

# Conservationists want expanded Adobe Town protections

• Biodiversity seeks wilderness study status for surrounding areas.

By Tori Adams  
Times staff writer

LARAMIE — Biodiversity Associates is proposing that the Bureau of Land Management double the size of the Adobe Town Wilderness Study Area to protect the Haystacks area from development.

Erik Molvar of Biodiversity said the group submitted 400 pages of documentation asking the Rawlins BLM office to give additional protection from oil and gas drilling to the spectacular rock formations in Adobe Town west of Baggs.

The Laramie-based environmental group also submitted about 950 pages of documentation to the Rock Springs BLM office asking that the Haystacks and the Powder Rim area, located north of the Adobe Town WSA, be designated a wilderness study area.

Molvar said the proposal to the Rock Springs District also asks that 15,000 acres within the Jack

Morrow Hills area north of Rock Springs be designated as WSA. The proposal is for WSAs around the Pinnacles, Parnell Creek and Joe Hay Rim.

Clare Miller, Rawlins BLM assistant manager for land and minerals, said the agency received the proposal Friday afternoon and was studying it.

He said the Adobe Town WSA encompasses about 85,000 acres of badlands-type earth and rock formations that look like castle battlements, banded rocks, chimneys and earthen columns capped with flat rocks.

Biodiversity calls the area in a news release "wild and pristine country, a spectacular landscape of jagged rims, fascinating spires and hoodoos and windswept desert."

The area is prime habitat for birds of prey and home to wild horse and antelope herds, burrowing owls and other "rare and sensitive plants and animals," Biodiversity says.

The group says the National Park Service evaluated Adobe Town in the 1970s and concluded that it was "a landscape of national park quality."

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Biodiversity/Erik Molvar

Adobe Town northwest of Baggs in Sweetwater County is known for spectacularly eroded rock and earth formations like these. It is a wilderness study area, but Biodiversity Associates wants the BLM to expand it and give it additional protection from oil and gas drilling.

Rawlins Daily Times 7/21/01

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## Adobe Town/ Concerns about impact of drilling

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Jeff Kessler of Biodiversity said the group is seeking protection for these areas because, "under the Bush energy plan, we stand to lose them" to oil and gas development.

Miller said BLM policy allows it to designate additional wilderness study areas, but holders of rights predating the Federal Land Policy Management Act could continue to explore for oil and gas as long as that didn't impair wilderness values.

Molvar said the BLM is required to consider potential wilderness study area designation whenever it receives evidence from the public that lands qualify for wilderness status.

But he said a large seismic exploration project for oil and gas resources is proposed for the Haystacks, which is in the Rock Springs District.

"Wyoming's conservation community hopes the new inventory will compel the BLM to protect the Red Desert landscapes from industrial development like this one," the Biodiversity news release says of the proposed seismic project.

A coalition of environmental groups recently proposed areas of the Jack Morrow Hills as a National Landscape Conservation Area, which Miller said takes an act of Congress.

NLCAs are similar to national

monuments. They are withdrawn from oil and gas leasing, but there are no restrictions on grazing, hunting or motorized vehicle use, Molvar said.

Accompanying Biodiversity's proposals were thousands of photos that document all known "human imprints" on the area, both historic and modern. The Wilderness Society, the Wyoming Outdoor Council and the Sierra Club helped conduct the inventories.

Biodiversity claims BLM recommendations against wilderness status in the 70s were based on the presence of "human imprints that have long since faded with time."

The group also claims the BLM "wrongfully disqualified wilderness lands from consideration when protection conflicted with potential oil and gas drilling."

By setting aside new wilderness study areas, the group says the BLM could guarantee these places remain untouched until Congress can decide whether or not to make them wildernesses.

The group quotes Bart Koehler of the Wilderness Society as saying "we need to save these wild places for future generations. Once the oil industry thunders across the landscape, the wilderness is gone forever."

Wyoming 82301 by 3:00 p.m. mountain time, on Monday, July 30, 2001. Bids will be also opened at the same time.

All bid envelopes should be clearly marked with the term "Turf Sweeper" on the outside of the envelope. Bid documents are available from:

City of Rawlins  
Parks, Recreation & Golf Director  
P.O. Box 953  
Rawlins, WY 82301  
307-328-4573  
Fax 307-328-4578

The City reserves the right to reject any and all bids or to accept any bid which in its sole and absolute judgment shall, under all circumstances, best serve the City's interests. No bids will be considered which are received after the scheduled time. The City reserves the right to

## Board / New

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