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Groups join to stop CBM development

By Gazette News Services

SHERIDAN - Eight conservation groups filed a second appeal with the U.S. Department of Interior's Board of Land Appeals to stop coalbed methane development in the Fortification Creek area between Sheridan and Gillette.

The Sheridan-based Powder River Basin Resource Council and Wyoming Wilderness Association joined six other groups in appealing the permitting of five coalbed methane wells, Jill Morrison of the Resource Council said.

The wells were granted permits by the Bureau of Land Management, which manages the land. A previous appeal to the BLM by the groups was denied in May, Morrison said.

The appeals ask the BLM to conduct an environmental impact study of energy development on elk herds, water supplies and vegetation in the Fortification Creek area, located off Interstate 90 in southeast Sheridan, northeast Johnson and southwest Campbell counties.

Morrison said the "piecemeal" approval of various coalbed methane wells without knowing the overall impact of development could be harmful to elk in the area, as well as vegetation and groundwater.

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