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Landowner Group Applauds Withdrawal of Aquifer Exemption for Methane Farming

Powder River Basin Resource Council applauds the decision by Patriot Energy and Luca Technologies to withdraw their request for an aquifer exemption for the Fort Union and Wasatch aquifers. The exemption was initially proposed to accommodate their experimental biogenic methane farming process. Powder River had filed objections to the aquifer exemption due to the importance of the aquifers for drinking and livestock use, and to concern that an aquifer exemption would allow the aquifers to be polluted. The request was pending before the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (WOGCC).

Campbell County rancher Ed Swartz praised the action by the company. “We are very pleased they withdrew their aquifer exemption request. Water is one of our most precious resources, and if we ruin our aquifers we are out of business,” he said.

Powder River Chair Bob LeResche also said he was pleased, and pointed out the Luca biogenic methane farming process is experimental, and there are many more questions about the process than there are answers.

“While we appreciate the efforts of Luca to find a way to stop wasting our water resources while producing methane, we believe the state and federal governments have not taken the time to review this process, to understand its impacts, and to ensure our groundwater is not destroyed or degraded by the microbes or constituents that Luca is injecting into the aquifer, or by their byproducts” he said.

LeResche added, “While we applaud Luca’s actions and their efforts to work with all the stakeholders, we will continue to keep an eye on this experimental process and work to get answers to the many questions that remain to be addressed.”

Powder River recently raised questions and concerns with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) regarding their oversight and analysis of the Luca process. BLM has so far failed to respond to a Freedom of Information Act Request from the organization requesting information on the permitting review conducted by BLM.

Powder River has reviewed data submitted by Luca technology to the WOGCC that demonstrates a 28% increase in total dissolved solids in aquifer waters after the Luca treatments. This and other data raises concerns about the ongoing impacts, and Powder River will continue to monitor the process closely.