



Representative Mark A. Semlek  
Wyoming House of Representatives

**FILED**  
JUN 25 2008  
Terri A. Lorenzon, Director  
Environmental Quality Council

Mr. Dennis M. Boal, Chair of the Environmental Quality Council  
122 W. 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Herschler Bldg., Rm. 1714  
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Dear Mr. Boal and all members of the Environmental Quality Council,

I have become aware that a petition has been submitted to your council to designate 11,000+ acres of the Sand Creek watershed, Black Hills National Forest (BHNF), as Very Rare and Uncommon. It has also come to light that this petition was prepared by the Powder River Basin Resource Council on behalf of the "Friends of Sand Creek."

Further, I understand there is to be a meeting sometime on June 24, 2008 where your council will decide whether or not to consider the petition. This petition is based on a compilation of various resource data, much of which was extracted from the Black Hills National Forest (BHNF) Management Plan. Obviously, the Forest Service is already using the data to manage the area. The petition fails to make a compelling nexus between the wonderful but common natural resources of the Sand Creek area and the potential for resource damage from mineral exploration, possible development and production. I support the BHNF being managed under the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 along with the subsurface management by the Bureau of Land Management. I do not support granting to the Upper Sand Creek Area Very Rare and Uncommon Status by the Wyoming Environmental Quality Council.

Granting the Very Rare and Uncommon designation for the Sand Creek Area in Crook County will have no advantage to the citizens of Wyoming, including those whom I represent in Crook County. This designation will stop certain types of potential resource utilization and could have negative implications for current and historical resource uses.

Types of future resource utilizations include gold and uranium mining. Gold and uranium are known to be located in the area. Should this Very Rare and Uncommon designation be granted, many types of mining would not be allowed. This will deprive Crook County area residents needed jobs, associated wages, and needed tax valuation. Crook County does not enjoy the benefits of the current mineral boom to the extent of other Wyoming counties. Stopping mining will keep current and future Crook County and Wyoming citizens from enjoying a higher quality of government services.

Committees:

*Revenue*

*Agriculture, State and  
Public Lands and  
Water Resources*

The area under consideration for Very Rare and Uncommon status is currently utilized by agricultural producers. I realize that this type of designation should technically not affect agricultural uses, reality shows that similar types of designation have provided impetus for reducing historical uses, including agricultural utilization. For example, wilderness designations have directly or indirectly caused decreases in livestock grazing within lands carrying that designation. This will affect other lands farmers and ranchers use, decreasing agricultural income in the area. This decrease in income will lower local purchases, which in turn will lower income to local governments. Being a rancher myself, I understand that if an agricultural operation loses its productivity, that operation will discontinue business. It is that base property that will have a higher likelihood of being removed from agricultural production and move from agriculture into residential. That change in land status will cause more strain on local governments and valuable wildlife habitat will be lost.

The area under consideration could maintain its current characteristics without granting it any special status. Technologies exist which allow resource utilization without causing environmental damage. Granting Very Rare and Uncommon status to the upper Sand Creek area will provide no advantage to Crook County citizens and, in fact, would provide several serious disadvantages to citizens we have been elected to serve.

Again, this Very Rare and Uncommon designation is not needed and I urge you to stop this process now by not accepting the petition for consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mark Semlek".

Representative Mark Semlek, House District 1

CC: Governor David Freudenthal  
Dept. of Environmental Quality