

Moore Ranch Uranium Project

Baseline wildlife information for Uranium One America's Inc.'s (Uranium One) Moore Ranch Uranium Project was largely compiled from data collected by biologists with ICF Jones & Stokes during previous inventory and monitoring efforts for the Bates Creek, Cutthroat, and Rainbow coalbed natural gas (CBNG) plans of development (PODs). Those PODs collectively and coincidentally overlapped approximately 86% of the proposed Moore Ranch Project permit area, 75% of the 1.0-mile perimeter, and 52% of the 2.0-mile perimeter. Generally, all but the extreme southeastern and western sections of the proposed permit area and perimeters were included in previous studies. Surveys for one or more of those three PODs were conducted annually from 2003-2006, and included numerous wildlife species and habitat features of concern such as bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) nesting and winter roost sites, grouse leks, and raptor nests, as well as surveys for other avian species of concern (e.g., mountain plover [*Charadrius montanus*], etc.).

In addition, Uranium One commissioned ICF Jones & Stokes to conduct baseline wildlife investigations from October 2006 through June 2007 expressly for the Moore Ranch Project. Because much of the project area has been included in wildlife monitoring efforts annually since 2003, the WGFD reduced the study area for raptors and other migratory birds to the portions of the proposed Moore Ranch permit area and 1.0-mile perimeter not already encompassed by overlapping studies in recent years. Those locations within the permit boundary included N and W ¼ Section 1 and W ½ Section 4, T41N, R75W; and SE ¼ Section 36, W ½ Section 33, and SE ¼ Section 28 T42N, R75W; a 1.0-mile survey area surrounding those locations was also surveyed. No reductions in the survey area were requested or implemented for sage-grouse, or Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E) inventories. Wildlife surveys conducted specifically for the Moore Ranch Project targeted bald eagle winter roost sites, grouse leks, nesting raptors (including eagles), mountain plovers, and other avian species of concern. At the request of Uranium One, special attention was also paid to water bodies within the proposed Moore Ranch Project permit area to gauge their use by waterfowl and shorebird species. In addition to these efforts, incidental observations of all other wildlife species seen within the proposed permit area were recorded during each site visit.

During the winter of 2006-2007, three ground bald eagle roost surveys were conducted at the Moore Ranch site by an ICF Jones & Stokes biologist on the following dates:

- December 19, 2006 (from 1 hour before to 30 minutes after sunset)
- January 19, 2007 (from 30 minutes before to 1 hour after sunrise)
- February 15, 2007 (from 1 hour before to 30 minutes after sunset)

During the bald eagle roost surveys, one ICF Jones & Stokes biologist searched all woodland habitats in the Moore Ranch site and within a 1.0-mile perimeter. Surveys were conducted from a vehicle using binoculars and a spotting scope. Data collected for all sightings included the number of individuals, age (adult or subadult), behavior, habitat, and location.

In addition, ICF Jones & Stokes conducted a complete set of three ground surveys for new greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) and sharp-tailed grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*) leks for the Moore Ranch site on the following dates in spring 2007:

- April 15
- April 16
- April 17

All surveys were conducted between 30 minutes before and 1 hour after sunrise by one biologist. The known lek locations and the surrounding suitable habitats were searched by scanning and listening from a vehicle on existing roads and trails. Biologists also watched for and recorded grouse, or their droppings, or feathers during all other surveys.

Furthermore, ICF Jones & Stokes biologists checked the status of all known raptor nests and searched for new raptor nests, burrowing owls, and prairie dog colonies throughout the Moore Ranch site on the following dates in spring 2007:

- April 17
- May 15
- May 20
- June 23

Searching was conducted both from a vehicle and on foot using binoculars and a spotting scope. The substrate, condition, status, location, and other site-specific information were recorded for all raptor nests, and some were photographed. Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) coordinates (uncorrected, less than 10 meters accepted error) were determined using hand-held global positioning system (GPS) receivers (Garmin). Standard precautions were taken to prevent the disturbance of active raptor pairs or their nests.

Areas of suitable mountain plover habitat on or within 0.25 mile of the Moore Ranch site were also searched in accordance with the *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service March 2002 Mountain Plover Survey Guidelines*. Those areas and any others suitable for plovers were searched from a vehicle (staying on established roads and trails within the project area). ICF Jones & Stokes biologists conducted surveys between sunrise and 1000 hours on the following dates in spring 2007:

- May 15
- May 20