

WYOMING RANCHER ASKS CONGRESS TO “DO IT RIGHT”

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Washington D.C. – A Wyoming rancher submitted testimony today to the House Resources Committee, urging Congress to make the oil, gas and coalbed methane industry “Do It Right,” and protect private property rights.

“The West’s agricultural economy is based on strong protections for private property rights and water rights,” stated Eric Barlow, a rancher from Gillette, Wyoming. “Individual landowners steward their own land and water with a view toward long term productivity, which benefits the whole region. Oil and gas development, especially coal bed methane production, threatens this careful balance if not done right,”

Thousands of private property owners in the West face a growing threat to their livelihoods and quality of life from oil and gas development.

“I want you to know that the organizations I represent here today support responsible oil and gas development,” stated Barlow. “For several years now we’ve been asking industry, federal agencies and Congress to ‘Do It Right,’ and the result has been lots of rhetoric and little action.”

Barlow also urged Congress to protect the West’s valuable water resources. “The ground water and surface waters of this nation are a precious and life-sustaining resource that must be protected and used prudently. In the future, water will prove to be far more valuable than all the precious metals and fossil fuels this nation has produced in its history. Whether it is the dewatering involved in coal bed methane production or the hydraulic fracturing of formations to enhance oil and gas production, our water resources are being irretrievably affected. This is another example of one resource being developed at the expense of another.”

Barlow made the following recommendations to the House Resources Committee based on his personal experience as a cattle rancher who has been involved with oil and gas development issues for many years.

- Private property rights must be protected by requiring surface use and damage agreements, and by improving notification to landowners.
- Water resources must be protected by requiring the replacement of water supplies affected by oil and gas operations, reinjection and treatment of coal bed methane produced water, and water management plans.
- The oil and gas industry must be held accountable for clean-up costs and damages by instituting a program to clean-up abandoned oil and gas wells, by requiring complete and timely reclamation, by requiring higher bonds, and by beefing up Bureau of Land Management inspection and enforcement program.

Barlow testified on behalf of WORC, the Western Organization of Resource Councils, and the Powder River Basin Resource Council.