

Wild Idaho Rising Tide

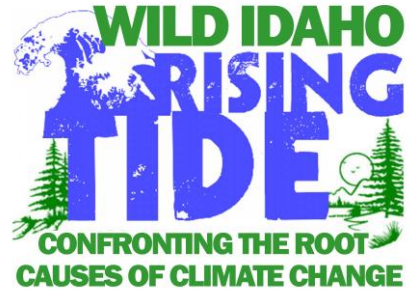
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June 11, 2020

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Sent via email message with attached, duplicate, PDF letter as an organizational response intended for posting with docket number CC-2020-OGR-01-001 Application for Spacing on the Idaho Oil and Gas Conservation Commission website

WIRT Comments on Snake River Oil & Gas Application for Spacing CC-2020-OGR-01-001

For the official record of docket number CC-2020-OGR-01-001, I respectfully offer these written comments and accompanying information on behalf of Wild Idaho Rising Tide (WIRT) and its over 3,200 climate activists, members, friends, supporters, and allies, as citizens and residents of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and other U.S. states, who own property, work, and/or reside in or near the surrounding watersheds that would be directly impacted by Snake River Oil & Gas' (SROG) spacing unit application approval and infrastructure construction and operation for oil and gas development. We object to SROG's project invasion and its significant impacts on affected communities, critical ecosystems, public air, water, land, and monetary resources, and private and City of Fruitland water sources within the floodplain, on the banks, and under the Payette River, as insufficiently identified and analyzed in SROG's February 24, 2020 Application for Spacing and accompanying public notices and pertinent government documents offering limited public information, via the Idaho Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (IOGCC) and Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), at the website page <https://ogcc.idaho.gov/administrative-hearings>.

We also oppose this SROG project's significant, direct and indirect, cumulative, adverse impacts on climate change, endangered species, cultural resources, socioeconomic and environmental factors, and reasonable public needs including human and environmental health and safety, drinking and agricultural water, and private property values, rights, uses, enjoyment, and insurability. As further public input and information shared with the IOGCC and IDL, we incorporate by reference into these remarks the written and oral comments and linked articles and documents of WIRT and all persons and organizations raising oppositional concerns about this project and its applications, documents, and processes relevant to project analyses, presented through all local, state, and federal public processes before, during, and after this IDL and IOGCC public comment period on SROG's latest drilling unit spacing application, concluding on June 11, 2020.

WIRT earnestly encourages and requests the IOGCC and IDL to: 1) Include these and all of our written objections and enclosed information in the public record for docket number CC-2020-OGR-01-001 and related project comment periods, 2) Extend this inappropriately brief, public comment period an extra 30 to 90 days, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, 3) Hold additional, open, public hearings in the most project-impacted communities, not conducted like the restrictive, September 9, 2019, Just and Reasonable Hearing, which limited comments, 4) Better assess the regional significance, scope, and precedence of this project, through a revised SROG spacing application and its public input processes, 5) Perform a more community-preferred, scientifically rigorous, independent, unbiased, full environmental study examining this controversial project, and 6) Dismiss this unnecessary and harmful, fossil fuel infrastructure expansion fiasco.

Besides urging public participation in comments and testimony for this project's spacing application, WIRT offers these formal remarks drawn from our multiple years of experiences, knowledge, and direct interests in this and previous, related, spacing and integration applications, orders, and legal challenges considered at state hearings and in federal court. This letter of objection also arises from detailed suggestions and guides provided by our colleagues Citizens Allied for Integrity and Accountability (CAIA) and project-impacted property and mineral holders, whose resistance to this application and resulting project we fully support with these comments, and through their successful, U.S. District Court case rulings that prompted production of this SROG spacing application. Together, we have identified these problems with current, SROG spacing application analyses and the anticipated project, which do not properly evaluate oil and gas production and transportation risks:

* They do not ensure the protection of the Constitutional rights of not only impacted mineral and property owners but also nearby residents, businesses, citizens, and all other Idaho communities that could encounter oil and gas extraction in the future. State regulatory decisions on this

situation would set precedents for the hundreds of thousands of acres leased by oil and gas companies for drilling activities that could adversely affect neighborhoods in Payette County, across the Treasure Valley, and in eastern and the rest of Idaho.

* They serve as a precursor to another attempt to integrate/force pool, aggressively lease, and destructively extract the oil and gas of unwilling mineral, land, and property owners near the Payette River in the Fruitland area. As the first administrative step toward integration of private mineral interests for oil and gas extraction, spacing applications predictably allow state regulators to force citizens to surrender their privately owned oil and gas for a pittance of its value and without adequate protections of other private and public resources.

* They target a slightly smaller subsection of the tracts specified in prior Alta Mesa Idaho (AMI) spacing and integration applications, with this third modification of spacing size, surrounding a gas well drilled on the banks of the Payette River in 2018, by AMI affiliate Alta Mesa Services. All of the same property owners and environment in the initial applications will share the negative impacts of this most recent spacing unit proposal, regardless of the well ownerships and recipients of lease payments and royalties stated in the new application.

* They necessitate the same judicial recourses sought by Idaho citizens and granted in 2018 by a federal judge, who ruled that similar applications and their planned actions violated the constitutional, property, and civil rights of Idahoans whose minerals had been force pooled by the state and companies associated with SROG.

* They recklessly endanger Idahoans and their properties and rights, with the senseless rush by Idaho regulators to push well production that results in more costs than benefits to Idahoans, especially during the current, worldwide, oil and gas glut and historically low oil prices, which could together force less expensive, irresponsible business practices that endanger health and safety and that pollute water, air, and soil.

* They encourage construction of a pipeline to carry oil and gas from wells in the spacing unit under the Payette River in at least two locations, threatening leaks and accidents at gas wells and along the pipeline, which could contaminate river water, underground aquifers, Fruitland water supplies and facilities, and farms, ranches, and their products reliant on river-sourced irrigation.

* They prolong the uncertainty and distrust endured by Idaho citizens concerned about the financial conditions, bankruptcies, changing names, close relationships, failed communications, and questionable accountability of Alta Mesa and its numerous, oil and gas company affiliates. They also raise doubts about the ongoing rearrangements of spacing units and leases, as citizens await outcomes of class action lawsuits brought by leaseholders in Idaho and other states, alleging Alta Mesa theft of their royalties.

* They support the fossil fuel industry profiteering on access to private resources, against the will of Idahoans, and facilitate drilling and injection of hazardous chemicals through aquifers and in close proximity to waterways, homes, schools, and farms.

WIRT recommends that the Idaho Oil and Gas Conservation Commission and Idaho Department of Lands require additional impact evaluations through a revised, SROG spacing application, responsive to citizen and hearing input, and ultimately deny this application for the previously stated and other commenters' reasons. During this decisive, project review phase, we ask that IOGCC and IDL consider and act in accordance with our and our colleagues' letters of objection that substantively address the deficiencies of SROG documents and processes, as we offer the counterbalance of regional insights so crucial to government and community protection of watersheds essential to lives and livelihoods. Thank you for accepting our comments on docket number CC-2020-OGR-01-001, intended both to improve the SROG spacing application and to advocate for justifiably anticipated, state of Idaho rejection of this SROG scheme to further impose risks on Idahoans, while reaping the benefits of southwest Idaho oil and gas exploitation.

/s/ Helen Yost, MSEE
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