

IN BRIEF

Industry

- » Oil and gas

Challenges

- » Improve application performance
- » Reduce backup replication timeframes
- » Prevent bandwidth saturation

Solution

- » Seven Steelhead appliances deployed — one at the primary data center in Denver, five at major regional offices, and one at a remote field office
- » One Steelhead appliance with the Riverbed Services Platform (RSP) running Windows Server 2003 R2 with DHCP and print services

Benefits

- » Immediately improved application performance and services at branches and reduced user complaints
- » Cut backup times for remote servers in half to free up bandwidth during the business day
- » Reduced file transfer times via CIFS enabling users to open and save CIFS files twice as fast
- » Eliminated need to purchase additional hardware at the remote site with RSP
- » Easy, rapid implementation and integration with Cisco routers

St. Mary Land & Exploration Company

Riverbed® Accelerates Microsoft® Application Performance and WAN Backup for Oil and Gas Company

St. Mary Land & Exploration Company (www.stmaryland.com) is engaged in the exploration, development, acquisition and production of natural gas and crude oil. The company's activities focus in five core areas in Louisiana, Montana, Oklahoma, and Texas. St. Mary was founded in 1908, incorporated in 1915, and became a public company in 1992. Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, St. Mary has approximately 550 employees.

Challenge: Slow Application Performance and Long Backup Windows

Including its Denver headquarters, St. Mary Land & Exploration has six major regional offices across five states. There are also many smaller offices serving foremen and their employees working in the field.

Nate Zeigler, Network Administrator at the company, was hearing complaints from his users about slow application performance over the WAN.

Each regional office has its own file server, but St. Mary had consolidated Microsoft Exchange servers at its main data center in Denver, resulting in periodic email traffic jams. "A good example was the morning email download, especially when an attachment had been sent to everyone in the office. Most people arrived at the office at the same time, opened Outlook, and bandwidth capacity took a major hit," Zeigler explained.

Long backup timeframes also created challenges. "We use LeftHand to replicate snapshots from the regional office servers back to our Denver data center. This process was going through the night and into the morning, eating up bandwidth during business hours," Zeigler said.

IT Environment: Microsoft Windows Server, Microsoft Exchange, and LeftHand for Backup

A hub-and-spoke MPLS network connects the St. Mary regional offices. "All traffic destined for the Internet from the regional offices comes through Denver where we have six T-1 lines and the regions have two or three T-1's each," Zeigler said. The field offices use either a combination of a T-1 or basic business broadband and VPN connections. There are Cisco 3750 and 3560 routers across the company's network.

St. Mary uses many applications from Microsoft. "We wanted to optimize Exchange email and CIFS," Zeigler said. "And while the users don't see it, it was very important to me as an IT administrator to optimize our LeftHand replication process to free up bandwidth."

Solution: Steelhead® Appliances Easily Integrate into Network Environment

Zeigler and his team first considered a bandwidth upgrade as an option to solve the application performance problems. "Then I heard about Riverbed at a 'lunch and learn' and did some research about WAN optimization. Competitor products looked time consuming to integrate, and we decided on Riverbed Steelhead appliances," Zeigler said.

The Steelhead appliances are very easy to implement, according to Zeigler. "We didn't do anything special to integrate with the Cisco routers. I did a five-minute configuration to set the IP addresses and shipped the Steelhead appliances out to our regional offices. We don't have IT teams at those sites: office employees plugged in the appliances and they worked," Zeigler explained.

St. Mary also deployed the Riverbed Services Platform® (RSP) to address the needs of a field office that did not have a Windows server. The RSP runs applications virtually in a protected portion in the Steelhead appliance. “We had just been ‘getting along without’ at that site, and now the RSP is running Windows with print services. We don’t need to consider buying another piece of hardware for that branch, so the RSP is delivering cost savings along with improved performance,” Zeigler noted.

“We already benefited from the partnership between Riverbed and Microsoft because the Steelhead appliances optimize Microsoft applications. Now there’s even more value for organizations like mine because we can run Windows Server on the RSP,” Zeigler stated.

Benefits: Faster Application Performance Over the WAN

“With Riverbed, we’ve solved several of our critical issues with one solution. First, the Steelhead appliance allowed us to cut backup windows in half. This freed up bandwidth, and workers instantly saw an increase in their application response times,” Zeigler said.

With the Steelhead appliances in place, we have no more user complaints about slow email in the morning.

Another problem that Riverbed solved for St. Mary was the email slowdown caused by consolidating Exchange at the main data center. “With the Steelhead appliances in place, we have no more user complaints about slow email in the morning,” Zeigler noted.

CIFS transfers were accelerated, so users in branches could save files to the data center much faster. “CIFS transfers are faster with the Steelhead appliances, and our users can open and save CIFS files twice as fast as before we deployed Riverbed,” Zeigler said.

Zeigler emphasized that Riverbed technology and support benefit IT administrators as well as users. “The great reporting built into Steelhead makes it easy for administrators to see how well it’s working. And Riverbed support is good: we usually get someone right away who is knowledgeable and able to answer our questions,” he said.

“Looking ahead, it’s reassuring for me to know that Microsoft and Riverbed are working together to deliver innovation and reliability. To someone running an IT network, that’s invaluable,” Zeigler concluded.

About Riverbed

Riverbed delivers performance for the globally connected enterprise. With Riverbed, enterprises can successfully and intelligently implement strategic initiatives such as virtualization, consolidation, cloud computing, and disaster recovery without fear of compromising performance. By giving enterprises the platform they need to understand, optimize and consolidate their IT, Riverbed helps enterprises to build a fast, fluid and dynamic IT architecture that aligns with the business needs of the organization. Additional information about Riverbed (NASDAQ: RVBD) is available at www.riverbed.com.



2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011



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SUMMARY

For St. Mary Land & Exploration Company, bandwidth constraints and latency issues were causing slow application performance and user complaints. 550 employees across five states needed to access Exchange email and other Microsoft solutions over the WAN. With Riverbed, St. Mary was able to solve several critical issues with one solution.

The company deployed a total of seven Riverbed Steelhead appliances at its main data center, five regional offices, and one field site. Backup time was cut in half, freeing up bandwidth. Users saw an immediate increase in application response times. In addition, St. Mary chose the Riverbed Services Platform (RSP) to run Microsoft Windows Server directly on the Steelhead appliance at the smaller field office, eliminating the need for additional hardware at that office.