified to derby specifications. Flynn used his spare time on the weekends and several hours after working during the day for McCumber Well Service to prepare the car for the thrashing he plans to receive — and survive.

He started looking for the new car as soon as he finished the last derby and picked his current car up on Mother's Day in Lusk.

He started working on the car at the start of June and finished in time to run the car in the Gift of the Waters Parade. For Flynn, the real payoff of participating in the derby isn't the prize money.

"It's the adrenaline rush," Flynn said. "I ride dirt bikes, I do a lot of other stuff, but this right here tops it all."

While Flynn can prepare all he wants to get ready for the derby mentally, there really isn't a way to

focus for him until he takes his first hit during his heat.

"Until I get hit the first time, I'm not going to accomplish a thing," Flynn said. "After that it all clears out and you can actually focus on what you're trying to do."

While the point of the derby is to survive a single heat and then move on to the main event, Flynn's philosophy is that he likes to put on a show. His goal is to build and select the car to take punishment while also doling it out.

"I like to show more than anything," Flynn said. "Cause I know when I go to a derby I want to see big hits and cars getting messed up. That's a derby, that's what it's all about and the money is just a perk to it."

While Flynn has a few more days to relax before the derby, he's keeping his mind on two things: keeping the prize money in Thermopolis and not leaving the arena with an undamaged car.

"I don't want to come out with a straight car," Flynn said. "I don't want to sand bag or run around and make laps so that I can try to make money. I want to go out and tear stuff up."



Stephen Flynn, 24, and his Demolition Derby modified 1968 Dodge Coronet are ready to enter the arena Saturday at the Hot Springs County Fairgrounds. Flynn is a fourth-time veteran of the derby and his goal this year is to keep the top prize money in Thermopolis. — J.D. Stetson photo

Demolition Derby

6 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 20
HSC Fairgrounds Arena
Advance tickets: Adults \$10,
kids ages 5-12 and seniors \$4;
available at Thermopolis-Hot
Springs Chamber of Com-
merce, Finishing Touches,
Needful Things, Carquest in
Thermopolis, Worland-Ten
Sleep Chamber of Commerce,
Linton's Big R in Riverton
At the gate: Adults \$12, kids
ages 5-12 and seniors \$5
Drivers: \$30 entry fee; rules
and regulations at
chamber office, 864-3192