

# Council: Protect Adobe Town

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Thursday, November 29, 2007 2:05 AM MST

ROCK SPRINGS -- One of the showcase diamonds in the state's crown jewels may have gotten a little safer Wednesday.

The state Environmental Quality Council voted to protect about 180,000 acres in the Adobe Town area of southwest Wyoming by designating the area as "very rare or uncommon."

By a 5-1 vote, council members decided the prized area met all the required criteria and was worthy of the designation, which protects the area from non-coal surface mining under state law. Whether the status will affect other land uses, including oil and gas development, is uncertain.

The Laramie-based Biodiversity Conservation Alliance and seven other conservation organizations submitted the petition to the council a year ago. The seven-member council has the authority to make the "very rare or uncommon" designation under state law.

The resolution will be forwarded to Gov. Dave Freudenthal for his approval.

Council members took note of Adobe Town's remoteness, its uniqueness, its wildlife and the area's significant scenic, geologic and historical values in making the decision.

"To me, it's a real diamond among all the gems in Wyoming," council Chairman Richard Moore said before the vote. "This area really stands out as unique and spectacular. The scenic values are breathtaking and beautiful."

But the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation expressed disappointment with the decision.

"We feel that designation of the area as 'very rare and uncommon' will lead to further restrictions on the use of the area for multiple use," Farm Bureau Director of Public and Governmental Affairs Brett Moline said in a news release. "While each acre of land is unique in some aspect, however minuscule, this area shares attributes with other landscapes, not only in Wyoming but also across the Western U.S. ...Given these facts, the Adobe Town area is not truly unique and should not be given a special title."