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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

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GOVERNOR: CONCERN GROWS OVER WYOMING RANGE LEASING

CHEYENNE, Wyo. - Concern over continued oil and gas leasing in the Wyoming Range is growing, Gov. Dave Freudenthal told the Bureau of Land Management in lodging his own objections to an upcoming lease sale.

Thirteen parcels on the Bridger-Teton National Forest are coming up for sale June 6. In a letter to Wyoming BLM Director Bob Bennett, Freudenthal said he understands the federal requirement to achieve "multiple use" on public lands - but said that is not the same thing as mineral development on every acre. Some 150,000 acres of oil and gas leases on the forest and federal lands adjacent to the Wyoming Range managed by the BLM that are already contributing toward the oil and gas portion of multiple use on federal lands. Much of the Wyoming Range parcels' value, the governor said, lies in their contributions to recreation and tourism.

"Much has happened in the 16 years since the completion of the Bridger-Teton National Forest plan that made the decision on offering these lease parcels for sale," Freudenthal wrote. "Energy development in the Upper Green River Basin has occurred at a rate and intensity that was not predicted in 1990. ... We cannot in good conscience move forward leasing in this area knowing that we are not using the most current information available."

The full text of Freudenthal's June 1 letter to Bennett follows.

Bob Bennett
Wyoming Director
Bureau of Land Management
P O Box 1828
Cheyenne, WY 82003

Dear Director Bennett:

As you know, we have lodged continuing objections to the lease sales in the Bridger-Teton National Forest because of its importance to recreation and tourism opportunities for the people of Wyoming. The same sentiments apply to the June 6, 2006 lease sale of 13 parcels within the forest. I am aware that the deadline for a formal protest has passed and that the decision on this matter is a foregone conclusion. Despite that, the BLM should be aware of the state's continued opposition to the lease sale.

The notice of sale for these and other parcels in the Wyoming Range has met with an overwhelming number of protests and concerns from a wide variety of Wyoming residents. I believe BLM should take note of the added number of people objecting to these lease sales. These concerned citizens come to the Bridger-Teton National Forest to escape life's pressures and to fish, hunt, camp, hike, ride horses, snowmobile and ski. I understand those protesting include industry workers in Sublette and Sweetwater counties, who spend their weeks working for the industry and their off time fishing and hunting in the Wyoming Range with their families. These people are being wedged out of other areas and are finding the Bridger-Teton their only option - now that option is at risk.

While I understand the Forest Service's requirement to achieve multiple use, I believe we have already done so. There are 150,000 acres of oil and gas leases on the forest and federal lands adjacent to the Wyoming Range managed by the Bureau of Land Management that are overwhelmingly contributing toward the oil and gas portion of multiple use on federal lands. Multiple use does not mean oil and gas on every acre. The federal government should focus drilling in the sage flat areas they have already leased before pressuring Wyoming into drilling our mountain preserves.

I am additionally concerned with the potential effect of oil and gas development on mule deer herds that may already be impacted on adjacent BLM lands. A significant portion of the Sublette mule deer herd depending on the Wyoming Range for its birthing and summer range are the same animals being impacted in the winter on

the Pinedale Anticline. By allowing oil and gas development in the Wyoming Range, we may further affect a herd that may be already feeling the impact of oil and gas development on its winter range.

Much has happened in the 16 years since the completion of the Bridger-Teton National Forest plan that made the decision on offering these lease parcels for sale. Energy development in the Upper Green River Basin has occurred at a rate and intensity that was not predicted in 1990. The analysis that was used to make the environmental decision to offer these 44,600 acres for sale is out of date. We cannot in good conscience move forward leasing in this area knowing that we are not using the most current information available.

Specifically, the state of Wyoming submits a protest on the oil and gas lease sale of the following parcels as listed in the June 6, 2006 Notice of Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale: WY-0606-111, WY-0606-112, WY-0606-113, WY-0606-114, WY-0606-115, WY-0606-116, WY-0606-117, WY-0606-118, WY-0606-119, WY-0606-120, WY-0606-121, WY-0606-122, and WY-0606-123. I request that you remove these parcels from the June 6 competitive oil and gas lease sale.

I ask that the BLM and the Forest Service halt the sale of these leases and that you also take a very serious look at retracting the other leases contributing to the 44,600-acre total to be offered for sale in the Wyoming Range.

Fishing and hunting in the mountains is a large part of our identity as Wyomingites. While we understand the contributions oil and gas makes to our state, we are not willing to threaten the hunting and fishing experiences of future generations.

Best regards,
Dave Freudenthal
Governor