

B. Guhl

November 10, 2008

Don Simpson, Acting State Director
Bureau of Land Management Wyoming State Office
5353 Yellowstone Road
Cheyenne, WY 82009

Re: Protest of Dec. 2, 2008 Competitive Oil and Gas Sale

Protest of 14 parcels. Specific parcels protested include: Parcels WY-0812-177, WY 0812-178, WY-0812-179, WY-0812-180, WY-0812-181, WY-0812-182, WY-0812-183, WY-0812-186, WY-0812-187, WY-0812-188, WY-0812-189, WY-0812-190, WY-0812-191 and WY-0812-192.

Dear Director Simpson:

I hereby protest the inclusion of the above referenced parcels in the lease sale advertised by the Bureau of Land Management on October 17, 2008. I request the above parcels be withdrawn from sale because they:

- The area is prized for elk and deer hunting, playing a vital role in maintaining the state's outdoor heritage and economic diversity. The associated Hunt Areas are 112 for antelope, 31 for elk, and 102 for deer – all of which are limited quota and produce high quality animals. Thriving elk herds are found in the Little Mountain area, providing a once-in-a lifetime opportunity for trophy quality bull elk. In fact, a person has only about a 6% chance of drawing an elk license for the area. Energy development in this area would bring new roads, which would reduce cover security for the elk, increase elk vulnerability, and decrease trophy size elk.
- The area is historically known as the Cherokee Trail and the trail is established with trail markers.
- The lack of pine trees on the western ravines overlooking the Flaming Gorge lacks sufficient coverage for the elk herds to hide causing man to protect their vulnerability. The lack of trees makes the choice of whether to choose energy or wild life because elk will not survive without our protection like they have in this vast area of sage brush and ravines without national forests. This is a very unusual habitat that we have created for the elk herds to have become dependent on us for survival and the Wyoming Game and Fish has done an excellent job which is ironic because the habitat on the western slopes over looking Flaming Gorge are native to elk. Man has pushed them to the mountains which are what will happen to the herds if the proposed drilling is chosen over the current protection of the elk herds.

I am a third generation Sweetwater County Native. My family is all great sports enthusiasts. I have grown up learning to love the Wyoming Mountains and back country. My family normally elk

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hunts in the Wyoming Range out of the Cottonwood Drainage. However, my husband and I always try our luck at putting in for the hard to get elk permits on Little Mountain. We have been successful drawing for elk licenses on Little Mountain in our married life, about four times in twenty four years.

I have been watching the proposed drilling exploration in the Wyoming Range and now in the Little Mountain area in Southwest Wyoming. I very much understand how important natural gas development along with oil discovery on our national home soil is to our economy as I am employed with a natural gas pipeline company in Sweetwater County that is striving to build pipelines to transport natural gas out of the Rockies.

However, this year my husband and I drew out for cow tags on Little Mountain. After experiencing what I did Saturday, November 8, 2008 before dark, I feel I must write you because as men and women I feel strongly we have the obligation to protect the indescribable blessing God has placed on the western ravines sloping to the Flaming Gorge that are covered only with sage brush and rock that are of Little Mountain in Southwest Wyoming. Only because of God and our Wyoming Game and Fish Department are the reasons my husband and I saw what we did Saturday night before dark. It was very close to seeing the elk herd on the elk refuge at Jackson Hole, only what we saw was in the wild of Sweetwater County and in the sage brush not like the amazing forests and mountains surrounding Jackson Hole, Wyoming! If I died today, I would thank God because there aren't very many people who get to see what I saw that night! I'm not sure if any of you have seen what I did. Please let me feebly attempt to try to describe what I saw. Please excuse me if I can't.

My husband and I left Rock Springs about 3:30 Saturday, 11/8/08 afternoon. We turned off of HWY 191 S around 4:00 pm at the Lower Sage Creek Road and traveled west toward the Gorge. The time changed last weekend so it was actually 5:00 pm and it was going to get dark in about an hour and half. The shadows were making the cedars look even prettier.

We continued down the dirt road, which is a county road. We decided to take a road that headed off to the west even more to the Gorge. I kept noticing white posts that said Cherokee Trail. I wondered what they meant...

We traveled about five more miles all the while talking about our son, our jobs, our parents, etc. Then out of the "blue" my husband spotted about 70 head of elk to his left in a canyon running full blast and kicking up all kinds of dust. They were in a deep canyon with no trees around for ever, with only sage brush and looked to be headed straight for the Gorge. We were on top of the ravine. We really didn't know what to do except keep going. We hoped they would somehow cross up on top. Then all of a sudden the herd stopped below in the canyon. They were on the southern side of the canyon. They were nervously watching us from about 1000 yards. We got out our spotting scope and best binoculars. I'm kind of shaky and had a hard time looking through the spotting scope free handed but after a few minutes I could roughly count close to around 60 head. There were about 4 nice bulls, several calves, and cows. After a few more minutes, the big bull laid down.

