

Ruby Calvert

In May, 2019, the Wyoming DEQ had a meeting in Riverton to take comments and advise attendees about the research, findings, proposals and projected results from the water discharge permits requested by Aethon in order to further develop the Moneta Divide project, which was projecting a potential drilling project of some 4,000 wells. This was the total number of wells to be drilled over the NEXT 65 YEARS if the field proved out (a fact that many forget as it sounds like all these wells will all be drilled in the next 2 or 3 years). A subsequent DEQ comment meeting was held in Thermopolis to go over the same findings with residents of that community.

The Riverton meeting, which I attended, had an audience of 150 , heard very thorough reports from Wyoming's DEQ division about how the various alternatives would handle the water discharges, (through treatment, dilution, and discharges) and that the WYDEQ intended to scrupulously monitor and oversee the potential water discharge permits requested by Aethon and Burlington Resources for the additional wells to be drilled. Folks in the audience commented on the economic value of this project to the county and state, and particularly many heads of households who are struggling to make a living in Fremont County, talked about their critical need for a living-wage job, and the difficulties they were having without these jobs in Fremont County. At that meeting, the DEQ stood by their data, science and research - and thoroughly explained that the water treatment facility built by Encana (called "Neptune") had the capacity to treat the water to be discharged, and if it didn't, that Aethon had a commitment to upgrade and expand the treatment facility so that the water discharged could be in the "Class 1" designation. Further, the monitoring system was elaborate - and would check the rivers for discharge variances about every 3-5 miles along the rivers, resulting in a an exceedingly careful monitoring system to maintain the water quality as promised.

I know Thermopolis residents are concerned about how much of this water will flow down Bad Water Creek, what the quality will be and how much will reach Boysen Reservoir, which is where Thermopolis gets their city water. However, as many of us Fremont County residents know, Bad Water Creek, which would be one of the creeks to handle some of the discharge water, has very seldom even had water in it, so one wonders how much water would really flow down this usually "dry" creek bed and reach Boysen Reservoir? Probably very little - At the meeting, Rob Hendry, a longtime rancher from Lysite, commented that he and his family had always used the water discharged from wells in this area to water his livestock, and had no problems with the quality of water (and neither had his father for over 30 years) , and he therefore, looked forward to this project. This comment, in itself, spoke powerfully to the quality of the water discharged from these wells.

Many others commented on the painstaking process and economic burden of obtaining these permits (7 years or more) that these companies had already experienced and invested their time and resources. The bottom line at the meeting - WyomingDEQ stood by its research and science; and indicated they felt this industry had submitted enough documentation to prove that they can drill these wells and be good corporate citizens. At length, the Wyoming DEQ discussed their planned monitoring system - that the discharge flows will be monitored far beyond any monitoring system checking other water discharges into Boysen Lake (for pesticides and fertilizers) And at that meeting, it seemed apparent that our Wyoming DEQ felt that the field could be developed and the companies could stay within the water discharge permits, and this project was very viable.

So what changed since those meetings to make the WY DEQ reverse its position? Powerful lobbying? Distrust in regard to the Wyo DEQ findings and research? Not believing Aethon and their

commitment to manage downstream water quality? Where did the public pressure come from? Give these industries and our Wyoming citizens an opportunity to make this work - The Wyoming DEQ and other state officials owe it to our citizens to sit down at a table and discuss additional research and other options, before you shut this down and put additional restrictions on the current permits that Aethon already has. That is not a fair process, does not provide due diligence and due process for anyone. Furthermore, it sets a terrible precedent on other industries who might want to do business in Wyoming. Has Aethon done anything wrong? No... Have they been willing to work with the 25 plus agencies that they must report to? Yes. Give this company an opportunity to prove that they can do the work, provide economic growth in our County and State, and still protect our environmental quality. It can be done - this is the 21st century, and Wyoming DEQ - have some faith in your data collection and stand by your research and commitment to monitor. Fremont County desperately needs these jobs and revenue, and the State has everything to gain and nothing to lose by green lighting this project, It seems simple to me - if the company cannot meet the standards established by the WY DEQ - the project goes on hold until the issues are worked out. Give these corporate partners an opportunity to prove they can be good citizens, perform as they promise and provide good jobs for our county workers. Come on Wyoming DEQ - stand by your research - I trust you and your calculations and regulations to do the right thing for all of us, and yes, I too, love Boysen Lake.

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