

WBR ARTICLE

CBM group meets again

By Kim Phagan-Hansel

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GILLETTE — Conservation and industry leaders gathered again on Monday to continue hashing out issues and goals concerning coal bed methane produced water. The 28-member working group, convened by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, is attempting to create recommendations for policy changes in the permitting process for coal bed methane to better regulate water quality.

"The working group continues to be productive," said John Corra, director of the DEQ. "They spent most of the day clarifying the top five to eight issues their work needs to address."

Brain storming sessions and small group activities helped group members narrow down the most important issues they would like to address. In addition, a large portion of the meeting was spent mapping out the goals of the group and how the group will continue working together throughout the process.

"We just tried to review things and narrow down the goal the working group would like to achieve," said Terry Wolf, president of the Wyoming County Commissioners Association. "We're finally getting to the bread and the butter."

While most group members are cautiously optimistic that some solid recommendations will come out of the working group, heated debates are already working into the process over wording such as using prevent or minimize.

"I do foresee some head butting coming up," Wolf said. "But I would just like to see a solution that works for industry and landowners and doesn't hurt the rest of us."

While the group continues to attempt to create recommendations, DEQ remains under the close watch of the EPA, who has interjected in the permitting process increasingly in recent months.

The group will continue meeting each month for the next three months. They will convene again on March 4 in Gillette.