

Powder River Basin Resource Council
Press Statement on the Release and Findings
Of
Powder River Basin Sage Grouse Population Viability Study
March 15, 2012

The Powder River Basin Resource Council received a copy of the long awaited study on the viability of the sage-grouse population in the Powder River Basin. We received the study today as the result of the Freedom of Information Act Request.

We have also attached a paper which quotes the highlights of the study.

The following comments on the study are from Dr. Bob LeResche, who holds a masters degree in wildlife biology and a PhD in pathobiology. Dr. LeResche was a former Commission for the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and Director of Habitat Protection for the Alaska Game and Fish.

Statement of Dr. LeResche

“First, we compliment the Bureau of Land Management for funding this study and the other critical studies done in the Powder River Basin on sage grouse habitat and impacts. We hope they will continue to fund the ongoing study of sage grouse habitat issues in the Powder River Basin.

We also commend the researchers, Rebecca Taylor, Dave Naugle and Scott Mills for this important study and for studies and recommendations to address the loss and decline of sage grouse and their habitat. We believe we should follow their study recommendations.

We now see so clearly that what we warned about regarding the rush to develop without proper planning, careful phasing of development and requiring timely reclamation is having lasting impact on an iconic prairie species. The more measured and holistic approach to oil and gas development that the Powder River Basin Resource Council asked the Buffalo BLM to adopt in the beginning of the CBM boom was ignored by BLM and now we are all paying the price.

BLM must heed the results of this study and take immediate action to buffer the sage grouse core and connectivity areas in the Powder River Basin. They must require industry to speed up the reclamation of thousands of defunct or idle CBM wells if the sage grouse is to have any available habitat to re-populate.

BLM must also carefully consider the impacts of new horizontal oil and gas drilling which is already underway in the Powder River Basin. We must not allow the oil and gas industry’s political muscle to continue to overwhelm science and the need for careful planning. We must balance oil and gas development with other resources.

We encourage land managers in other states and in other areas of Wyoming to heed the findings of this study and to do it right and do it better while there is still a chance to preserve critical habitat for the sage grouse and other species.”

Dr. Bob LeResche is a board member of the Powder River Basin Resource Council