



Sold to the highest bidder

Apparently the *Roundup* misstated the intent of the BLM scoping meeting advertised in last week's publication. The first paragraph of the article stated that the reason for the meeting was to hear public comment regarding the latest proposal for winter drilling on the Mesa. In fact, it seems that the reason for the meeting was to satisfy federally mandated requirements necessary to move forward with approval. The meeting appeared to be nothing more than a required inconvenience that the government turned into a sales meeting for Shell, Anschutz and Ultra.

Those of us that attended were treated to a well put together Power Point shell game that could not squeeze in enough praise for the benefits of winter drilling on the Mesa. We were told that the companies had banded together as one big happy family to work together on single, multi rig locations, directional drilling multiple holes from essentially one location. Crews would be bussed in to minimize vehicular traffic and a

process was proposed to limit water truck traffic. All great ideas! If these proposals had been offered as a serious step towards saving what's left of the winter range on the Mesa, all concerned would have been relieved and grateful. However, that was apparently not the intent of the oil companies or the BLM. Instead, it seems that the proposals were made more as an ultimatum. Shell's position seemed to be such that they would make the promised changes to their ongoing operation only if they were allowed to work unimpeded through the winter. They made it clear to me that the BLM approvals that are now in effect would allow drilling operations on ten acre segments which would essentially destroy the entire area. Their argument appeared to be, either let us drill through the winter or else.

Although I understand the oil companies agenda (money), I am somewhat bewildered by the joined at the hip stance of the BLM. Aren't they sup-

posed to be the impartial intermediary that we have put in place to protect the lands and resources belonging to all of us? If so, why would BLM employees structure a scoping meeting such that the oil companies had the floor for whatever time they needed to best sell their product and at the end of their sales pitch absolutely no public discourse was allowed? Although an orderly question and answer session was universally requested, and could have been easily implemented, Prill Meacham and Matt Anderson aggressively defended the format that protected both BLM and Oil Company representatives from answering questions directed from the floor. I feel that the BLM, by their seemingly underhanded obstinacies, have missed another chance to heal some of the division that exists between big oil and concerned citizens. And once again have sold our wildlife and federal lands to the highest bidder.

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