



NORTHERN LARAMIE RANGE ALLIANCE

Mr. Joseph F. Meyer, Field Manager
Mr. Randy A. Sorenson, Realty Specialist
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Casper, Wyoming, Field Office
2987 Prospector Drive
Casper, WY 82604

Dear Messrs. Meyer and Sorenson:

Re: Converse County, WY, request for expanded right of way for Mormon Canyon Road across BLM-administered federal land

Based on minutes of the Board of County Commissioners of Converse County, Wyoming, and conversations with officials, we understand that Converse County will be requesting that an existing road easement across BLM-administered federal land be expanded to permit alteration of Mormon Canyon Road south of Glenrock, Wyoming. The federal land is in the NE/4 of Section 13, T.32N, R.76W of the 6th P.M. in Converse County. Topographical maps show the steep canyons along this part of Mormon Canyon Road as the road climbs into the mountains of the Northern Laramie Range.

We strongly urge BLM not to grant any such expansion or other alteration of the existing easement unless and until the County submits with its request specific and detailed plans for changes it or its permittees may intend to make to and along Mormon Canyon Road.

A wind energy developer, Wasatch Wind Intermountain LLC (“Wasatch Wind”), has proposed an extensive industrial development to the south of this federal land. Mormon Canyon Road is the means of access to the proposed development and thus, in connection with the development, Wasatch must undertake a major widening, straightening and grading of what is currently a steep, narrow and winding gravel road. Wasatch Wind hired a local engineering firm, CEPI, to provide a traffic study of Mormon Canyon Road and some of the other access routes in the area. We provide with this letter excerpts from the traffic study for your information, and we would be happy to supply the full report, as well. As you will note in the excerpts, CEPI has “severe grade and alignment concerns” requiring “significant modifications” to Mormon Canyon Road. Wasatch has itself noted that that “[a] portion of the roadway is cut into the side of a mountain, with vertical rock faces above and below the road.”

The area in question is also in an area of substantial historic and environmental significance.¹ Accordingly, the contemplated changes to the existing route should be preceded by thorough historic and environmental surveys of the affected area.

¹ As the name implies, this area was the location of a major layover point for Mormon emigrants en route to Utah during the 1840s and ‘50s.

If BLM determines that it wishes to proceed to consider the County application, we would request that the application be noticed for a public hearing and that there be a formal comment period to enable citizens to express their view.

In closing, we are very much aware that the U.S. Department of the Interior (“DOI”), under the leadership of Secretary Salazar, has been supportive of wind energy development in the United States and has encouraged its officials to facilitate this. As we have noted on many occasions, our organization does not oppose industrial-scale wind energy generally, when it is properly sited and has community support. Indeed, within the past three years we worked with Duke Energy to help prevent adoption of policies at the county level that could have impeded well-sited wind development on the high plains. We also offered to the then-CEO of Wasatch Wind to help facilitate its locating sites for its proposed project that would be appropriate, and that would have garnered community support. He declined, and Wasatch Wind has continued pursuing its project in the Boxelder-Mormon Canyon area of the Northern Laramie Range despite overwhelming public opposition as reflected in the only all-households survey conducted on the project in Converse County.² Under these circumstances, we believe it is extremely important that BLM pursue an open and transparent process and exercise the utmost caution in making any decision that could result in impairment of historical and environmental values on public lands with which it is entrusted, particularly in an area that is the subject of so much public concern and attention. Obviously, failure to proceed in this manner could undermine, rather than reinforce, public support for DOI’s renewable-energy policies.

Thank you very much, in advance, for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Northern Laramie Range Alliance
by its
Steering Committee

Bret Frye	Kenneth Lay
Willard McMillen	Sharon Rodeman
Sally Sarvey	Tom Swanson
Diemer True	

cc: Mr. Donald A. Simpson, State Director, BLM
Ms. Lucile Taylor, Clerk, Converse County, Wyoming
Ms. Christine Mikell, Chief Executive Office, Wasatch Wind Intermountain LLC

² That survey, conducted in December-January, 2010-11, went to all 6,270 households in Converse County. The results were independently tabulated. The response rate was very high for a survey of this kind – 23% - and showed more than 70% opposed to Wasatch Wind’s Boxelder-Mormon Canyon Project.