

Eric Barlow Testimony
before U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resource
Committee Natural Gas Conference January 24th, 2005

Greetings, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Eric Barlow and I live on a family ranch in Wyoming's Powder River Basin. Living on a ranch that is experiencing coalbed methane development affords me with an "on the ground" perspective about "how" natural gas supplies are being increased.

The West is making a tremendous contribution towards the goal of increasing natural gas supply. The significant rise in permitting, active wells and production is evidence that a boom is occurring. However, this is coming at a real cost to the region's water, air, land and wildlife. The associated conflicts and controversies are a burden on our families, our Communities, the gas industry and, ultimately, the consumer.

I come here today with a simple message, let's "Do It Right." Mr. Chairman, there is ample opportunity with some of the proposals before you today to continue down a flawed path of weakened protections, the limiting of meaningful participation and further erosions in accountability. This course can only lead to greater conflict, more impacts and less certainty.

It can be done right. Our proposal includes more opportunities for public participation, not less; stronger environmental protections, not weaker; greater accountability, not diminished. An example of this "Do It Right" concept is our federal coal law, the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA), which requires among other things, surface owner consent, replacement of damaged water resources and increased public input. In the 28 years since SMCRA's passage, the coal industry has evolved into a prosperous and relatively non-controversial industry that is a mainstay in our current energy supply. We believe the natural gas industry stands to benefit greatly from a "Do It Right" approach and as they realize these gains, so will we all. Thank you for your time and consideration.