Public Opinions about In-Situ Recovery of Uranium

Wyoming residents’ level of knowledge, support, and perceived risks of uranium extraction

Presenting selected results of WYSAC Technical Report No. SRC-1004
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Under contract to the School of Energy Resources, University of Wyoming

Photo: Platte River, Encampment

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About the Survey
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- Phone questionnaire developed by WYSAC and SER
  - Designed to collect information about the public’s knowledge and concerns about in-situ recovery of uranium
- Random sample of Wyoming households
  - Administered Feb. 15\textsuperscript{th}-24\textsuperscript{th}, 2010
- 935 completed telephone surveys (31% response rate)
  - Margin of error is ±3.3 percentage points, with 95% confidence
- Defined by 2 regions: ISR and non-ISR
  - ISR – 9 counties that have or may eventually have ISR
  - Non-ISR – all other counties
Key Findings

Soda Butte Creek, Yellowstone National Park  © Brett Deacon
Considerations in energy development

- **Job creation**: 80.0% Very important, 17.9% Somewhat important, 2.1% Not important
- **Tax revenue for the state**: 70.2% Very important, 26.8% Somewhat important, 3.0% Not important
- **The cost to your household**: 68.5% Very important, 27.0% Somewhat important, 4.6% Not important
- **Health impacts**: 65.6% Very important, 27.2% Somewhat important, 7.2% Not important
- **Environmental impacts**: 49.3% Very important, 41.1% Somewhat important, 9.6% Not important
- **Greenhouse gases produced**: 37.0% Very important, 38.1% Somewhat important, 24.9% Not important
Support for continued energy development

- **Oil & Natural Gas**: 80.5% In support, 15.7% Neutral, 3.8% In opposition
- **Coal Mining**: 79.5% In support, 16.5% Neutral, 3.9% In opposition
- **Wind turbines**: 78.1% In support, 14.9% Neutral, 7.0% In opposition
- **Uranium Extraction**: 61.4% In support, 29.0% Neutral, 9.6% In opposition
Prior level of knowledge of in-situ recovery of uranium

Statewide Average

Region 1 (ISR) 68.9%
Region 2 (Non-ISR) 47.0%

A little, moderate, or a lot
△ Statewide Average
Support for continued uranium development, by level of previous knowledge

- A lot, moderate, or a little:
  - In support: 68.40%
  - Neutral: 22.60%
  - In opposition: 9.00%

- No knowledge:
  - In support: 51.40%
  - Neutral: 38.10%
  - In opposition: 10.50%
Belief that uranium extraction MIGHT cause potential problems

- **Groundwater contamination**: 76.50% Yes, 23.50% No
- **Pollution from waste water spills**: 71.70% Yes, 28.30% No
- **Land disturbance as a result of exploration and recovery**: 57.50% Yes, 42.50% No
- **An increased risk to public health**: 52.90% Yes, 47.10% No
- **Unsafe roadways where uranium is transported**: 30.90% Yes, 69.10% No
Risks of uranium extraction, by degree of support

ISR might cause...
- Groundwater contamination
- Pollution from waste water spills
- Land disturbance as a result of exploration and recovery
- An increased risk to public health
- Unsafe roadways where uranium is transported
Level of concern of those who think ISR might cause the problem

- **Groundwater contamination**: 54.9% very concerned, 30.4% somewhat concerned, 5.7% neutral, 9.0% not concerned
- **Pollution from waste water spills**: 51.0% very concerned, 33.7% somewhat concerned, 6.5% neutral, 8.9% not concerned
- **An increased risk to public health**: 45.8% very concerned, 40.9% somewhat concerned, 8.6% neutral, 4.7% not concerned
- **Unsafe roadways where uranium is transported**: 33.8% very concerned, 42.9% somewhat concerned, 7.9% neutral, 15.4% not concerned
- **Land disturbance as a result of exploration and recovery**: 23.4% very concerned, 47.3% somewhat concerned, 12.5% neutral, 16.7% not concerned
Conclusions
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- *Job creation* and *tax revenue* are the top considerations of Wyomingites when thinking about continued energy development of all types in Wyoming.

- Wyoming residents with any prior knowledge of in-situ recovery of uranium are more likely to support its continued development.

- 29% of respondents are *neutral* on continued uranium development, nearly twice as many as for any other type of energy development.

- Potential groundwater contamination and pollution from waste water spills are of great concern to Wyoming residents.
  - Over 70% of Wyomingites think ISR might cause these two problems.
  - Of those, over 80% are *Very* or *Somewhat Concerned*. 
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Full technical report available at:
- http://wysac.uwyo.edu/
- http://www.uwyo.edu/ser/uraniumforum