



POWDER RIVER BASIN RESOURCE COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

POWDER RIVER: GOV. DROWNS WATER RULE

Ranchers, landowners say blocking action on CBM discharges shows lack of leadership

Gov. Dave Freudenthal's decision to scrap a proposed rule governing coalbed methane discharge water thwarts a thoughtful and considered effort by Powder River Basin landowners and the state's Environmental Quality Council to address a growing problem in the basin, supporters of the rule said today.

"We have worked long and hard with the EQC for more than a year on a difficult issue that nobody else wanted to touch," said Bob LeResche, the Clearmont landowner who chairs the Powder River Basin Resource Council board and joined in the citizen petition for a rulemaking on CBM water discharges. "The governor says this was the wrong route to take, but he refuses to suggest an alternative—to even get started. We need leadership from the top on this issue, but the governor once again simply refuses to provide it."

LeResche and a score of other ranchers and landowners in Campbell, Johnson and Sheridan counties petitioned the EQC in December 2005, asking the council to approve a rule that would help control the huge volumes of CBM discharge water swamping ranches and pastures in the Powder River Basin and then flowing forever out of Wyoming. That proposed rule, amended specifically to meet technical legal questions raised by Attorney General Pat Crank, cleared the EQC in January.

But it required the approval of the governor, who announced today he will not sign it.

"This is a real disappointment," said Tooter Rogers, a Recluse rancher who joined the petition effort and is due to meet with Freudenthal on Friday to discuss the issue. "The Legislature and its CBM Water Task Force, officials at the Department of Environmental Quality, the EQC and even the governor himself have all agreed that there's a serious problem with the poor-quality CBM water drowning some of our lands up here. The State Engineer specifically told the EQC that this proposed rule was no threat to his jurisdiction.

"Something needs to be done, and people were actually trying to do it. But now the governor has shut the whole process down."

Sorenson and LeResche said it was unclear what the landowners' next steps would be.

“I guess that’s up to the governor,” LeResche said. “In the absence of any leadership from Freudenthal, we’ve spent a year on a good faith effort to write meaningful rules to regulate a situation the governor and every informed Wyomingite knows is a problem. This problem is only going to get more and more out of control.

“We’ve been begging for his leadership in fixing the problem, but all we keep getting is legalistic parsing that our ideas won’t work. Next he’ll be claiming that it all depends on what the definition of is is, like another famous politician.

“It’s well past the time for people to just sit back and tell us what can’t be done. We need someone with vision to tell us what we can do—and then to help us do it.”

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