

# WRTT Conference Call

October 26th, 2009

Monday 11:00 AM Mountain Time

Call: 1-877-612-4949 Passcode: 8870122

## WRTT

### TIPS, Technology Transfer, Training and General Information:

- Please check out the updated **TIPS** website for recent updates! These are located in the “What’s New?” section of the page.  
<http://www.tips.osmre.gov>
- Please check out the updated **NTTT** website for recent updates! These are located at: <http://www.techtransfer.osmre.gov>
- Check out the newly designed **OSMRE** website at: <http://www.osmre.gov>
- Upcoming events: <http://amd.osmre.gov/ttcalroot/TTCalendar.aspx>

### Discussion Topic(s):

The Western Region Technology Transfer Team (WRTT) recently approved a “high priority” topic for our region (“Reclamation methods to prevent the establishment of cheatgrass and management practices to control cheatgrass invasion”). It is now part of this year’s Applied Science Cooperative Agreement solicitation. Hopefully, someone will address this issue with the submission of a decent proposal. In the meantime, this is a current problem that will not go away. Please discuss what new and innovative ways you have addressed this problem in your area?

Montana stated that they’ve addressed this problem in varying degrees. They have attempted to bury the cheatgrass seeds under the surface soil (A horizon) and place that soil at a lower depth. They also plant an annual brome on the surface. Having the company rip the soil and not compact the soil has still been an issue. Many of the stockpiles have a sterility problem. This year was a bumper crop for Brome’s!

Wyoming stated that the regulations allow for a maximum allowable cover of cheatgrass at 10%. WY uses the “hoop toss” method to determine cover. Wyoming also stated that they’d tried using herbicides to try and control cheatgrass (based on the question posed by North Dakota). They stated that all they ended up with was a mat of cheatgrass. Montana stated they had used herbicides also.

New Mexico noted that they have used different grazing methods to control cheatgrass. Dormant season grazing has worked very well to hold down the invasion of cheatgrass.

New Mexico stated that this method required lots of work and, when used effectively, held down the cheatgrass to 3% with a total groundcover of 9-15%.

ND AML noted that cheatgrass has not seemed as serious a problem as it has in some other western states.

ND didn't generally make detailed evaluations of vegetation success or species composition on our reclaimed AML sites and usually consider any vegetative cover to be good. However, they did conduct evaluations of three large reclaimed AML sites in 1998 and 2003. In those studies, smooth brome seemed to be the most prevalent invasive grass species, accounting for more than 30% of the relative canopy (first-hit) cover at the Hazen-West site, near Beulah, in 2003. At the Noonan site in northwestern ND, Kentucky bluegrass and smooth brome were about equally prevalent, accounting for about 18% and 16% of the relative first-hit cover in 2003. At the Fritz site in southwestern ND, smooth brome seemed less prevalent, accounting for only about 6% of first hit-cover in 2003. This was also the only site where cheatgrass was recorded, with about 1% relative first hit cover.

One of the major reasons for the reduced first-hit incidence of invasive grass species at the Fritz site was that it was the only of the three that was grazed. Therefore, it seemed that one possible direction for research on this topic would be to study the effects of cultural practices such as grazing and burning on establishment of cheatgrass (and other invasive grass species) on reclaimed sites.

Another thought is to see whether selective application of herbicide might be useful in cheatgrass control. Specifically of wick-applied herbicide, where the herbicide is contained in a rope-like wick suspended between two ends of a horizontal boom and "wiped" on to the plants. This method usually applies herbicide only to the tallest plants; and cheatgrass and smooth brome seem to establish more quickly and are taller, especially early in the season, than many other native species. Some research on this application method for leafy spurge control was conducted at NDSU several years ago.

All present noted that cheatgrass was a huge problem in the west (outside of Alaska) and that more study was needed to help figure out a way to control this problem.

## **WRTT Member Reports/Information**

Alaska: A new permit had been proposed. The permit was still in the public notice stage.

Arizona (Navajo): Three folks were attending the IMCC meeting in Chicago. The Desert Rock EIS discussions are ongoing. A bond release was taking place at the Black Mesa mine.

Arizona (Hopi): Not present.

Colorado: Cheatgrass is a growing problem on several mine sites, coal and construction materials. We have recently asked CSU to conduct a literature review for us.

Montana: The MT-CO coordination project regarding electronic submittal of data is making great progress and an April release date is expected. A test pit was dug in the Bull Mountains to check the viability of opening a coal mine at that site. The Spring Creek amendment is being reviewed. Chris Bardash is to attend the IMCC meeting in Chicago.

Montana (Crow): Not Present

New Mexico: A bond release at the McKinley mine is being reviewed. A “traditional release” of an onsite residential area is taking place in the same area. The San Juan permit renewal is being reviewed.

North Dakota: Routine operations. Dean Mose was to attend the IMCC meeting in Chicago.

Utah: Permitting is ongoing in Coal Hollow. One AML project was taking place in the North Tintic area. Consultants have been hired to inventory all of the AML coal sites in the state.

Wyoming: The School Creek permit was approved but still had problems getting the Fish and Wildlife Service to approve their portion of the permit. A process called the “Kaizon Process” was used in WY to get a pending permit approved in three days!

Casper Field Office: The Casper Field Office hired a new inspector. The Absaloka permit revision was being reviewed. The office worked with the state of MT at an AML site and used the downhole camera to evaluate the site.

Program Support Division/Albuquerque Area Office/Farmington Area Office: Not present.

Denver Field Division/ Olympia Area Office: Barbara Bowerman was to attend the IMCC conference in Chicago.

TIPS: Not present.

## **General Discussion**

Any topics of interest from our OSM offices, states and tribes are to be brought up at this time.

**Comment:** Please feel free to chime in on the sites I'd sent you to review regarding a medium for us to use for discussion outside of our monthly call. I received a little feedback, but, would like more.

**Next Call:  
November 16th, 2009**