

Contractors and environmental team working collaboratively to ensure success



Environmental Compliance Monitoring – a Collaborative Effort

J. Thalmann

Background

Every project site has different requirements regarding state and federal regulations, and sensitive resources including wildlife, vegetation, hydrology, and environmental conditions. Working collaboratively with construction crews, project proponents, state and federal agencies, and field survey crews is essential to ensure successful planning and implementation of construction activities for wind projects in the west. Here we present key duties performed by our environmental compliance monitor on a wind construction project in Wyoming. We also present issues we've encountered and solutions we've developed to help improve future construction projects.

Environmental Compliance Monitors

Projects are dependent on compliance with local, state, and federal laws, permits, and regulations. Minimizing impacts to environmental, cultural, and biological resources is needed to avoid project delays or even shut-downs. Hiring environmental compliance monitors is an effective way to ensure projects are constructed in compliance with laws, permits, regulations, and the project's committed measures.

Environmental compliance monitors ensure:

- Sensitive areas (wildlife, cultural, vegetative, water features) are not encroached by construction and have signage
- Construction is not exceeding limits of disturbance
- Construction is in compliance with seasonal restrictions (e.g. raptor nest buffers, big-game crucial winter habitat)
- Trenches have appropriate egress ramps or covered to prevent wildlife entrapment
- Perform visual observations of completed/ongoing work for sedimentation/erosion issues
- Proper documentation and tracking of stormwater BMPs
- Compliance with and updating of the SWPPP
- Non-compliance issues are quickly resolved and corrective actions are performed to prevent future problems

Collaboration Strategies

- Review project plans regularly
- Encourage open communication
- Implement a collaborative GIS platform
- Attend Plan-Of-Day (POD) meetings



Burrowing owl at a burrow



Swift fox family at a den

Problems encountered:

- Not notified of changes in planned disturbance
- Disturbance within sensitive areas
- Sediment runoff prior to placement of BMPs

Solutions developed:

- Improved communication and tracking of changes
- Use of the GIS platform which displays avoidance areas
- Early identification of potential problem areas and preemptive installation of BMPs

Conclusions

- Involve the entire project team early in the planning process and encourage open communication between all parties. This ensures efficient planning and implementation of construction activities.
- Incorporating a GIS platform for all construction and monitoring partners increases productivity, efficiency, and project understanding. This avoids crews having outdated information with changing project designs.
- Review project plans and processes regularly to guarantee regulatory compliance and to adjust procedures and plans as needed.



A "tailgate" meeting with environmental team and other project personnel



Surface roughening for erosion control



Construction of a pipeline



Wattles to prevent sediment run-off



Horned lark nest with eggs



Ferruginous hawk chick in nest

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Contact Information

Johanna Thalmann
HWA Wildlife Consulting, LLC
2308 S 8th St, Laramie, WY 82070
johanna@hwa-wildlife.com
443-239-3543