

BLM Buffalo Field Office
Attention Thomas Bills, Project Manager
1425 Fort St
Buffalo, WY, 82834

Dear Mr. Bills,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Fortification Creek Planning Area.

I urge you to protect this important and fragile area and its diverse and abundant wildlife species. The Fortification Creek Area is a unique landscape within the Powder River Basin and the last remaining area unscarred by oil and gas development. The area is home to an isolated elk herd, mule deer, songbirds, and sage-grouse. I personally value this fragile area and the wildlife it supports and believe the habitat cannot be replaced once development on the scale BLM proposes begins.

The topography of the area is rugged and the public enjoys hiking, hunting, and recreating amidst the hills and valleys. If development proceeds, most of the area will not be able to be reclaimed and the public will forever lose these recreation opportunities.

Right now the price of natural gas is deflated and industry and BLM have reduced previous estimates of recoverable CBM reserves in the Fortification Creek Area and throughout the Powder River Basin. It is not worth sacrificing the habitat, wildlife, vegetation, and water of this area for what will likely be uneconomic gas production.

I oppose any drilling in the Fortification Creek Area under the current alternatives, which would cause significant impacts and irreversible damage without sufficient protection. BLM made commitments since the 1970s to protect this area and this proposed plan fails to implement those protective criteria regarding CBM development proposals.

Please protect the Fortification Creek Area by ensuring sufficient habitat is available for the elk herd, minimizing noise and disruptive activities, preventing drilling on steep slopes and areas with erosive soils and poor reclamation potential, and requiring phased CBM operations based on successful reclamation criteria.

CBM development in this area has already caused and will continue to cause significant impacts. BLM should conduct an environmental impact statement to fully analyze projected impacts and develop mitigation measures that will prevent or reduce those impacts.

Sincerely,