



WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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November 19, 2007

Alan Rabinoff
Deputy State Director, Lands & Minerals
Bureau of Land Management
5353 Yellowstone Road
Cheyenne, WY 82003

Dear Mr. Rabinoff:

The BLM recently announced their intention to sell extensive oil and gas leases in the Saratoga Valley. The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission (Commission) supports Governor Freudenthal in his request that the leasing be delayed until a more adequate consideration of the wildlife resources can be made. In particular, the Commission is in the process of identifying and evaluating sage grouse seasonal ranges and core habitats. This process will help guide the development of oil and gas development and other land uses to avoid significant impacts to sage grouse that could lead to that species' listing under the Endangered Species Act.

It is our experience that it is much easier to protect Wyoming's wildlife if it is given thorough, studied consideration before the decision to lease is made. Mitigation efforts aimed at minimizing the impact of exploration, development, and production often fall short of fully protecting wildlife and create an atmosphere where those charged with protecting wildlife resources are placed at odds with those developing the mineral resource.

Because of the high wildlife values and the relatively low potential for oil and gas development in the Saratoga Valley area, the Commission feels it would be prudent to delay the leasing at this time. This should not cause a hardship regarding current oil and gas development, given the extensive leasing in higher potential areas throughout the state, but would certainly allow a more sufficient planning process concerning how this development could avoid impacting other resources on multiple-use BLM lands. As you know, wildlife is the primary component of the State's second leading industry, which is tourism and recreation.

Mr. Alan Rabinoff
November 19, 2007
Page 2

The Commission looks forward to working with the BLM in developing conservation measures for wildlife that will also allow development of Wyoming's oil and gas resources.

Sincerely,



Bill Williams, DVM
President
Wyoming Game and Fish Commission

BW/VS/cmc

cc: Governor Freudenthal
Ryan Lance
Commission members
Terry Cleveland