

Deck the halls



MAXINE HERR

A 22-foot Christmas tree lights up Memorial Hall in the North Dakota Capitol while colored window shades depict a 10-story Christmas tree on the south face of the capitol's 19 story tower, carrying on a tradition dating back to the 1940s. A similar tree is depicted on the north face of the tower.

Crescent Point well protected in current weak crude oil market

Crescent Point Energy has become the Canadian barometer of Bakken activity from the time the play first gained public attention.

And it's being even more closely watched these days as questions pile up around the impact of falling crude prices on capital investment and corporate dividends.

But, even with company shares falling to multi-year lows, Crescent Point shows no signs of reaching for the panic button.

In his most recent assessment of commodity price weakness, Chief Executive Officer Scott Saxberg said Crescent Point is well protected from current commodity price weakness.

"Our strong balance sheet and our active three-and-a-half

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Canadian officials take their pitch for XL approval to D.C.

The Canadian government grabbed another chance on Dec. 15 to make its case for Keystone XL in Washington, D.C., when North America's three energy ministers held their first trilateral meeting in seven years.

Although the pipeline was not part of the formal agenda, Canada's Natural Resources Minister Greg Rickford again hammered home his government's argument that XL can "help end dependence on insecure sources of crude" with a secure supply from the Alberta oil sands, while "helping our friends



GREG RICKFORD

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PRODUCTION & RECOVERY

Direct effect

North Dakota's oil production takes first hit from slumping oil market

By **MIKE ELLERD**

Petroleum News Bakken

Telltale signs that North Dakota's oil production is being impacted by the five-month downward spiral in global crude prices are beginning to appear in the form of hard numbers. The latest oil production data released by the Department of Mineral Resources on Dec. 12 indicate the state's oil production declined slightly in October following nine consecutive months of production growth. Contributing to that decline are depressed oil prices.

Preliminary data from DMR indicate the



LYNN HELMS

state's oil production averaged 1,182,174 barrels per day, a decline of 4,054 bpd from September production. The last time production declined in the state was in December 2013 when output fell by 49,766 bpd to an average of 926,687 bpd (see chart). However, that decline in production was generally attributed to severe weather conditions in the state. In contrast, production grew in September by 53,987 bpd over August production, the highest monthly production growth rate in North Dakota on record.

DMR Director Lynn Helms sees slumping oil

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GOVERNMENT

What's ahead in Montana

MPA Executive Director Dave Galt on the state's upcoming legislative session

By **MIKE ELLERD**

Petroleum News Bakken

Nearly 2,000 bill drafts have been requested for Montana's 64th legislative session that begins on Jan. 5, many directly or indirectly related to the state's oil and gas industry, and Montana Petroleum Association, MPA, Executive Director Dave Galt is gearing up for another biannual, three-month lobbying marathon.

While Galt sees taxes, regulations and infrastructure spending as likely industry-related issues the Montana Legislature will address,



DAVE GALT

"probably the number one issue has to do with sage grouse," he told Petroleum News Bakken in a look forward at what the session might look like.

MPA along with a number of other trade and agriculture organizations has been working closely with Gov. Steve Bullock over the past two years in developing a sage grouse conservation plan. Bullock formed a 12-member advisory council in 2013 which developed a conservation plan intended to leave management of the species to the state avoiding federal intervention. In September, Bullock signed an

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NATURAL GAS

Exceeding expectations

North Dakota beats gas capture goal by 4% as 88% of operators meet targets

By **MAXINE HERR**

For Petroleum News Bakken

Sixty out of 68 operators in North Dakota met their gas capture targets capturing 78 percent of produced natural gas in October, exceeding the state's goal by 4 percent according to data released by the Department of Mineral Resources, DMR, on Dec. 12. That 4 percent provides some cushion as the state's capture goal rises to 77 percent on Jan. 1, 2015. It remains at that target until Jan. 1, 2016, when operators will be required to capture 85 percent of the gas.

DMR Director Lynn Helms said with the exception of a few operators, companies in the Bakken were actively capturing the gas and pro-

"I couldn't be happier. What has happened since January of last year is exactly what we wanted to have happen." —Lynn Helms, ND Department of Mineral Resources

viding midstream companies with a greater sense of what to expect from production.

"I think the big impact of gas capture is behind us," Helms said in a Dec. 12 monthly press conference.

Overall, he is pleased with the industry's efforts to be in compliance with the gas capture

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