

William H. Stallings, Chief
Transportation, Energy and Agriculture Section, Antitrust Division
U.S. Department of Justice
450 Fifth Street, N.W., Suite 8000
Washington, D.C. 20530

April 16,2012

I live in Paonia in the North Fork Valley, Delta County, Co. The BLM here is proposing to sell 30,000 acres of leases for gas well exploration, drilling, and extraction. They claim that there is little opposition to this yet the vast majority of the letters they have received (one report says 98%) are strongly opposed. And they have received letters from a very significant percentage of the population. There are several crucial issues, the one "on top", qthat really covers all the rest, is that no environmental impact study has been done and none is intended. They are basing claims of minimal negative impact on 20+ year-old data that is irrelevant today due to the many changes that have occurred here. Our input is being asked for and then ignored. In short, we are likely to have our livelihoods and lives destroyed for the profit of a few. Below is a summary of just some of the issues:

1) In the past there have been gross illegalities in a local lease sale process, oil companies colluded to keep the price bidding low and then shared the spoils after the sale. They were levied very small fines and allowed to keep what they had essentially stolen from the people, and the local and state governments. Their actions have significantly reduced any potential tax revenues that could be used to at least partially mitigate the damage to infrastructure that will be done when the leases are exercised.

2) Air quality-The North Fork Valley is fairly narrow and deep and subject to temperature inversions. The massive increase in truck traffic and the fumes from any drilling would soon turn the pristine air here to something similar to the Los Angeles basin in summer. (See "tourism" below.)


3) Water quality-The base of our economy here is agriculture and much of that is organic. Water resources are always in a delicate balance between supply and demand and weather. We have enough but not much extra. It is quite possible that fracking will pollute the water but long before that, drilling will pull millions of gallons per well from our water supply, grossly pollute it, and then pump it back out. Organic farms will lose their status and be destroyed. It is quite possible and has happened elsewhere, that animals will sicken and die and crops will fail destroying all the agriculture here. This valley is a regional breadbasket and vital for the health of the state.

4) Real estate-Just on the word that the BLM sale is planned, real estate sales dropped significantly. Should the plan go through, this will become one of those areas that everyone wants to leave but can not because not one will buy their property, no one will want to come here.

5) Tourism-this valley is a tourist magnet because of its natural beauty, hunting, fishing, and hiking opportunities, and its abundant organic agriculture. There are even organic wineries here that draw significant business. No one will come here if it becomes an industrial zone for the oil companies. The state of Colorado has designated this "an emerging creative district."

Any way that you can intervene to prevent the destruction of our homes, livelihoods, health, and safety will be greatly appreciated!

Thank you,


Geoffrey Levens, L.Ac., Health Coach
PO Box 1521
Paonia, CO 8142970-5217-3422
geoffreylev[REDACTED]

cc: The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500