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To WYMail_PAPA_YRA@blm.gov
cc
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Subject comments on SEIS Anticline escalation near Pinedale

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MARCH 27, 2007

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I am writing in regard to the BLM proposal to escalate drilling for oil and gas in the Anticline gas field. My concern has to do with the rate and intensity of development and the apparent lack of protections for wildlife, scenery, air quality, and other attributes of the upper Green River basin that make it what it is. We have a unique and vulnerable resource in this part of Wyoming, and we are on the verge of trading it away for a degree of industrial development that is, in my opinion, entirely incompatible with the way of life and environment of this area. The existing level of disruption has been well documented in the press - almost half of the mule deer herds have been lost or displaced to less suitable habitat, more than half of the sage grouse, and increasing numbers of pronghorn. Air quality has taken a significant nosedive in the past decade, obscuring views of the Wind River Range and changing lake chemistry in the Bridger Wilderness. The community of Pinedale is being changed faster than social services can keep up, and I for one have stopped driving US 191 because of all the huge vehicles going 90 MPH.

I would suggest the following changes to the existing proposal to effect a more balanced approach, gas production AND wildlife protection; gas fields AND scenic vistas and clean air.

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Regarding wildlife habitat I am for keeping development within identified concentrated areas and to the extent possible locate the areas of most intense development away from the highest-value wildlife habitat. Seasonal wildlife protections must not be lifted on nearby areas since habitat fragmentation proposed for core areas would be more severe than it already is. Better to confine the footprint of development and maintain some relatively undisturbed habitat nearby, even if it isn't the best quality habitat, much of which has already been committed to gas field development. The flanks of the Pinedale Anticline where there is relatively little development or potential must be protected to allow wildlife access to migratory routes as well as to substitute winter, breeding and nesting ranges that have already been lost in the core areas. Mitigation may have to include some restrictions on human recreation use of these

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areas in order to keep from displacing wildlife further. Those areas in the upper Green River basin that have become increasingly important to wildlife because of displacement from the gas fields should be identified and measures planned to protect them. The SEIS should state that such provisions for wildlife are part of the proposed action—not just shunted off into some vaguely stated mitigation plan.

Regarding air quality and scenery: this part of Wyoming has long been known for its distant views and some of the best air quality in the nation. Whatever measures are now being taken to mitigate the increase in airborne pollutants are not effective enough to prevent degradation of air quality now, so with more development the concern increases. Not only does the loss of air and water quality and scenery impair the natural beauty of a unique part of the country, it will have a negative effect on that sector of the local economy that depends on these resources, including outfitter-guides and resorts.

The sense of place associated with the upper Green River basin includes ranchlands, wild mountains, clean water and clean air, and abundant wildlife; all of these are at risk as we see the air and landscape looking more like coastal Texas every day. I have hiked to viewpoints at dusk in the Wind River Range to look down on lights on all the rigs on the Mesa; not exactly a wilderness experience. I don't understand the need to extract every drop of hydrocarbon from the area as quickly as possible. Phased development at a slower pace would honor the sense of place here, would allow the county and small towns to catch up with the increasing need for social services, would mitigate the typical boom-bust cycle associated with energy development, and may lead to a more measured and reasoned development scenario with protection of other irreplaceable resources in mind. Thanks for the opportunity to speak on this matter.

Sincerely,

Susan Marsh