

The Conserving Wyoming's Heritage Alternative:
*Protecting Wyoming's People, Land, Water and Air
in the Powder River Basin*

For analysis in the Powder River Basin Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Submitted by: The Wyoming Outdoor Council,

Powder River Basin Resource Council,

Biodiversity Associates,

Oil and Gas Accountability Project.

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Introduction

BLM is now in the process of developing a range of alternatives for an expected 51,000 coalbed methane wells in Wyoming's Powder River Basin, to be drilled and producing by 2010. BLM recognizes that the number could be much higher – its recent RFD scenario projects (at the high end) 80,000 wells in this time frame, and perhaps 139,000 wells for the overall life of the PRB CBM play.

This level of development and the multitude of associated impacts require the highest level of pre-development study and planning to ensure responsible natural gas recovery and some level of balance in protecting other resources. Over the past several years, the groups that are submitting the Conserving Wyoming's Heritage (CWH) alternative for CBM development in the Basin, have worked closely with landowners and others that live in the Basin, as well as independent scientists who have continually cautioned that the development may pose serious and long-lasting threats to land, water (both above and below ground), air, soils and wildlife. The guiding principles of the CWH Alternative strike the best balance possible between the interests of industry, the state of Wyoming and this country's dependence on natural gas as a fuel source on the one hand and the interests of landowners, proper land stewardship and a healthy environment on the other.

Wyoming's heritage is forever connected to the land, and directly related to a clean, healthy and properly functioning environment. Hundreds of coalbed methane wells, let alone tens of thousands in a concentrated area, can easily destroy this heritage and the healthy environment on which it depends. Wyoming's rich heritage includes ranchers and agriculture producers who depend on productive land, as well as clean air and water, for their livelihood. This heritage also extends to diverse wildlife populations, healthy fisheries, an important cultural history and a place known for wide-open spaces in a truly classic western landscape of sage, mixed grass and rough country. The Conserving Wyoming's Heritage alternative – while also recognizing that fossil fuel exploitation plays a part in the recent history of this region – serves to strike a balance between these interests, as opposed to letting the coalbed methane wells and their impacts leave the Powder River Basin as national sacrifice area. This great heritage can only be preserved by adequately safeguarding and protecting Wyoming's people, and its land, water and air resources.

Accordingly, we respectfully ask that BLM analyze the Conserving Wyoming's Heritage alternative and its guiding principles in the draft EIS, or, in the alternative, to attach this alternative as an appendix to the DEIS. In this fashion, the public, industry and scientific community will have the opportunity to comment on its many important features.

****** Powder River Note:**

Powder River has the entire "The Conserving Wyoming's Heritage Alternative" available. If you are interest please email your request to info@powderriverbasin.org. Thank you