

# CITIZENS PROTECTING THE WYOMING RANGE

## Wyoming's Namesake Mountains

On the western edge of our state lies a stunning mountain range that is often overlooked by tourists, but remains a prime destination for locals. They know that some of Wyoming's best fishing, hunting and camping is found a short drive up dirt roads from towns like Daniel, Alpine, Big Piney and Afton -- roads that follow pristine rivers into a 100-mile chain of peaks called the Wyoming Range. These mountains provide accessible but wild backcountry with limestone cliffs towering over shimmering aspen groves and clear rivers teeming with native trout. And yet, the Forest Service, the caretaker of this range that forms the southwestern leg of the Bridger-Teton

*"My general feeling is we shouldn't be drilling national forests. They're there for special reasons and I don't think we should diminish those reasons."*

**Senator Craig Thomas**

Quoted in the June 18, 2006 Casper-Star Tribune

National Forest, is willing to trade some of the range's exceptional natural and recreational values by opening it to new oil and gas development. In response, local landowners, outfitters and business owners formed **Citizens Protecting the Wyoming Range**, which seeks to protect this range from

new leasing and drilling. We support *responsible* energy development, which means keeping it out of special landscapes like the Wyoming Range.

## Exceptional Wildlife Habitat and Recreational Opportunities

Because of its exceptional habitat, the Wyoming Range supports some of the most robust wildlife populations in Wyoming, particularly when it comes to big game and sensitive species like native cutthroat trout. The range harbors the Sublette moose herd, representing half the state's moose, and it offers one of the few places where elk inhabit their natural winter range. One of Wyoming's most revered mule deer herds summers in the Wyoming Range. Because of its location dividing three major rivers, the Range is home to three cutthroat trout subspecies native to Wyoming streams.

**Outdoor Recreation:** The 75-mile Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail, which follows the range's crest from South Piney to the Hoback River, is among the state's premier backpacking experiences, passing under limestone cliffs and through old growth forests and alpine meadows. Wyoming families frequent the Horse Creek, Middle Piney, La Barge and Hoback areas to hike, fish and hunt away from tourist crowds. Some 300 miles of snowmobile trails run through the mountains.



**Big Game Hunting, Outfitting and Ranching:** Lots of elk, mule deer and moose ensure that the Wyoming Range is a favorite destination for Wyoming hunters. On average, 8,600 mule deer hunters visit the Wyoming Range each year as well as another 2,400 elk hunters. This activity generates sustainable economic growth and helps support more than 45 outfitters and numerous other local businesses. People visiting the Bridger-Teton National Forest to enjoy its wildlife spent \$51 million in local communities in 2004, supporting 1,132 local jobs. These mountains also support sheep and cattle ranching on the open range.

## The Energy Boom Comes to the Wyoming Range

The spectacular mountains of the Bridger-Teton National Forest rim one of the nation's most productive natural gas regions. Public lands in the Upper Green River Valley accommodate more than 3,000 wells, with hundreds of new wells being drilled each year. Now land managers are attempting to grant new leases and drilling permits in the Wyoming Range, putting at risk one of the region's greatest assets.

**New Leasing and Existing Development:** Starting in December 2005, the Forest Service began offering new leases on 44,600 acres of the eastern slope of the Wyoming Range. These lease parcels were challenged by outfitters, sportsmen groups, NOLS, AFL-CIO, hundreds of citizens, Gov. Freudenthal, and conservation groups; administrative law judges found these appeals "likely to succeed" and have suspended the issuance of these leases. Still, more than 150,000 acres of the Wyoming Range are under lease for energy development. Industry recently drilled an exploratory well in Fish Creek and proposes to drill in the Upper Hoback drainage.

*"We feel that the long-term recreation values that the Range offers far out value energy development. Our ultimate goal is to have legislation introduced in Congress to permanently protect the Wyoming Range from energy development."*

**Gary Amerine**, founding member  
Citizens Protecting the Wyoming Range

**Enough is Enough:** Wyoming and especially Sublette County are already doing their fair share to produce natural gas for the nation. Much of Sublette's \$5 billion in annual production comes off BLM lands in the Pinedale Anticline and Jonah gas fields. Much of the Upper Green development occurs in sensitive winter range for Wyoming's famous big game herds, whose members disperse into the Wyoming Range and other mountains for summer forage and to birth their young. Drilling is displacing pronghorn and mule deer from preferred winter range, which is already compromised by drought.

### What citizens can do

You can make a difference by contacting Wyoming's political leaders and asking them to support federal legislation that would withdraw the Wyoming Range from new leasing. Gov. Dave Freudenthal and Sen. Craig Thomas, who support responsible energy development, have already spoken out on the need to protect these mountains. Go to [www.wyomingrange.org](http://www.wyomingrange.org), to learn more.

**Citizens Protecting the Wyoming Range**, a grassroots group comprised of sportsmen, outfitters, ranchers, property owners and conservationists, does not oppose new energy development in Sublette County. But we believe development has its limits. With so much industrial activity in the nearby Upper Green River Valley, it doesn't make sense to expand it onto the national forest of the Wyoming Range. **Citizens Protecting the Wyoming Range** will work to:

- Stop the issuance of any new leases in the Range, including the 44,600 acres most recently offered for leasing.
- Stop new exploratory drilling in any undeveloped areas of the Wyoming Range, including the proposed wildcat wells off the Hoback drainage.
- Ensure that the new Bridger-Teton National Forest plan restricts new energy development.
- Seek federal legislation that would withdraw most of the national forest lands in the Wyoming Range from future leasing.

### Contacts for Citizens Protecting the Wyoming Range:

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