

Outfitter Mike Judd to share the tragic consequences of Canada's Rocky Mountain energy boom

Public invited to energy forums in Daniel, May 31, and Jackson, June 1

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JACKSON, Wyo.— Outfitter Mike Judd will be in Wyoming next week to discuss the fate of his home base at Pincher Creek, Alberta, where oil and gas development has industrialized the landscape and imperiled its recreational traditions. Judd's experiences with drilling outside his doorstep in the Canadian Rockies will help western Wyoming residents appreciate what they stand to lose should the natural gas boom invade their Bridger-Teton National Forest.

“When the first exploratory wells go in, people need to think about what full-field development will look like. Eventually the landscape they are familiar with will be different. The wildlife will be gone, the water will be in bad condition and the air will be in bad condition,” says Judd.

Wyoming's energy boom has brought budget surpluses and jobs into the state, but expanding this drilling into our national forests will harm our outdoor heritage of hunting, fishing, recreation and tourism economies. Priceless permanent assets, such as wildlife habitat, scenery, forests, big game herds and fisheries in the Bridger-Teton National Forest may be diminished or lost. As federal officials rush to issue new energy leases, Wyoming residents must examine what's at stake should drilling proposals move forward.

Four conservation groups are hosting back-to-back forums, **Wyoming's Heritage at Risk: Drilling in the Bridger-Teton National Forest**, in Daniel on May 31 and Jackson on June 1. Joining Judd will be local experts giving brief presentations on the state of energy leasing in the Wyoming Range, a drilling proposal in the Hoback Basin, and the status and future importance of the Bridger-Teton's Forest Plan revision process.

- Daniel: Wednesday, May 31, at 6:30 p.m. Daniel Schoolhouse
- Jackson: Thursday, June 1, at 6:30 p.m., Teton County Library

The free events begin with an informal open house and refreshments, with presentations starting at 7 p.m. Local outfitter **Gary Amerine** will emcee the Daniel forum, and former Teton County Commissioner **Sandy Shuptrine** will emcee the Jackson forum.

A life-time resident of the eastern slopes of Alberta's Rocky Mountains, **Mike Judd** is owner and operator of Diamond Hitch Outfitters and Crazy Dog Expeditions. The guide/outfitter conducts horse pack trips and dog sledding excursions outside Pincher Creek, an area southwest of Calgary that has been overrun with pipelines, drill rigs and processing facilities from Canada's natural gas boom. For more than two decades, Judd has been a determined and outspoken conservationist, seeking to maintain the biological diversity of the Canadian Rockies' east slopes.

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“In the early days this part of the Rockies produced the best wildlife in North America, record bighorn sheep, grizzlies, elk. All this wildlife is holding on by a thread,” says Judd. “People in my line of business have quit and some have moved elsewhere. The outfitting potential here is poor. Hunting is finished for me.”

Daniel outfitter Gary Amerine, owner of Greys River Trophies and host of the Daniel forum, knows first-hand how untrammled landscapes such as the Bridger-Teton’s Wyoming Range help diversify economies. Amerine leads his summer clients and some of his fall hunting clients in the Horse Creek area, the drainage west of Merna that has been targeted in a recent round of oil and gas leasing by the U.S. Forest Service.

“Along with my wife Jenny and our children, I live along the Horse Creek Road. We are apprehensive about the proposed oil and gas drilling the Wyoming Range,” Amerine says. “The social and environmental issues that come along with development cause us great concern. We operate an outfitting business in the Wyoming Range and feel we will be adversely affected if drilling activities start in our areas of operation. Also, we believe any and all people using the Wyoming Range for outdoor recreation will be adversely affected.”

During her tenure on the Teton County Commission, Sandy Shuptrine participated in land-use planning that affected Teton County, which is 97 percent publicly owned. She made sure natural resource areas, such as migration routes and riparian corridors, were included in the Town and County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which was adopted in 1994.

"The increasingly rare condition of abundant and diverse wildlife and associated habitat on our planet makes Wyoming’s unique natural assets that much more precious. I cannot imagine squandering such a gift to future generations, as well as to those who now place a high value on these resources. We need our natural heritage to keep us whole and healthy," says Shuptrine, who sits on Wyoming Outdoor Council's board.

The Bridger-Teton is a land of many uses—hunting, fishing skiing, ranching, hiking, snowmobiling and many other activities have existed side-by-side in harmony for years and support a growing tourism economy. But this harmony is threatened. One million acres of the forest could be leased for oil and gas development (which conveys a virtual property right to drill) unless the public becomes engaged and stands up for its protection. Otherwise, our forest’s current multiple uses may be replaced with a single, dominant use—oil and gas development—to the exclusion of others. On June 6, the Bureau of Land Management will open the third installment of a 44,600-acre leasing plan in the Wyoming Range. The Forest Service authorized these sales without conducting a meaningful environmental review or seeking public comment before deciding, in effect, to invite oil and gas drilling into one of western Wyoming’s special landscapes.

Conservation groups contend officials should use their discretion to deny the leasing requests at this time and instead focus on completing the revision of the Bridger Teton Forest plan, which will guide what areas should be open or closed to leasing and development. In the meantime, forest officials are analyzing an energy exploration company’s plan to drill three wildcat wells in an unroaded part of the Upper Hoback River drainage not far from the Hoback Ranches subdivision.

Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance * Greater Yellowstone Coalition
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