Bakken Basin Beckons: the State of Oil and Employment in the Bakken Shale Oil Formation by Judy

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In 1996, petroleum geologist Dick Findley hit a jackpot in an otherwise barren area a few miles outside Sidney, Montana. He found a layer of dolomite, a porous mineral, some 9,000 feet undergroundâ€¦and it contained what had since been dubbed the largest on-shore oil field discovered in decades in the United States.

When news of the discovery broke, the US Geological Survey (USGS) launched a study to determine how large the oil reserve was and how it would impact the US oil industry which, at that time, was experiencing an all-time low. What they found shocked the USGS and made national headlines for years to come. The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) made the biggest estimate on what US oil companies can expect to harvest from the Bakken Basin: a whopping 503 billion barrels of oil. This leads to many wonderful benefits, including a growth in the oil workforce in the states of Montana and North Dakota.

Bakken Basin Beckons to the Unemployed

With the Bakken Basin making national headlines, the number of people moving into North Dakota to look for work continues to grow. It might be surprising, but skilled and qualified individuals in the oil industry can find work within 24 hours of arriving in the state. The North Dakota State University made a study that determined the effect of the oil boom in the state's employment rate: from 5,000 jobs in 2005, the oil boom has more than tripled its workforce so that by 2009, there are over 18,000 workers in the oil industry alone. With the continuous development in the industry, it looks certain that the number of jobs created will continue to grow.

Not just in the Oil Workforce

Jobs are also mushrooming in other industries that provide products and services to the burgeoning oil workforce.

Transportation and freight are crucial to the oil industry, and six-figure trucking jobs are available to those with license and clean criminal records. With the right clearances, truckers can get themselves hired overnight.

People who could not find temporary lodging when they move into the state usually end up sleeping in their vehicles in truck stops and parking lots. The states' real estate and construction industries are now into some kind of frenzy as they try to keep up with the sudden and growing demand for low-cost housing.

Food services in the area can barely feed the workforce, and that's not an understatement. In Williston, for example, the McDonald's store is so busy it had to increase its rate to $15 per hour in order to attract more employees. Companies are now spending $120 per worker per day on the average in order to house and feed their growing workforce.

Unprecedented Growth

Local government units are now hard-pressed to keep up with the unprecedented growth in the area. Basic services such as housing, proper sewage, and parking spaces are limited, and that's not counting the growing number of building permits and traffic violations inundating the local

government offices. Traffic congestion has become a problem as well, what with thousands of trucks from city to country roads.

Not that the residents, old and new, are complaining. At the rate of its development, the oil boom in North Dakota and Montana is expected to hire thousands more people in the oil industry alone. That means thousands more jobs in auxiliary industries and a reduction in the states' unemployment rate.

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Judy - About Author:
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