

Testimony of Scott Moyer
House Committee on Small Business
April 17, 2008

“Maintaining Public Lands for Hunting, Fishing Ranching and Small Business”

Madam Chairwoman and members of the Committee—

Thank you for the invitation to speak to you today. I am truly honored to be here. My name is Scott Moyer, and I am a small business owner and long-time resident of Rifle, Colorado, in the heart of Colorado's natural gas development. I'd like to tell you a little bit about how a thriving energy industry has enabled me to build a successful small business. Eleven years ago my wife Mona and I purchased Down Valley Septic, a company that offers septic pumping, portable toilets, tank rentals, roll off containers, and potable water services.

Today we have 33 employees. I firmly believe that our success, and the success of many small business owners across the West, can be attributed in large part to the enormous investments made in recent years by oil and natural gas companies operating in our region.

More people than ever own successful small businesses in our valley, and there is more opportunity there than ever before. My wife and I got lucky being in the right place at the right time, and never imagined that we could grow a company to the point ours is today. We have enjoyed seeing success and growth in our community.

When we started our company, there was little opportunity for a small business to grow in Garfield County. Today, the oil and natural gas companies employ more than 70,000 people in Colorado alone. Natural gas development has added diversity and year-round stability to what was once a seasonal tourist location.

Garfield County is certainly not the only place where the economy is booming thanks to the oil and natural gas industry. Across the Intermountain West, oil and natural gas companies provide direct employment for over 100,000 people. As our nation faces economic uncertainty, the working families in our region can breathe easy thanks to the economic opportunities that this industry continues to provide.

While tourism is important to the West, its economic impacts pale in comparison to those of the energy industry. The simple fact is the oil and natural gas and related service and supply companies have provided job growth and opportunity to many rural areas. The industry employs thousands of accountants, engineers, geologists, landmen, software and IT experts, environmental specialists, and administrative help at salaries that are 61% above average.

In addition, royalties and taxes from the industry account for an enormous percentage of state and local coffers. A recent study by the Colorado School of Mines estimated that oil and natural gas companies contribute \$23 billion to the economy in Colorado alone. When it comes to quality jobs and overall economic benefits, no other industry can even compare to what the oil and natural gas companies bring to the small towns of the Intermountain West.

No longer are our young men and women forced to leave the towns where they (and often their parents and grandparents) grew up in order to find decent work in Denver, Salt Lake City, or elsewhere. Even without higher education, the residents of our communities now have the option of living and working near their families and friends. What's more, if they do decide to stay, they don't have to worry about the low-pay and uncertainty often associated with seasonal tourism-related employment. You would be hard-pressed to find an employee of an oil and natural gas company forced to moonlight in order to make ends meet—a practice all too common for those who work in tourism.

Although we've heard much about the effects of energy development on hunting and fishing in the West, this talk seems to be based more on political motivation than on reality. Our region abounds with opportunities for recreation, including hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, mountain biking, and skiing, just to name a few. The oil and gas industry is filled with avid outdoorsmen who are as concerned with protecting wildlife and the environment as anyone. Perhaps that's why there are so many examples of oil and natural gas companies going above and beyond what's required by thousands of local, state, and federal regulations in order to leave the land with which they are entrusted as pristine as it was found. There is absolutely no reason to believe that we have to choose between the development of our vast natural resources and the preservation of our public lands for recreation and other uses. We can and are currently doing both.

I think it's important to remember what a small and temporary impact natural gas development has on the environment. Less than 1% of our public lands are currently disturbed by oil and natural gas development, and many areas where development once occurred are now—just a few years later—so pristine that they have been proposed as official Wilderness Areas in legislation now before Congress.

A very vocal minority in our region seems to be infected with the “Not in my backyard” syndrome. They would deny the rest of America access to the bountiful natural resources found beneath our public lands—lands that, let's remember, belong to ALL Americans. According to the Department of Energy, our region now supplies 25% of our nation's natural gas and almost 10% of our domestic supply of crude oil. This is energy that is needed by folks in California, Ohio, Washington, and yes, even in New York City. I for one, like many of my fellow small business owners who depend on a healthy oil and natural gas industry for our livelihoods, am willing to deal with the challenges of small and temporary impacts that result in real, long-term economic benefits.

People from all walks of life are coming to the Rifle area. They are staying not only for the job opportunities, but also for the unmatched hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities the area offers. People who came to Western Colorado to play 20 years ago usually went back home; now people come here to hunt and fish, they get a good job, and they never leave. We are fortunate in Western Colorado to work in our playground.

The simple truth is that the oil and natural gas companies operating in the Intermountain West are making it possible for many of us to maintain a standard of living that would not otherwise be possible, while at the same time taking great care to be good stewards of our public lands.

Thank you.