

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Sublette County, Wyoming

P.O. Box 250

PINEDALE, WY 82941

September 16, 2009

Chairman Nick J. Rahall, II
Doc Hastings, Ranking Republican Member
Members of the Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
111th Congress
Washington, D.C.

Dear Honorable Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HR 3534. Sublette County, Wyoming's land base consists of about 20 percent private lands, and about 80 percent public lands. Our economy is strongly dependent on the multiple use of public lands, including energy production, agriculture, and recreation. Energy production in Sublette County accounts for roughly 97 percent of the county tax base and resulting revenue.

The Sublette County Commission supports the need to streamline the federal planning process in a way that will more effectively promote efficient, responsible energy development. This legislation appears not to serve that purpose, but rather the opposite.

Along with the increased emphasis to develop renewable energy such as wind and solar, as well as increased demand for low carbon emission fuel, there will likely be an increased demand for natural gas.

Sublette County has been actively engaged as a cooperating agency with BLM during the planning process on all recent energy development projects in our county. Our goal in that participation is to try and insure that our energy resources are developed in a manner that effectively mitigates impacts to our other multiple use economies and protects our ability to maintain and enhance our economic diversity. We feel we have been

successful for the most part in achieving that goal. As an example, Sublette County has and is working cooperatively with our energy developers, BLM, and other state cooperators, including the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality to address ozone non-attainment issues. We feel we are being successful in that effort and within the next year we should have data to measure that success. We do not feel that adding more federal regulations will help in that process.

Pinedale Mayor Stephen Smith is attending this session to discuss his view of the legislation and the impacts of natural gas development in his town, one town in our vast county of nearly 5,000 square miles. We know that there are a wide variety of viewpoints on energy development in our county, and Mr. Smith's view is one, but is probably not in the majority. While Mr. Smith's view endorses the mandated use of "best management practices" for all energy development on federal lands, we know from experience that such a cookie-cutter approach doesn't achieve the desired results. Instead, we as a county commission actively work with natural resource agencies and with natural gas operators to address issues of concern, and are doing that now in partnerships where we monitor water and air quality, and impacts to wildlife populations.

Mr. Smith's letter included an attachment claiming to be a fact sheet about categorical exclusions, but that was far from a factual or impartial collection of information, and was in fact prepared by an environmental group in Wyoming that has fought energy development in our county. The fact sheet doesn't give an accurate presentation of the facts, and fails to note that while categorical exclusions are indeed commonly used in our local BLM office for processing applications for permit to drill, that is because the agency has already completed exhaustive environmental impact statements for the development that is currently occurring. Categorical exclusions are used because the analysis has been made, and mitigation has already been determined, and because the proposed drilling falls within the narrow categories for such use.

For those wanting an honest assessment of the impact of energy development in a western county currently home to two of the largest natural gas fields in the nation, we the Sublette County Commission would be glad to provide further information.

The Sublette County Commission maintains that along with the need for the United States to become more energy independent, the congress needs to promote statutory and policy changes which will enhance responsible energy development and not provide unnecessary and unneeded roadblocks that only serve to make us more dependent on foreign energy.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William W. Cramer".

William W. Cramer, Chairman

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Linn".

John Linn, Member

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joel E. Bousman".

Joel E. Bousman, Member