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*Representing Wyoming's 34 Local
Conservation Districts*

Terri A. Lorenzon, Director
Environmental Quality Council

Powder River Conservation District

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Mr. Mark Gordon
Environmental Quality Council
Herschler Bldg. 1W
Cheyenne, WY 82002

March 10, 2006

Dear Mark,

On behalf of the South Fork/Salt Creek Watershed Advisory Group, the Powder River Conservation District (PRCD) would like to take this opportunity to comment on the Petition to Amend Wyoming Water Quality Rule, Chapter 2, Appendix H filed by the Powder River Basin Resource Council (PRBRC).

The South Fork/Salt Creek Watershed Advisory Group is comprised of representation from local landowners, industry, the Powder River Conservation District, and the Natrona County Conservation District. The purpose of this group is to address all water quality issues on the South Fork of the Powder River and Salt Creek. We believe that adoption of this petition would probably lead to the discontinued discharge of beneficial use water produced by conventional oil & gas operations.

The advisory group has been active in water quality monitoring since 2003. As a result, reports have indicated that the elimination of oil field discharges in the Salt Creek sub-watershed would result in sustained periods of no flow as well as elevated sulfate and dissolved solids concentrates, thereby causing detrimental effects on water users and potentially on fish and wildlife in the watershed (Salt Creek/South Fork 319 Watershed Assessment Final Project Report 2003-2004). This is only one example, of many statewide situations, where the discontinuation of surface discharge would have a negative effect on the environment, wildlife, agriculture and the many ranchers dependent on these waters.

However, recognition needs to be given to the areas where discharge water is damaging the environment. An importance needs to be placed on the manner in which

water is being discharged and justification can be given to its "beneficial use." Some landowners have suffered greatly from CBM discharge water and have reaped negative financial effects. The best interests of the environment, all landowner, and industry should equally be considered. Perhaps the solution is as simple as requiring a surface use agreement with all landowners affected by produced water, rather than enacting new statewide rules that would be detrimental to many areas.

Locally, all of the previously mentioned entities benefit greatly from surface water discharge. Being located in an area that has limited water sources and soils with high concentrates of natural minerals, the produced water is particularly valuable. Therefore, the listed entities do not believe that it is practical to adopt the Petition to Amend Wyoming Water Quality Rule, Chapter 2, Appendix H. As an advisory group we feel this issue does not have a blanket solution and that the entire petition should be dismissed, perhaps with the alternative above considered by the petitioners.

We appreciate the opportunity to express our concerns regarding this issue. Please contact our office should you have any questions concerning our comments or if any clarification is needed. Both, DEQ approved, final reports from water monitoring seasons 2003 and 2004 are available for your reference to support our position.

Sincerely,


Wendy Wagoner
PRCD District Manager