

Contact:

State Decision Protects Our Health

*Citizens United for Responsible Energy Development delighted by decision
in light of new study linking ozone to premature death*

Sublette County residents applauded a state decision Thursday, which said the Pinedale area has unsafe levels of ozone and does not meet federal standards. In his announcement, Gov. Dave Freudenthal gave clear support to the citizens of Sublette County who face the health consequences of high levels of ozone pollution.

A local group called Citizens United For Responsible Energy Development, or CURED, said the “nonattainment” decision is a major step toward ensuring energy development does not unfairly compromise their health and that of their children.

“Congratulations to the Governor for doing the right thing and making our health—especially that of our children and the elderly—a high priority,” said Mary Lynn Worl, a Sublette County resident and chair of the group. “Prior to this decision, the DEQ has been making little headway in cutting back Sublette County pollution, but things should change now.”

CURED is a citizen’s group based in Pinedale, Wyoming, whose aim is to protect the region’s air, water, lands and public health. The group believes energy development is important for Wyoming, but it should be done in ways that adequately protect citizen’s basic rights to clean air and clean water.

Sublette County has had high ozone levels over the past several years. CURED members believe that due to erratic weather patterns, combined with the poor economy which has reduced rig and traffic emissions, “Our lung have been lucky this winter,” stated Worl. “But the problem is not being fixed, and we’ve only been given a breathing spell.”

“This is the first step toward a more permanent solution,” said Rod Rozier, a resident of Pinedale and member of the organization. “We support an aggressive solution to lowering emissions. The federal government has a big hammer to help states cut emissions, and we’re glad to see all the tools that are possible brought to bear on the problem. What it boils down to is cutting emissions, and to do this in a landscape where there will be increased drilling. I’m encouraged that the state is showing the commitment to make sure this happens.” Rozier added.

Just prior to Freudenthal’s announcement, an 18-year study was published in the New England Journal of Medicine, which is the first to show that long-term, low-level exposure to ozone can be lethal.

CURED members said they are encouraged by the Governor’s decision, especially given the study’s implications.

“It’s heartening to see the Governor is on the same page as scientists and health professionals,” said Worl. “It’s clearly a decision that supports our public health.”

Even though they applauded the decision, CURED members said they remain worried the current ozone standard of 75ppb may be too weak, because scientists advising the Environmental Protection Agency have repeatedly said the allowable amount should be lowered.

“The EPA’s Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee made a clear recommendation for a stronger standard last year, in the range of 60 – 70 ppb, but it was rejected. If that’s the standard that science is recommending, I’m inclined to listen to that for the sake of my family’s health,” said Worl.