
7.0 SOCIAL IMPACTS

Baseline social and economic factors, including population, personal income, and quality of living factors described in Chapter 3.0 were compared to expected changes in the economy that would affect a typical family in the study area. Impacts were evaluated against the potential for changes in quality of life factors (i.e., availability of necessities, recreation, and leisure time) and the ability of residents to maintain or improve the current quality of life as a result of the proposed project and alternatives. Impacts would be similar for both the SPP and the JIDP.

7.1 POPULATION

The projects could result in some increases in population in Sublette, Lincoln, and Sweetwater Counties as a result of job seekers from other areas moving to the area in search of employment; although existing industry expertise and services in the three counties is generally adequate to service additional oil and gas development. While the initial analysis assumed that adequate support services existed, companies at the time of this report indicate--despite State of Wyoming reports to the contrary when data was collected for this analysis--that there are insufficient numbers of rigs available for meeting drilling schedules and that there are insufficient numbers of employees to staff the rigs that are available. The existing labor shortage, which is already impacting the CIAA, may be incrementally increased by the JIDP and SPP.

7.2 INCOME, POVERTY, AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Personal per capita income in the study area ranged from \$16,140 to \$28,037 in 2000 (see Table 3.4). The estimated annual starting wage per job for indirectly created jobs from development on the SPPA would range from \$32,195 to \$32,921 and on the JIDPA would range from \$31,881 to \$32,025. The estimated annual starting wage per job from production would be \$37,985 on the SPPA and \$47,778 for the JIDPA. These estimated annual starting wages are from 50 to 58% higher than the personal per capita income reported in 2000. Thus, there would likely be beneficial impacts

on income and poverty reduction as a result of the Proposed Actions and Alternatives. These benefits would not be realized under the No Action Alternatives of either project.

It is not anticipated that the SPP or JIDP will result in a notable in-migration of workers to the study area. With an estimated 1,713 available workers available in the study area and 12,000 available workers in Wyoming (see Table 3.5), the estimated number of laborers that would be directly employed as a result of the projects would be readily available. The SPP Proposed Action would require approximately 96.1 AJEs annually (direct and indirect labor). The JIDP Proposed Action would directly provide up to 9,899 worker years and up to 52,930 AJEs during development and up to 6,964 new worker years and 32,823 new AJEs from production. The duration of these impacts, and therefore the number of jobs, would depend on the rate of development. Some of these jobs would be existing jobs that would continue as a result of continued development and operations that would otherwise have been lost; some jobs would be newly created parallel or transitional jobs. These jobs would likely reduce unemployment in the study area and the state. The projects would result in beneficial impacts to local employment--both to the workforce directly involved in oil and gas development and to the general service economy--especially during construction and drilling.

7.3 QUALITY OF LIVING

Increased revenues and incomes in the study area would likely result in some change in the values and social condition of the local communities. These effects would likely include increased entropy in the study area society. Entropy is a measure of the natural decay of the structure or of the disappearance of distinctions within a social system--a trend toward disorder and chaos resulting ultimately in total breakdown (cf. Catton 1982; Heinberg 2003). Much of the energy consumed by a social organization is spent to maintain its structure--counteracting social entropy (e.g., through legal institutions, education, the normative consequences, or television). The increased flow of government funds into local area budgets could serve to maintain balance of the social condition through selective enforcement of normative consequences. However, uncontrolled government growth without a clear set of goals and objectives designed to maintain the balance and integrity of the community and preserve the freedoms and individual responsibilities of community members,

could serve to increase entropy. Random obtainment of wealth without a correlative input of self-determined ingenuity and earned labor will tend to encourage individuals toward the entropy and the influence of those individuals often serves to drive government bodies toward accelerated internal entropy.

An additional consideration to quality of life would cumulatively be impacted by oil and gas development and production. Non-labor sources of income was the fastest growing sector in 2000 according to EPS community profiles. Excessive growth and difficulty obtaining services due to high numbers of low-income individuals could result in the perception that the Pinedale area and Sublette County in general may not be as desirable a place to live. This could potentially encourage non-labor income sources to refrain from moving into the area, or even drive some individuals in the area to choose another area in which to live (personal communication, December 2004, with Roy Allen, Economist, BLM Wyoming State Office, Cheyenne).

7.3.1 Crime

Crime could increase in the study area as a result of greater affluence among residents. In-migrant labor that fails to become employed could also result in some increased crime. However, because of the demographics of the laborers attracted to oil and gas development and production, the existing crime situation, which is already affecting the CIAA, may be incrementally increased by the Project.

7.3.2 Health Care

Increased affluence in the study area could attract additional health care providers to the area or encourage existing health care providers to remain in the area. This would likely be a beneficial impact to the study area society. However, impacts already being experienced by the healthcare community may be incrementally increased by the Project as a result of increases in population from laborers attracted by jobs.

7.3.3 Housing

While it is possible that there may be some increase in the study area population as a result of job-seekers coming to the area, such an increase in population would not place an undue burden on existing infrastructure. For instance, nearly 32% of the housing in Sublette County is vacant, although the habitability of this vacant housing is unknown (see Table 3.8). If there were an increase in the population, increased demand would likely cause an increase in housing prices (rental costs and home sale prices). Additionally, increased affluence in the study area is likely to cause an increase in the demand for higher-quality housing, which could result in increased housing construction projects. This would result in increased ad valorem tax revenues to local governments. It could also make it more difficult for some individuals to obtain satisfactory housing within affordable price ranges, which would have an effect on those individuals. Impacts to housing already being experienced by the affected communities may be incrementally increased by the Project as a result of increases in population. Plans are underway to build another motel in town and several mancamps are currently under discussion by area operators for permitting to alleviate some of the pressures on housing. Several housing developments are also being planned.

7.3.4 Cost of Living and Inflation

Increased cost of living and inflation already being experienced by the affected communities may be incrementally increased by the Project.

7.4 EDUCATION

Increased revenues to schools as a result of increased ad valorem and other taxes and revenues would be a beneficial impact to the school systems, allowing the purchase of higher-quality teaching materials and potentially increasing the wages of teachers, which could attract teachers with higher credentials than would otherwise have been attracted to positions within the study area. Any increases in population would likely aid in offsetting the current trend toward school

closures/consolidations in some communities. Additionally, increased funding would provide schools with more options to improve education and raise performance test scores, thus increasing the overall education rate and improving the overall quality of the workforce in the study area. Increases in population may help reduce impacts already being experienced by schools in affected communities that have resulted in school closures.

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