Luke Charley

December 19, 2013

Culture Diversity

Drilling for Oil near Killdeer

I attended the Industrial Commission of North Dakota meeting help at 9am on December 19, 2013. I did this because I heard on Prairie Public that there was a consideration coming up during that meeting that related to drilling near the Killdeer mountains. Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem presented about having special considerations for places of significance, such as the Killdeer Mountains, when it came to drilling or pipeline placement. I realize that there was some controversy with this earlier in the year when there was arguments about whether or not drilling should be allowed near the Killdeer Mountains because it is the site of a Native American battle, and possible a burial ground. Back in January, the go-ahead was given to Hess Corp. to start drilling oil wells in the Killdeer Mountains, and this drew a lot of opposition from Native Americans, as well as archeologists. They were concerned with the drilling harming the area’s historical and cultural significance, especially to the Native American people. There was opposition to this because the proposed drilling site was five miles from Medicine Hole, which is a site considered sacred by the Native Americans, and near the battlefield historic site where Sioux tribes fought Army soldiers in 1864. Native Americans stated that the industrialization of that sacred place would affect the spiritual experience, and it would be like “having an oil well next to your Catholic church.” In addition to the drilling itself, concern was raised about truck traffic and overall wear and disregard for the sacred ground. So for the meeting that took place this morning, there was discussion about whether or not to include the Killdeer Mountains as part of the list of places of extraordinary significance. Black Butte, Elkhorn Ranch, and Lake Sakakawea were all on this list of 18 places. Although it would not prevent development of any of the minerals, it would have more rules and guidelines to go through before the process could take place. It would also establish a two mile buffer zone around each site included. The plan would include dealing with noise and traffic, how and when to reclaim the site, and efforts to protect the viewshed. Although this was just a proposed list, the 18 sites included hasn’t yet been approved officially, but these are steps that are being taken to protect the integrity and sacredness of the land.