

## **STATEMENT BY**

**Thomas Irgens**  
**Dakota Resource Council**  
**Contact information: 701-859-3412**  
**August 16, 2005**

My name is Thomas Irgens. I've been farming in Springbrook, North Dakota, since 1970. I grow spring wheat and durum and sell farm machinery. I am a member of the Dakota Resource Council and its Oil and Gas Task Force.

Dakota Resource Council is a grassroots activist organization empowering people to influence the decision-making processes that affect their lives. DRC is committed to preserving sustainable agriculture and developing natural resources responsibly.

In the 1980s, I lost two water wells and a water runoff reservoir to seismic testing and oil well drilling. In dry years, I haul water. I've received no compensation for this lost water. I have redrilled one well at my own expense.

Seismic shot holes remain unplugged, even after over 20 years. I have filled some of them myself. I contacted the North Dakota Oil and Gas Division and received no assistance, either financially or in enforcement action.

The action of the companies and the inaction of state agencies frustrated me. The agencies were more interested in drilling than filling.

I shouldn't have to go through this. No farmer, rancher, or landowner should. He who makes the mess should clean it up.

But that's not how it works. Just this summer, the bond reclamation fund found out it would pay nearly \$17,000 to reclaim two separate oil wells because the bonds were pulled. If that fund were depleted due to a large company going bankrupt or another negative impact, the taxpayer liability could be astronomical.

Most people do not think of this side of oil and gas development. Farmers and ranchers think of it all the time. This is a call to "do it right."

I'm concerned that my friends and customers in the McKenzie County area could go through the same experience as I did. Many of them are concerned that the Foreman Butte project is looking to disturb more than 500 acres of public and private land. The total amount of drilling permits has increased from the 43 noted in the study to 49.

Area residents are concerned about the numerous fresh water wells that are being drilled along with the conventional oil wells for use in the production phase. Water is not a luxury in western North Dakota. It is a scarce necessity and we should protect it at all costs.

The developers of this project, Zinke and Trumbo, Inc., have provided a total financial assurance of \$250,000. According to our study, the potential liability is more than \$6.7 million, if something goes wrong. You can get more details from the report.

State and federal agencies should have the same eagerness in protecting resources and landowners as it now does in permitting oil and gas drilling.