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The cows kept looking at us. We really didn't know what to do. Here we were on a ledge looking down at them in our truck. Finally we decided to drive back up the road and as we did they nervously started to walk up the canyon. We continued up the road. Then we decided to drive back down and they were still in the canyon. My husband decided to walk over to where they were because now we were in a place they couldn't see our truck. I watched him while sitting in the truck, until he disappeared over the top. After a few minutes, I looked up the road and the entire herd crossed in front of me. I tried to call my husband on his cell phone (modern day hunting). The elk didn't run as they crossed in front of me. The big bull was the last to cross. He ate as he walked in front of me. When my husband came back to the truck, we drove up the road and crossed over. This is the sight I will never forget in my entire life that looked just like the elk on the refuge in Jackson Hole. As we headed west towards to Gorge we saw the entire herd. They were about a mile west. They were stretched out following each other in a row one by one over a long distance headed north. They were walking. I couldn't believe no one else could see them but us! We paid good money to see something like this in Jackson and here we were witnessing this in the sage brush above the Gorge. I couldn't believe my own eyes! I was totally amazed! Later on the way home, my husband said I was so excited to see something like this is because I am from here and some one from back east may not be as excited as me. I don't think so...

Reflecting back and thinking about seeing the sixty plus elk herd stretched across the top of the ravine covered with only sagebrush overlooking the Flaming Gorge with the Uintah Mountains in the backgrounds was a site I will remember for the rest of my life. Putting drilling rigs, people in trucks going up and down those roads will scare those elk and other herds. Little Mountain is a very unique place. The elk are pushed off of Little Mountain itself and are left to fend for their life in the sage brush ravines during hunting season. We as man need to continue to protect them as we have done all along. I honestly believe Game and Fish have done a remarkable job and are the reason I was able to witness what I did, along with God yesterday.

Elk are a huge animal that can't hide in sagebrush. There isn't enough timber for them on Little Mountain like in the Wyoming Range or Yellowstone Park. Please study this area seriously before approving drilling. Once the elk are gone it will be generations before they will thrive again.

When we arrived home I researched what the Cherokee Trail historical markers meant. This is yet another reason why I feel strongly against the proposed drilling on Little Mountain. This is what I found:



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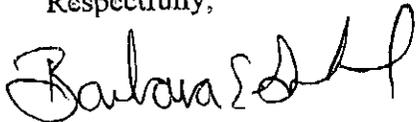
Picture taken from (www.blm.gov) 2008

The gold fever hit the Cherokee Indians as hard as it did the rest of the country. In 1849 and 1850, many Cherokees left their reservation in Oklahoma and headed west to seek their fortunes in the California gold fields. The trail began in Tahlequah, Oklahoma and traveled through Colorado before joining the California/Oregon Trail at Fort Bridger, Wyoming.

In Wyoming, the trail crossed the southernmost portion of the state. Cherokees that left in 1850 followed a slightly different route than those who had departed the year before. Much of the route taken by the 1849 excursion overlapped with the Overland Trail while the route through Wyoming taken a year later was further south. (www.wyomingtourism.org), 2008

In closing, I respectfully ask you to seriously study this beautiful area of the state of Wyoming I love. I was so blessed to see the elk herd last weekend and I realize not very many people in our beautiful state get the opportunity that my husband and I had to witness the beauty of the elk herds that are thriving on the western ravines of Little Mountain, not to mention the people of the United States or other countries. I respectfully ask you not to consider this decision in haste so my son and his daughter; my grandchild will be able to see the same blessing I did in their lifetime along with other future generations. I pray our way of life in Wyoming will not be sold out for the price of a possible gas proposal instead I pray our leaders have enough guts like the past leaders to set aside land like the elk refuge in Jackson or Yellowstone Park for many generations to come and to place the protection of those beautiful elk herds in the people who have dedicated their lives to protect them such as Wyoming Game and Fish.

Respectfully,



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copy to:

** Governor Dave Freudenthal
BLM – Rock Springs Field Office
Wyoming Game & Fish Department & Commission
Senator Barrasso's Field Representative,
Pati Smith
Wyoming State Representatives and Senators - local
Sweetwater County Commission
Bureau of Land Management - Wyoming State Office
Attention: Don Simpson