

A country in the mind

First, let me say I stand with the Citizens for the Wyoming Range, who say they are not opposed to energy development. As chairman and CEO of a multinational corporation with ties to the energy industry and a ranch owner on the Upper Hoback, I count myself among those most committed to encouraging broad-based energy development in this country.

Like the Citizens for the Wyoming Range, I believe development should be considered and balanced, with provisions for special and unique circumstances. These circumstances can be influenced by economics, and by something less tangible, but no less real. The Bridger-Teton National Forest is a public treasure, one of those rare pristine wilderness areas remaining in the lower 48 states. Home to migratory wildlife, including deer, elk and moose, the Wyoming Department of Game and Fish aptly describes it as a "crucial habitat priority area."

This, I believe, is what Congress had in mind with the Wyoming Range Legacy Act, which withdrew these lands from further oil and gas leasing. The late U.S. Sen. Craig Thomas said it best: "We shouldn't be drilling national forests. They're there for special reasons and I don't think we should diminish those reasons. Even if you do it well, you're changing the character of these lands."

The Legacy Act created a solution for handling existing leases, and I believe Plains Exploration and Production should allow their leases to be retired.

PXP proposes to drill 136 gas wells in the pristine Noble Basin along the Upper Hoback. As Dan Smitherman, a spokesperson for Citizens for the Wyoming Range wrote, "There are serious trade-offs in any drilling proposal, because once a place becomes an industrial gas field, other uses are diminished or vanish altogether."

In other special places like the Upper Hoback, "a growing number of oil and gas companies have decided the best business decision is to walk away." Recently, he points out, leases west of Glacier National Park were retired, and "more than 110,000 acres in lease along Montana's Front have been voluntarily turned over by companies to protect wildlife habitat and recreational uses."

Recently, the National Forest Service took a very significant step issuing a decision to not allow drilling on 70-square-miles of the Wyoming Range north and south of the PXP project, reversing prior decisions authorizing leasing. However,

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Perspective

this still leaves the Noble Basin project as one that could yet undermine the purpose of the Legacy Act.

In my view, the Upper Hoback situation mirrors profound concerns shaping the national debate, involving both our nation's economic future and quality of life.

My business is the automotive industry. Like the energy industry, we often find ourselves at the center of this debate. I take great satisfaction in the role our industries have played in building our nation and enhancing our quality of life. That is why I'd never criticize a company like PXP for extending the frontiers of its business. I do believe, however, it's incumbent on all companies and industries to look at their activities today in the broadest perspective. Our challenge is to manage the near-term while investing in the future. For any successful business, that future requires a heightened awareness of environmental concerns.

Beyond that, my interest in the Upper Hoback is personal. As a rancher, this is where I come when I want to stretch out, tinker with the equipment, talk to my horses, ride the well-traveled trails, breathe that clear, pure air, and take in the absolute beauty. When I retire, this is where I will live full-time. More importantly, I want this for my children and grandchildren, and your children and grandchildren.

The time to speak out is now. The U.S. Forest Service recently issued a draft environmental impact statement for the Hoback drilling project. The deadline for public comments is March 11. Submit your letters to Jacqueline Buchanan, U.S. Forest Service, 340 N. Cache, P.O. Box 1888, Jackson, WY, 83001.

I also urge you to contact the offices of Gov. Matt Mead, U.S. Rep. Cynthia Lummis, U.S. Sen. Mike Enzi and U.S. Sen. John Barrasso seeking their support in convincing PXP to retire the leases.

Writer Archibald MacLeish called the West "a country in the mind, and so eternal" symbolizing the very best in the American character and the American dream. For me, the Wyoming Range represents both the dream and reality — a dream too meaningful and a reality too valuable to be compromised. The national forests belong to all of us; the responsibility is ours to share.

■ Gregg Sherrill, a rancher on the Upper Hoback, is chairman and CEO of Tenneco Inc.

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Sports teach kids about leadership and teamwork, and boost their self-confidence. Athletic activity also keeps them fit and is a healthy outlet for energy. While these benefits clearly outweigh any negatives, there are still some risks.

Protecting the developing brains of pre-teens and teenagers from sports-related concussions seems like, well, a no-brainer. But it goes beyond requiring them to wear helmets or having them sit out for a couple of plays after a big hit.

Following established guidelines that are based on scientific research can help to ensure that concussions are quickly recognized and that young athletes recover without any long-lasting effects. We now know that every concussion is serious, especially for children whose brains are still developing. As with any injury, the brain needs time to heal.

Although most young athletes recover after a concussion, every athlete responds differently. Concussions are a type of injury to the brain and need to be carefully monitored. Severe medical problems after a concussion are extremely rare but can occur. More often, concussions cause symptoms that temporarily interfere with school, relationships and participation in sports.

In recent years, The Children's Hospital has seen a dramatic increase in youngsters from throughout the Rocky Mountain region showing up at its emergency departments, urgent care facilities and outpatient Concussion Program with sports-related concussions, due in part to greater awareness by parents and coaches about the symptoms of a concussion.

The National Football League and the National Collegiate Athletic Association already support strong guidelines for player safety and injury recovery. But while football has gotten most of the atten-

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