

## **Blue-Green Press Advisory on Wyoming Oil and Gas Training**

UNITED STEEL WORKERS OF AMERICA • THE LABOR INSTITUTE • PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE • FRIENDS OF THE RED DESERT • POWDER RIVER BASIN RESOURCE COUNCIL

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**LABOR LEADERS, CONSERVATIONISTS AND MINERS SHARE CONCERNS ABOUT COALBED METHANE DEVELOPMENT, WORKERS' RIGHTS.**

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**Rock Springs, WY-** Some Wyoming landscapes targeted by oil, gas and coalbed methane companies should be off-limits to further energy development according to a group of conservationists, hunters, trona workers and labor leaders. At a recent meeting in Rock Springs, thirty citizens from the labor and conservation communities found common ground in their concerns over the way their public lands are being managed in the Red Desert, Upper Green River Valley and the Powder River Basin. Members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), the Labor Institute, the Public Health Institute, the Powder River Basin Resource Council and the Friends of the Red Desert coalition also agreed that:

Prime hunting and recreational areas on public lands in Wyoming such as the Jack Morrow Hills and Adobe Town should be identified as off limits to further energy development. Public lands should be managed first and foremost for their clean air, clean water, abundant wildlife and open spaces.

Wyoming needs smart growth. The boom and bust cycles of the energy industry don't support or promote job stability in Wyoming. These cycles have a detrimental impact on communities, the environment and local workers.

Corporations have capitalized on fear of job loss to drive a wedge between conservationists and blue-collar workers on issues of mutual concern. This trend will stop only if we stand together publicly on these issues.

The energy industry should use the best available technology such as directional drilling to avoid adverse impacts on land, water, air, wildlife and other resources.

We have a responsibility to future generations to balance the short-term gains of resource development against its long-term costs to our communities, quality of life and environment.

Tom Maki, Rock Springs resident and USWA Staff Representative says, "What we found over several days is that all of us, labor leaders and conservationists alike, share many of the same concerns regarding Wyoming's future. We recreate and hunt in the Red Desert and Upper Green River Valley. We all enjoy the abundant wildlife, clean air and open spaces that Wyoming provides. And we all have a stake in how this gas boom affects our communities, our livelihoods and our quality of life. We all worry about the legacy we are leaving for our children."

Prior to the two-day meeting in Rock Springs, trona workers and hunters from USWA Local Unions 13214 and 15320 conducted over-flights of coalbed methane fields in the Powder River Basin and met with residents impacted by coalbed methane development. The Powder River Basin currently has nearly 14,000 coalbed methane wells. By the year

2010, the Bureau of Land Management estimates that over 50,000 wells will have been drilled on the Wyoming side of the Powder River Basin alone. Additionally, the coalbed methane boom in northeastern Wyoming is expected to bring over 17,000 miles of new roads, 20,000 miles of new pipelines, 5,300 miles of utility lines and the disposal of over 1.4 trillion gallons of water, altering a rural landscape into an industrial zone.

Pennie Vance of the Powder River Basin Resource Council, says, “It is tremendously heartening to see the level of concern citizens have, not only for their own backyards but for the Powder River Basin and what corporations are doing to our private property rights, our rural landscape and our way of life. However, if what’s happening in the Powder River Basin today is a preview of things to come in southwestern Wyoming, citizens should be very, very concerned.”

Southwestern Wyoming, including the Red Desert and Upper Green River Valley, has coalbed methane deposits that have been estimated at 314 trillion cubic feet, over twelve times the amount of methane in the Powder River Basin.

Monte Morlock President of USWA Local 13214 in Rock Springs stated, “We learned of issues involved in coalbed methane development and are concerned about the potential impact of gas and oil drilling in southwest Wyoming. We hope that this group can educate the public about that impact and what it will mean to us as hunters, anglers, and citizens.”

Future plans of this “blue-green alliance” include more meetings in Rock Springs in addition to meetings with Sheridan area unions and conservationist.

The Bureau of Land Management will be releasing draft and final land management plans that will affect more than six million acres of public lands in southwestern and southern/central Wyoming over the next few months. These plans include the final Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan for the northern Red Desert, the draft Great Divide Resource Management Plan for the southern and eastern Red Desert and the draft Pinedale Resource Management Plan for the Upper Green River Valley