

January 18, 2010

Contacts: **Josh Coursey**, 307-389-7495, Muley Fanatics Chapter President
Craig Thompson, 307-389-2715, Flaming gorge TU Chapter President
Joy Bannon, WWF Lander, 307-335-8633
Steven Brutger, TU, Lander, 307-332-6700 ext. 11

Sportsmen's Coalition concerned about proposed seismic study in the Greater Little Mountain Area

Rock Springs, WY- The Greater Little Mountain Coalition, a diverse group of sportsmen, union members, citizens and local businesses submitted comments to the BLM today opposing a proposed seismic study in the Greater Little Mountain Area. The seismic project represents a landscape disturbance to an area that is valued for its unique high desert habitat which provides excellent hunting fishing, and recreational opportunities.

Azalea Oil Co. has requested permission from the BLM to conduct a 2D seismic study this summer in the southern portion of the Greater Little Mountain Area in the Minnie's Gap and Iron Mountain region. The project proposes to use dynamite to blast 125 shot holes to a depth of 50 feet using buggy drills that would travel off-road creating new tracks across the landscape. Portions of the seismic study location cross through the Marsh Creek complex, known for its numerous springs and groundwater recharge significance. This area is extremely vulnerable to permanent scaring due to sensitive soils and this invasive activity could compromise habitats supporting native Colorado River cutthroat trout, sage grouse, crucial winter ranges for big game, parturition areas for moose, and other sensitive plant and animal species. "We all know what happens to this area when people start going off-road—people see a trail and start to use it and before you know it, a new road is created," says Josh Coursey, a local hunter and concerned member of the Coalition.

"The Marsh Creek complex contains springs that are a vital water source for supporting the fisheries in this area, particularly the native Colorado River cutthroat trout. "Having off road buggy drills, exploding dynamite, all sorts of vehicle traffic in this area is unacceptable", comments Craig Thompson, local resident and President of the Flaming Gorge Trout Unlimited Chapter.

While not opposed to oil and gas development, the Greater Little Mountain Coalition believes the study site is located in an integral part of what Governor Freudenthal has described as "one of Wyoming's crown jewels". The Coalition and the Governor have consistently submitted their concerns on previous seismic studies and oil and gas lease sales in this area citing concerns that such activities could serve as a trigger for the full industrialization of an irreplaceable recreation area and fragile ecosystem.

“The Coalition is concerned that multiple types of energy development are creeping into the area without looking at the big picture of how we want the region to be managed for future generations” stated Steven Brutger, Trout Unlimited Wyoming energy Coordinator.

The Greater Little Mountain Area is highly favored by sportsmen for its trophy deer and elk hunting, native cutthroat trout populations and overall recreational value. Protecting the hunting and fishing heritage of Wyoming by maintaining the integrity of this area is the highest priority for Coalition members. The landscape has also been listed as one of the top ten most important fish and wildlife habitats on America’s public lands by the Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development and one of the most vulnerable for getting spoiled by energy development. The Coalition has been working with the BLM and energy companies to come up with a plan that protects the unique qualities of the area while balancing energy development at the same time.

Deleted: area