



Local 13214



Greater Little Mountain Area: 18,000 Acres on BLM's December Auction Block

Press Release – Nov. 6, 2008

The Latest: On December 2, the BLM will offer 247,645 acres of oil and gas leases for competitive sale in Wyoming. Included in the auction are 18,050 acres in the Greater Little Mountain Area, just east of Flaming Gorge Reservoir. These acres are being sold as 14 separate parcels of land, ranging in size from 120 to 2,560 acres. Auction block parcels include crucial habitat ranges for elk, mule deer, antelope, and important riparian and watershed areas for Colorado River cutthroat trout. See attached map for parcel locations and identification numbers. Deadline for public comment is Nov. 17, 2008.

Sportsmen's Perspective: Greater Little Mountain has become the latest important hunting and fishing area to be included in the rush to lease and develop southwest Wyoming's public lands. These lands are prized for elk and deer hunting, playing a vital role in maintaining the state's outdoor heritage and economic diversity. Identified by the BLM's resource management plan as a highly significant resource area worthy of protection, the leasing of this area defies the agency's own management designations. "This is the crown jewel of Sweetwater County. Are we so desperate that we have to turn it into a Jonah in the junipers? How will we explain this to our grandchildren?" – *Walt Gasson*, Green River native and Executive Director of the Wyoming Wildlife Federation.

While limited energy development is already occurring in this unique landscape, public sentiment remains strongly against further leasing and energy development because of the importance of the area as one of Sweetwater County's most popular hunting and wildlife viewing areas. A thriving elk herd is found in the Little Mountain area, providing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for trophy quality bull elk. In fact, a person has only about a 6% chance of drawing an elk license for this area. Energy development in this area would bring new roads, which would reduce cover security for the elk, increase elk vulnerability, and decrease trophy size elk.

Economic Investment in the Greater Little Mountain Area: Since 1990, the Greater Little Mountain area has benefited from more than \$2 million in riparian habitat restoration projects funded by various private groups (Trout Unlimited, Bowhunters of Wyoming, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, etc.) and state and federal agencies. The Wyoming Game & Fish Department has also spent at least \$351,000 on habitat improvement projects. Local hunters, anglers, teachers, boy scouts, and wildlife enthusiasts have participated with on-the-ground habitat projects and monitoring efforts. "When the public has invested their sweat, money, and time in helping restore and maintain these special places, it makes no sense to us for the BLM to potentially throw this money into the wind." states *Cathy Purves*, Science and Technical Advisor for Trout Unlimited.

How the Public Can Get Involved: There will be a **public meeting** held on Tuesday, Nov. 11th at 7pm in room 1302 of Western Wyoming Community College. All are welcome to attend to find out more, such as how to submit a formal protest, requesting that specific parcels of land get withdrawn from the auction block.

BLM must receive protests no later than 4:00 pm on **November 17, 2008** and be submitted by either **mail (hardcopy letter) or by fax**. BLM will not accept protests sent by electronic mail. Protests must include reasons to support removing the specified parcel(s) from the December auction.

Bureau of Land Management Wyoming State Office
5353 Yellowstone Road, Cheyenne, WY 82009 OR send a fax to 307-775-6203

PRESS CONTACTS:

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