

Charlotte Belton

I have been following the discussions about the proposed discharge of water from oil and gas field operations into Badwater and Alkali Creeks, which water makes its way to Boysen Reservoir, then through the Wind River Canyon, on to the municipal water supply of Thermopolis and beyond.

Because the pollutants that Aethon proposes putting into the creeks have the potential to impact the quality of the reservoir, the river, its fish and bird life, the drinking water of downstream towns, and water used to irrigate crops we will eat, I ask that the DEQ thoughtfully place restrictions on the discharge. I understand that there was initially hope that the pollutants might be diluted adequately, but Wyoming people are aware that even though the reservoir is high this year, there are years when it is very low, with extremely low levels now seeming more possible. When the increased discharges from the future oil/gas production coincide with severe drought years, the level of pollutants in the river could seriously damage the fish of the Wind River or the quality of the drinking water in downstream towns. In any case, the water will be degraded, either to a greater or lesser extent.

The DEQ and Aethon should explore how to clean the produced water of the petro- and any, perhaps unnamed, fracking chemicals before the water reaches our Class I Wyoming waters. It seems reasonable for the state to ask that the discharge be cleaned and then piped to Boysen, as Encana apparently planned to do.

DEQ has an obligation to thoughtfully and thoroughly examine the financial and environmental consequences the people of Wyoming and the downstream communities will have to bear should Aethon be allowed to discharge pollutants into our waterways.

The clean air and water of Wyoming are undeniably among Wyoming's most important resources. Because they seem "free" we may not value them adequately. There is not the drama of the boom and bust cycles of oil, gas and coal. Our clean water and air, the fish and the birds, don't have comparably well-funded lobbyists. But allowing the water and air quality to degrade harms the State in myriad ways – the health of our people and animals and crops, the quality of life, the environment we all treasure and which is part of intricate biological systems which connect far beyond our State or even our nation.

I ask that the DEQ carefully weigh the immediate and future consequences of a permit.

Sincerely,
Charlotte Belton