



**Pioneer's CBM Well Licence Expires –
AWA Gains Voice in Rumsey's Future**

Calgary (March 13, 2008) – The coalbed methane (CBM) well licence granted to Pioneer Natural Resources in 2007 in Rumsey Natural Area expired on February 26, 2008, a year after it was granted. The licence was cancelled two days later by the granting agency, the Energy Utilities Board (EUB; now the ERCB).

“This is good news for this internationally significant protected area and for all who have worked strenuously to keep Rumsey free of industrial activity,” says Cliff Wallis, vice-president of AWA. “AWA is now seeking leadership from Alberta Parks in developing a new management plan for the Rumsey Block that recognizes the area’s ecological significance.” The management plan must also address the need to restore past disturbances to native condition and to prevent cumulative adverse effects in future.

Although the EUB’s Information Letter 90-21 says AWA will be advised of well licence applications in Rumsey, we received no notification until the Pioneer licence had been granted. In March 2007 AWA and the Alberta Native Plant Council (ANPC) jointly requested that the EUB review its decision. Accompanying the request was a submission documenting the historical interest of both organizations in Rumsey and providing reasons for objecting to the licence. In August the EUB denied the request, stating that neither organization had advanced a legal right or interest in relation to the proposed well.

Despite the denial, however, the intervention resulted in several important changes that may mark the beginning of true protection for Rumsey. First, Pioneer Natural Resources allowed the well licence to expire, choosing not to proceed with drilling more CBM wells in the protected area, at least for the present. Second, on February 20, an ERCB representative informed AWA that Rumsey Natural Area and Ecological Reserve is now flagged so that an application within Rumsey will immediately trigger contact with AWA. Third, the ERCB has committed to inviting AWA to participate in consultations with Sustainable Resource Development should any applications be submitted.

“Licences with surface access should not be considered for the Rumsey Natural Area, nor should any new oil and gas dispositions be posted,” says Cheryl Bradley, who represents ANPC. “Until Alberta Energy makes that commitment, it is essential that system failures such as occurred with Pioneer’s well licence be averted through effective process. This includes early consultation with all interests regarding any applications for surface access approval.”

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