

From: [Larry Crist](#)
To: [Laura Romin](#); [Amy Defreese](#); [Betsy Herrmann](#); [Jay Martini](#)
Subject: FW: Rep Stewart Meeting - Alton Coal BP
Date: Monday, January 26, 2015 2:49:21 PM
Attachments: [Alton Coal BP_Jan262015.docx](#)

From: Michael Thabault [mailto:michael_thabault@fws.gov]
Sent: Monday, January 26, 2015 1:51 PM
To: Larry Crist
Subject: Fwd: Rep Stewart Meeting - Alton Coal BP

Can you answer

Michael Thabault
Assistant Regional Director
Ecological Services
Mountain Prairie Region

Begin forwarded message:

From: Noreen Walsh <noreen_walsh@fws.gov>
Date: January 26, 2015 at 1:47:28 PM MST
To: Michael Thabault <michael_thabault@fws.gov>, nicole_alt@fws.gov
Cc: Matt Hogan <matt_hogan@fws.gov>
Subject: FW: Rep Stewart Meeting - Alton Coal BP

Per my voicemail, great briefing paper.

One question: to be consistent with the USGS Buffer Review and our subsequent recommendations to BLM, we would now generally recommend 3.1 miles as a buffer.

However, I understand our recommendation reflected in the attached predates the USGS review and our subsequent (recent) recommendations to BLM.

Can we still support 2 miles, knowing what we know now? Are there other protections beyond the buffer that taken together with the buffer mean that 2 miles is sufficient? If so, can we explain? If not, do we need to change our recommendation?

Thanks, let's resolve this and then we can close this out.

Noreen

From: Matt Hogan [mailto:Matt_Hogan@fws.gov]
Sent: Monday, January 26, 2015 1:35 PM
To: Noreen Walsh
Subject: FW: Rep Stewart Meeting - Alton Coal BP

From: Kelhart, Megan [mailto:megan_kelhart@fws.gov]
Sent: Monday, January 26, 2015 1:08 PM
To: John Bryan; Marla Trollan
Cc: Matt Hogan; Michael Thabault; Martin Kodis
Subject: Rep Stewart Meeting - Alton Coal BP

Hi John and Marla,

Dan is scheduled to meet with Neil Kornze (BLM-Director) tomorrow I believe and both are scheduled to meet with Rep. Chris Stewart on Wednesday, January 28th at 1:00 p.m. EST. to discuss the status of the Alton Coal EIS/project.

Attached is the briefing paper, with a few minor edits, as prepared by the Field Office. Gary Frazer asked that we make sure that Matt and Noreen have seen this briefing paper and are okay with it before we provide it to the Director.

Can you please make sure that they see the paper, make any needed edits, and give it a green light as soon as you can? Finally, one question we have is, are we to assume that Alternative K1 is our preferred alternative?

Thank you, we look forward to hearing back from you.

Megan

Megan Debranski Kelhart
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January 13, 2015

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

FROM: Matt Hogan, Deputy Regional Director, Mountain Prairie Region

SUBJECT: Alton Coal Tract Lease-By-Application (LBA) EIS

I. INTRODUCTION

Rep. Chris Stewart (R-UT) requested a meeting with Director Ashe and BLM Director Neil Kornze to gain a better understanding of the permitting process for the Alton Coal mining project, which is on BLM-managed land.

II. BACKGROUND

The Service's Utah Field Office reviewed and commented on BLM's Administrative Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (ASDEIS) in August 2013. In summary, we commented that the proposed project will have significant effects to greater sage-grouse. The greater sage-grouse populations affected by the proposed project are found within the Panguitch Priority Area of Conservation (PAC) and include the southern-most lek in the species' range.

We recommended selection of Alternative K1 among those presented in the ASDEIS. This alternative provides the greatest opportunity for long-term persistence of local populations of greater sage-grouse. It minimizes the amount of disturbed habitat by 980 acres (or 49 percent) below the amount that would be disturbed by the proposed action.

Despite the reduced acreage subject to direct disturbance in Alternative K1, the extent of available, year-round refuge habitat may not be adequate to prevent the loss or displacement of the local greater sage-grouse populations. Consequently, we recommended that BLM stipulate that no surface disturbance associated with mining activity occur until year-round refuge habitat for greater sage-grouse is restored (as part of the project's mitigation plan), fully functional, and used by the species. Our recommendation is consistent with the 2013 Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Objectives Team (COT) Report to avoid mining leases in sage-grouse habitats until other suitable habitats can be restored and used by the species.

We further recommended that BLM increase the proposed lek buffer for surface disturbance from the proposed 0.5 mile to 2 miles. In the absence of such measures, the proposed greater sage-grouse mitigation plan does not fully compensate for impacts disclosed in the ASDEIS.

III. STATUS

On December 4, 2013, BLM provided a response to Utah Field Office comments to the ASDEIS. BLM stated that it is infeasible for the operator to complete mitigation projects prior to mining and that use of refuge habitat by greater sage-grouse will not be required as a stipulation for successful mitigation. In addition, BLM chose to employ a 0.5 mile surface disturbance buffer for leks. We understand that a publication-ready Supplemental DEIS is ready for release and is undergoing review in the BLM Washington Office.