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October 23, 2007

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FILED

OCT 25 2007

RECEIVED OCT 25 2007

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Environmental Quality Council

To whom It May Concern-

I have only recently become aware of the hearing to protect the area of the Red Desert surrounding Adobe Town or 'dobe Town as it is known in our family. My children's Great Grandfather as well as their father ran sheep in that area and it has always been a special place to our family. While I find all of Wyoming incredibly beautiful, and the Red Desert especially, this area stands out as a real gem due to the unique topography, fantastic geologic formations, and the awe inspiring remoteness— and I am only too familiar with its remoteness, having broken down out there on several occasions. In my mind this special area is worthy of national park status and but in the least should be granted status of Very Rare or Uncommon. What has taken nature millions of years to create could be lost in as little as one year of heavy mineral development.

The mineral industry has a "reclamation" process by which they attempt to restore the land after they destroy it- and destroy it they do. The desert environment is so fragile and it lacks the rainfall to make restoration successful. Anyone who has seen the end result of a mining or gas reclamation project; gravel, bulldozer tracks, odd metal parts, and noxious weeds, knows that it falls far short of returning the land to its former pristine state. No amount of blading and seeding in one season can reproduce what has taken millions of years to perfect.

Simply looking at a photo of the 'Dobe Town area—if you haven't actually spent time there—might deceive you into believing that the area is only a "pile of rocks". At first glance it certainly *looks* like a pile of rocks. However, anyone who has been there can look at the same photo and can hear the birds singing, can smell the sage, can see the fresh mountain lion tracks on the edge of the puddle, and can feel the nasty little buffalo flies biting them until the wind comes up and blows them away. I would implore anyone who has a vote either allowing or disallowing the destruction of the area to cast their vote while standing on the top of a bluff watching the swallows glide up to see who you are, or while looking out at the "Man and the Boy", sitting on the same rock that was used by a prehistoric visitor chipping an arrow-point, or hiding in the shade of a rock only 20 yards from the tricking spring where the wild horses are "nooning-up" - or better yet while standing atop one of the many tan fuel tanks overlooking the wasteland caused by mineral development.

I have accompanied groups participating in Native American vision-quests to the desert and have witnessed the profound changes that can take place in a person while in this special area. I have seen someone arrive seeing only rocks and leave in a few days having intimate knowledge of the natural habitat—as well as themselves. There are very few areas left in our country that are this spectacular, remote or awe-inspiring and many of them are already National Parks or National Monuments or are protected in some way. It is the vastness of the area coupled with the striking topographical features that combine to make this area so unique. Because the land is so open, even one oil well 10 miles away, can mar the vista of this magnificent landscape.

For what would this land be lost? To fill someone's gas-guzzling car? To heat someone's inefficient home? To make more plastic packaging? To light up Las Vegas? The destruction of this land will only serve to *temporarily* fill the insatiable thirst of our nation for energy. Like a drug addict who destroys their closest relationships with friends and family to satisfy a perceived need, we as a nation are destroying our most cherished natural habitats to satisfy our insatiable thirst for energy. What will happen once we have used up all of our reserves? All of *their* reserves? At some point, we will be forced to conserve and find more efficient energy solutions, could this not be done now *before* we irreparably destroy our last best places?

If we were to develop minerals within our towns and cities like we are doing in the wild there would be a tremendous public outcry—everyone would vote against the offensive development. There is not the population on the desert to create this same level of uproar because quite logically the wildlife cannot vote—however I think I know which they would vote if they could. I drive a car too, so I am not exempt from contributing to the problem, but personally I would rather see mineral development on my own ranch than in this wild, remote and unique location.

I hope the Environmental Quality Council will grant Adobe Town the protection of Very Rare and Uncommon status and protect it from future development. This beautiful landscape should be saved and enjoyed for many future generations—of not just people but wildlife.

Sincerely,

Lela Emmons