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## Letters to the editor

By The Denver Post

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### Oil and gas industry's influence in Colorado

**Re: "Energy firms 'threatened'; Perceived bias leads industry to organize," Aug. 16 business news story.**

The Post reported that the oil and gas industry in Colorado is re-organizing itself to influence governmental policy in reaction to what it sees as a "perceived anti-energy bias" in the state. One oil and gas producer said he feels "threatened by overregulations."

Give me a break! Colorado oil and gas producers have had their way for decades, dominating the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission and, encouraged by Bush administration laissez-faire policy, pretty much going where they wanted. That there is now a small pushback by elected officials and Gov. Bill Ritter's administration to protect private surface-landowners, the top of the Roan Plateau and the Vermillion Basin and to broaden the makeup of the commission is hardly "overregulation" and does not, in any way, constitute an "anti-energy bias."

Rather, these recent policy moves begin to restore some balance to a situation that has been out of control, especially in recent years. Anyone who has driven around Colorado and the West in recent years to look at the damage from energy development to our Western lands, as I have, would know that the impact of coal-bed methane and other gas development on these lands is much more widespread than the damage attributable to coal surface-mining.

As a result, the oil and gas industry risks losing its favorable position vis-a-vis coal from an environmental perspective if it does not take a deep breath, relax, and respect the need to place some limits on where and conditions under which gas may be developed in our state.

**Bruce Driver, Crested Butte**

### Not just "backyard birdwatchers," "goose gawkers"

**Re: "Most avid wildlife viewers are anglers and hunters," Aug. 15 letter to the editor.**

Letter-writer Lou Phillippe claims that hunters are the most effective supporters of wildlife. He's wrong. In 2001, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published the most comprehensive study ever conducted of wildlife-related recreation. The study, based on 40,000 detailed interviews, showed that more than 66 million people participated in wildlife watching that year and spent more than \$38.4 billion in the process. Contrary to Phillippe's characterization of "goose gawkers" and "backyard birdwatchers," these people traveled away from home specifically to engage in non-hunting-related activities, including not only observation, but maintenance of natural areas and other constructive pursuits.

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