

Casper RMP/EIS Comments

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Category: Wildlife

Koepsel Kirk
Last Name **First Name**

Sierra Club
Agency Organization

45 E. Loucks #109
Address

Sheridan Wyoming 82801
City **State** **Zip**

kirk.koepsel@sierraclub.org
Email

Comment:

Wildlife

The BLM failed to examine the impact that oil and gas development is having on wildlife. Several new studies have shown that roads in open country have a greater impact than previously suspected on elk. Oil and gas development can displace mule deer from crucial winter range and lead to major herd declines. CBM development can contribute to major sage grouse declines and result in displacement of birds from important habitats. Conventional gas development, even under current BLM mitigation policies adopted in the Casper RMP EIS, leads to displacement of sage grouse and significant declines. New studies have demonstrated that the Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan is completely obsolete, and its recommendations, when followed, are likely to lead to sage grouse declines in the face of energy development. The Sierra Club urges adoption of much stronger lease stipulations using NSO or no lease in key wildlife areas as a way of protecting important wildlife species.

Baseline wildlife data is lacking in the plan. Several leks on BLM land along the Ornsby Road are not included in the plan. Although the BLM notes that there are four bat species of management concern in the planning area, no inventory was done of snags, mines, or caves to protect these species' unique habitat requirements.

BLM notes correctly that Wyoming Natural Diversity Database has rare species occurrences for the planning area. These should be gathered by BLM and published in the Draft EIS as part of NEPA's baseline information requirement. It is unclear from the EIS whether BLM has actually even made a data request from WYNDD, or if so, whether these data formed the basis of any analyses contained therein. It is therefore unclear whether BLM considered these data in its formulation of the EIS.