

# BLM approves northern Wyoming drilling plan

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POWELL - The Bureau of Land Management has given final approval to drilling additional wells exploring for natural gas in the McCullough Peaks area east of Cody.

The bureau said the wells would temporarily displace some wild horses in the area, but would not cause long-term significant harm.

Bill Barrett Corp. already has drilled a well on state land about 20 miles east of Cody. The company asked to drill three wells over 37 square miles of BLM land, followed by four more wells if initial efforts succeed.

Barrett spokesman Jim Felton said recently that the company was still ascertaining the amount of recoverable natural gas from its one drilled well.

"It takes as long as six months to truly understand what this well is telling us," Felton said.

Marshall Dominick, president of Friends of a Legacy, a local group dedicated to the wild horses in McCullough Peaks, said he will watch to see if wells drilled within the wild horse management area have an adverse effect on the horses.

Dominick said he was disappointed with the bureau's finding of no significant impact from the drilling.

BLM spokeswoman Sarah Beckwith said horse specialists will be monitoring the industry activities.

"We want to make sure they are protected," Beckwith said.

The horses will be displaced temporarily, but Beckwith said the agency believes they will return.