

The Red Desert is a nationally known high desert landscape and stronghold for wildlife, and Adobe Town holds some of its most spectacular landscapes. The Adobe Town area is currently one of the few large tracts of public land in the Red Desert that does not bear the marks of past or current oil and gas development. Energy development across both public and private lands in Sweetwater County is occurring at a rapid pace and is widespread throughout the county, raising public concerns about the loss of wildlife habitats, open spaces, and valued landscapes throughout the region. It is important to the citizens of Sweetwater County that certain special places, such as Adobe Town, be sheltered from development so that they are maintained in their present natural state for the enjoyment of the public.

With these considerations in mind the Sweetwater County Commission adopts the following Resolution.

Whereas,

Adobe Town is one of Sweetwater County's natural treasures, a landscape that is of great importance to local residents;

The intricate pinnacles, natural arches, window rocks, and towering cliffs of Adobe Town are a geological masterpiece, creating landscapes that rival our national parks in their scenic grandeur;

The spectacular landscapes, open spaces that stretch from horizon to horizon, abundant wildlife and wild horses, and prime trophy pronghorn hunting opportunities make Adobe Town one of the Red Desert's most important recreation destinations;

Adobe Town stretches across 180,910 acres from The Haystacks to the Powder Rim, one of the last major tracts of public land where visitors can enjoy the Red Desert in its original, natural, and untouched state;

There are currently over 13,000 wells pending under the Continental Divide – Creston and Hiawatha projects, mostly within Sweetwater County, and Sweetwater County is already doing its share to supply the nation's energy needs without drilling in Adobe Town;

Adobe Town has an exceptionally high density of archaeological and cultural sites, illuminating a record of human occupation dating back over 12,000 years;

Adobe Town bears world-class fossils of large mammals from the Eocene epoch, some of the most significant fossil deposits from this period of prehistory in the world;

Native American peoples hold Adobe Town as a sacred and respected place and use the area for religious and spiritual purposes; and

We wish to leave Adobe Town as a gift to future generations in its current spectacular and unspoiled state.

Therefore, the Sweetwater County Commission resolves as follows:

The highest and best use of Adobe Town is to protect its natural beauty and intact habitats for the use and enjoyment of all future generations of Sweetwater County residents and visitors;

All public lands within Adobe Town, both the Wilderness Study Area and surrounding natural landscapes totaling 180,910 acres, should be withdrawn from all future oil and gas leasing and surface mining, so that current mineral interests in the area can be allowed to sunset if they are not developed during the current lease term;

Current oil and gas leases within Adobe Town should be developed in a way that minimizes intrusions on the land and wildlife.

Oil and gas development is an important part of the economy of Sweetwater County. But our abundant mineral resources need to be developed in a responsible way, with respect for the land and sensitivity to the needs of wildlife. This means not only the use of the best available methods to reduce impacts to lands and wildlife during development, but also setting aside lands where the highest and best use is maintaining them in a natural state for the enjoyment of the public. The protection of special landscapes such as Adobe Town is part and parcel of responsible and sustainable energy development, which is supported by this Commission.