



**SECTION:** MSL, ROE, LOC, EASEMENTS  
**SUBJECT:** Minimum Disturbance on Native Range

06-05

The objective is to minimize the loss of native grassland. This is a diminishing resource critical to wildlife habitat that cannot be replaced. We recognize the economic contributions of the oil and gas industry to the region, and the province. We believe development can occur in a manner that offers minimal impact to the native range. Recovery time is minimized on areas subjected to limited stripping, moderate levels of traffic, and careful soil storage. Reasonable caution ensures little or no disturbance to the underlying prairie vegetation.

The costs of reclamation are greatly reduced under a minimum disturbance regime. Minimum disturbance can be achieved through the cooperative efforts of the Board and Industry. The following outlines some basic expectations for operating within areas of native rangeland:

### **Seismic programs**

Conventional seismic activity can occur in a manner that minimizes the impact to the landscape. Applicants should identify areas of sensitive terrain associated with the native rangeland. Coulee complexes, steep/erosive slopes, sand dunes and wetlands cannot tolerate physical disturbance. Brushing in riparian areas shall be kept to a minimum with absolutely no cottonwood tree removal in the river valleys.

### **Access roads**

Existing trails or temporary access across native prairie shall be used where possible. Typically, access roads are not to be stripped or scalped for the exploration stage. Access development may be approved where adverse topography dictates the need during the start up phase, or for long-term producing wells.

### **Well sites**

Sites shall be selected to avoid native grasslands wherever possible. Where this is not practical, the expectation is to minimize the disturbance on native range. Soil stripping shall be limited to the area required for safely leveling the rig. Vehicle parking, lay down areas, and buildings can be placed directly on the grass. The Board supports off site fluid disposal, but may approve on site sumps, on a case-by-case basis.

Drilling fluids may be spread upon cultivated or tame forage fields.

The Special Areas Board does not permit spreading of drilling waste (LWD) on native rangeland.

Soil sterilants shall not be used for vegetation control.



Subject: Minimum Disturbance on Native Range (continued page 2) 06-05

Multiple well pad sites for reduced spacing programs, horizontal, slant-hole, or directional drilling methods are strongly encouraged to minimize or avoid disturbance to native rangeland.

Access road and well site development shall be permitted under frozen or dry conditions.

### **Pipelines**

Minimize the impact to native rangeland by routing through cultivated or tame pasture fields wherever possible. Where this is not practical, use existing disturbances, right of ways, or access roads as priorities for pipeline installation.

Routes should be selected to avoid or minimize the impact to areas of sensitive terrain associated with the native rangeland. Coulee complexes, steep/erosive slopes, sand dunes and wetlands cannot tolerate indiscriminate physical disturbance.

Equipment and procedures (ploughing-in, ditching) that cause the least disturbance to the landscape should be considered. Specialized equipment such as the prairie protector blade should be used to minimize scalping during topsoil replacement.

Traffic management plans should be developed to reduce the impact to native rangeland adjacent to any excavation.

Vehicle and equipment access for industrial development should consider and be prepared to implement the following prior to construction:

- Development should be avoided for exploration phase
- Use joint road use opportunities where available
- Minimize the level and extent of the disturbance to what is absolutely necessary
- Use gravel, clay, straw, or geotextiles in combination for fill areas
- Gravel can be used to fill rutted areas that are not too deep
- In cut areas, strip only the necessary width; build conservative backslopes
- Stripped areas beyond the driving surface should be revegetated immediately
- A low-grade road may be preferable to a high-grade road
- High grade roads are subject to municipal construction policy specifications
- Reclamation of road allowances may be required by the Special Areas Board



Subject: Minimum Disturbance on Native Range (continued page 3) 06-05

### **Reclamation**

All physical disturbances to native rangeland must be reclaimed. Successful reclamation will establish an equivalent growth capability on the landscape.

Re-contouring and blending into the pre-disturbed landscape is required.

In disturbed areas, seed mixes should permit re-establishment of those species that were removed. Introduced vegetation should not aggressively move into adjacent non-disturbed areas.

Erosion must be addressed under the needs of the Soil Conservation Act.  
Weeds must be controlled under the provisions of the Weed Control Act.

Jay J. Slemp, Chairman  
Special Areas Board