



Little Mountain Coalition Encouraged by BLM's Decision

News for Immediate Release

December 2, 2008

Contacts: Joy Bannon, Wyoming Wildlife Federation (307-287-0129); Dwayne Meadows, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (307-760-6802); Cathy Purves, Trout Unlimited (307-332-6700)

Local Southwest Wyoming grassroots effort results in reprieve for hunting and fishing traditions of Sweetwater County

CHEYENNE – On November 26, as folks were heading out for the Thanksgiving holiday the hunters and anglers of Southwest Wyoming were given notice of something to be thankful for. The BLM announced their decision to remove 13 of the 14 Little Mountain area lease parcels that were initially included in the December 2, 2008 Wyoming Oil and Gas lease sale. These parcels, totaling over 16,000 acres, received 127 protests from members of the public, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Board of County Commissioners - Sweetwater County, Trout Unlimited, Wyoming Wildlife Federation, local members of the Mule Deer Foundation Muley Fanatics Chapter, National Wildlife Federation, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and members of the United Steelworkers Union local 13214.

What makes this announcement so important is the high level of public involvement and interest in the area proposed for auction. A series of rallies over the course of the last 3 months have ignited the passions of people who have historically called this area their special place because of its unique wildlife values and coldwater fishing opportunities in a high desert environment. Concerns with what is happening north and south of Rock Springs in the oil and gas fields of Pinedale and Colorado have prompted local citizens to get involved and make their voices heard. Local BLM and Wyoming Game & Fish Department representatives participated in a public informational meeting hosted by the six sportsmen-related groups at Western Wyoming Community College on Nov. 11, 2008. After a heated meeting that lasted more than two hours, local outdoor enthusiasts put their concerns on paper for the BLM to consider.

Local hunter Lee Splett said, "That is a pretty important piece of ground and I was concerned about the proximity of these leases to important areas like the Flaming Gorge." Splett continued, "I appreciate the efforts the BLM has made to protect this region, now hopefully it's permanent."

"Decisions being made today could catastrophically affect our ability to enjoy southwestern Wyoming's great outdoors in the future," said Joshua Coursey, chairman of the Muley Fanatic Chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation. "The BLM made the right decision in withholding these valuable public lands from its December auction."

"We're very pleased that 13 parcels in the Greater Little Mountain area were deferred in the December lease sale. But the credit for this victory goes to the people of Sweetwater County – those individuals, families, businesses and agencies that protested the leasing of their home place," said Walt Gasson, Green River native and Executive Director of the Wyoming Wildlife Federation.

Conscious of the uncertainty of the Greater Little Mountain area's future, Dwayne Meadows of Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership noted, "We'll all be keeping a close eye on future lease sales – which occur every two months in Wyoming. The last thing we want to see happen is for these parcels to reappear on a future auction block, which is a possibility. The way the system is set-up right now, the public has to keep fighting to make sure the door isn't opened again to oil and gas development in this important recreation area." Based on the public's response to this lease sale, this area is one worth fighting for.

The Greater Little Mountain Coalition is a group of organizations and concerned individuals who want to see the Greater Little Mountain area's rugged landscape continue to support abundant wildlife populations, sensitive species, and provide ample recreation opportunities.

#