

ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT TODAY - FOR TOMORROW

934 N. MAIN ST. SHERIDAN, WY 82801 (307) 672-5809 FAX (307) 672-5800
 INFO@POWDERRIVERBASIN.ORG WWW.POWDERRIVERBASIN.ORG



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Environmental Quality Council
 112 West 25th Street,
 Herschler Building, Rm. 1714
 Cheyenne, WY 82002

Sand Creek Rare and Uncommon Docket #07-1102

Dear Environmental Quality Council,

The Powder River Basin Resource Council is writing in support of the petition to declare portions of the Sand Creek area within the National Forest Service As Rare and Uncommon. The petition goes into detail about why such a designation is needed and the benefit it will bring to the ecology of the area. Powder River has been supporting conservation measures in the Sand Creek area for well over a decade. Powder River Basin Resource Council believes the reasons for declaration as rare and uncommon are valid and would like to dispel some of the misguided statements concerning the status of rare and uncommon.

Contrary to statements made by various parties, the declaration does not affect grazing rights and there is no historical data that shows that rare and uncommon status will lead to further restrictions of those rights. If that information is available it should be public record. References to Wilderness designation as examples of loss of grazing rights show a clear misunderstanding of the differences between this federal law that requires congressional approval and the state law that set up the rare and uncommon status. Private land adjacent will not be affected and current access will remain.

A designation of rare and uncommon does not affect oil and gas development or coal mining. It will give some protections from other types of mining, such as hardrock mining, and ensures that the land will be managed to protect the unique qualities for which it received its rare and uncommon status. A rare and uncommon status does not stop mining in the area, but does mean that the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality will need to give thorough investigation as to what the impact would be of an operation in the designated area.

Economic development as a factor in the declaration of rare and uncommon is not part of the State statute. I am sure that the EQC will take economic factors into consideration, but it should not be the deciding factor in this decision making.

Thank you for the time and effort you have placed in this project and we trust that the Council will move the Sand Creek Rare and Uncommon petition to hearing status.

Sincerely,

Kevin F. Lind - Director

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Terri A. Lorenzon, Director
 Environmental Quality Council