



## **Greater Sage-Grouse Study Interim Results Released**

### **Year four of five-year study corroborates findings: habitat selection is impacted by high levels of oil and gas development, but may be mitigated**

PINEDALE, Wyo., April 5 /PRNewswire/ -- Wyoming Wildlife Consultants, LLC (WWC), Ultra Resources Inc., Shell, and Questar Market Resources have released the annual report for a \$1.4 million, five-year sage-grouse study designed to determine if natural gas development on the Pinedale Anticline in Wyoming influences the habitat selection of wintering greater sage-grouse.

The report "Greater Sage-grouse Winter Habitat Selection Relative to Natural Gas Field Infrastructure in Northern Portions of the Pinedale Anticline Project Area Sublette County, Wyoming" presents the first four years of data from the study.

Consistent with the 2008 annual report, the 2009 data suggests that sage-grouse are avoiding habitats near natural gas development with relatively high levels of activity. However, the report also corroborates previous findings that suggest collecting liquids related to natural gas development off-site via a gathering system may reduce the impact of development to sage-grouse habitat selection. A liquids gathering system (LGS), which the operators voluntarily proposed and are implementing on the Anticline, is a system of pipelines. The LGS transports condensate and produced water from the natural gas wells to centralized gathering facilities and trunk pipelines rather than trucking.

Matt Holloran, Senior Ecologist for WWC said: "Preliminary data from the study indicates that reducing activity associated with development may reduce the effect of that development on sage-grouse. The results also potentially suggest that use of the

on-site mitigation already being implemented may benefit management of the species in the future."

"The latest report further indicates potential benefits to sage-grouse from the use of liquids gathering systems which Ultra, Shell and Questar voluntarily proposed and committed to expand across the Anticline," said Aimee Davison, natural resources advisor for Shell. "Questar's LGS has been operational since 2005, and both Ultra and Shell are currently installing LGSs on the Pinedale Anticline."

The research suggests that sage-grouse are avoiding those portions of the Pinedale Anticline with active drilling rigs, conventional producing well pads without an LGS and plowed main roads, but on well pads with the LGS there appears to be a reduced effect on sage-grouse habitat selection which may be due to the reduced traffic and human activity associated with these pads. This is due to the fact that liquids at conventional pads are contained in storage tanks and must regularly be transported from the area via tanker trucks. On the Pinedale Anticline, more than 75,000 truck trips have been eliminated from November 2005 through December 1, 2009 as a result of the liquids gathering system installed by Questar. It is estimated that once the LGS is operational field-wide it will reduce truck traffic by 165,000 trips per year when the field is at maximum production.

Using radio-transmitting collars and data-loggers, sage-grouse presence was recorded at defined habitat patches on the Pinedale Anticline. The study compares habitat containing pads with active winter drilling, pads both with and without off-site liquids collection, plowed main haul roads, and control areas. Researchers studied the length of time and number of visits sage-grouse made to the distinct habitat patches relative to the level of and type of development activity occurring near these patches.

The Greater Sage-grouse study was conducted by WWC and funded by Ultra, Shell and Questar. The annual report presenting the first four years of data from the five-year research project has been jointly released by WWC, Ultra, Shell and Questar. The report is being made available to both the Bureau of Land Management and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. A complete copy of the 2009 progress report is also available to the public and can be accessed online at [www.PAPAoperators.com](http://www.PAPAoperators.com).

SOURCE Ultra; Shell; Questar