

STATEMENT

Of

Keith Becker, 1451 Owl Creek Rd, Thermopolis, WY 82443

To

State of Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality

May 21, 2019 at Thermopolis, Wyoming

Sirs:

I am Keith Becker, a resident of Hot Springs County. My comments reflect my interests in the quality of our municipal water supply, the class I water and the Blue Ribbon fishery of the Wind River/ Big Horn River below Boysen Reservoir. It seems to me that the State of Wyoming and your department have both a regulatory and a fiduciary responsibility in protecting those interests.

Let me point to the elephant in the room. I refer to the collapse of the coal industry in the state. Though largely unforeseen, it was inevitable given the economics of the energy industry. From a purely economic perspective, when the cost of an energy resource exceeds the cost of a viable alternative, its market collapses. Today the cost of non-fossil renewable energy is less than the operating cost alone of a coal fired generating plant.

I bring up the coal industry because the other hydrocarbon industries are approaching a similar economic challenge. We have a huge reserve of fossil fuels in this state. All of them are approaching the point where the cost of production is rising rapidly and the market value is stagnant or declining. Many billions of dollars have been invested in techniques to produce unconventional reserves including hydraulic fracturing.

From financial reports in Forbes, Bloomberg, Business Insider and The Wall Street Journal we learn that the plays in fracking of natural gas bearing structures have yet to return profit to the industry. Ever higher levels of technical advancement

have yet to increase returns. Assumptions were that the price of the product would increase. That seems highly unlikely as the cost of renewables are rapidly decreasing with technological advancements in generating capability and battery banks to level the supply. The price of natural gas would have to almost double for the fracking industry to be profitable. Renewables are destined to be competitive by sometime next year at current prices according to those same publications.

Like the coal industry, the fracked natural gas industry may well be headed for collapse. It can therefore no longer meet its promises to clean up its waste water and is thus asking us to pick up these costs in the degradation, you refer to it as dilution, of our water resources. Do we really want to grant a discharge permit to a gas field that cannot meet its financial and environmental obligations just as the coal industry is shedding its obligations for pensions, healthcare, cleanup and reclamation through bankruptcies.

The oil industry faces identical challenges as production costs increase and prices decline. Bloomberg and Business Insider point out that by 2026 just seven years from now fully electric cars and trucks will be less expensive to buy and operate than internal combustion vehicles. They will be more sophisticated, have higher performance and equal range.

So on economics alone, never mind the trillion dollar costs of the climate crisis in intensified flooding, wildfire and hurricanes, and the destruction of our ocean resources through the 80% of planet heating trapped there, approving this discharge permit for this gas field expansion may be extremely costly for communities along the river for negligible gain in meeting the nation's energy requirements.