Action Alert:
Protect the Fortification Area
A National Public Lands Treasure

Wyoming's Fortification Creek Area is a beautiful, vibrant treasure in the northeastern corner of the state. This area is far more than a creek, it is a 120,000 acre stronghold for many area wildlife species including the declining sage-grouse and the important Fortification elk herd.

Each year, hunters vie for trophy elk tags in the Fortification Area through one of the most selective limited quota hunting draws in Wyoming. The area is also valued as a remote hiking and horseback destination. Unfortunately, these recreational uses are under immediate threat from natural gas development.

Areas of excellent, contiguous habitat such as the Fortification Area are becoming farther and fewer between. The surrounding landscape is fast becoming transformed by mineral development and other consumptive land uses – even in the vast state of Wyoming. Fortification has become an island in a sea of coalbed methane gas development which surrounds the area making it an increasingly valuable resource.

BLM is currently developing a plan to determine how coalbed methane gas will be developed in this area. This presents an opportunity for the public to tell BLM to protect the recreational, opportunities, wildlife and water resources in the area. However, the BLM has recently issued permits to drill in this area **before** this analysis is complete.

Natural gas prices are at a seven year low and natural gas reserves are filling up. Why are we rushing unneeded mineral development in such a unique and beautiful area without the proper planning and consideration? It is important to wait to develop this area until BLM has a comprehensive development plan for the entire area.

There is still time to protect this area. Your voice matters.

What you can do:

Please take a moment to write or call Governor Freudenthal and our national delegation to tell them you want BLM to do it right. Read the sample letter and edit it if possible, as your own voice is always the most powerful.

Example letter:

Governor Dave Freudenthal
State Capitol
200 West 24th Street
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002-0010
Website: Governor.wy.gov

Dear Governor Freudenthal,

I am writing to seek your help in protecting the Fortification Creek Area, a rugged and remote 120,000 acre area known for its hunting and recreation. The area serves as a stronghold for many area wildlife species including the declining sage-grouse and the important Fortification elk herd.

BLM, as the agency responsible for development of our federal minerals, has the ability to determine the pace and scale of development. The BLM Buffalo Field Office is issuing permits to drill within the remarkable Fortification Creek habitat area and has failed to include the public in the process. The BLM Buffalo Field Office has issued over 2,000 coalbed methane gas permits in Wyoming's Powder River Basin that have not been drilled. Simultaneously, thousands of wells are being shut in due to falling prices.

Developing Fortification now robs the public twice. Not only by returning few royalties to state and federal treasuries, but also by jumping ahead of the planning process. We have time to take extra care to protect the unique Fortification Area and to wait for gas prices to rebound to increase revenues.

Protect the Fortification Area. Hold off the development until the BLM planning process is complete. What is the rush? Please ask BLM to include public input to improve the development plan. Expand the Fortification Creek Planning Area to include the entire elk year-long range.

And finally, please request that the BLM complete a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement to fully analyze impacts of development to the entire habitat.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Governor Dave Freudenthal
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