

Sangha Update
February 20, 2008

Dear Sangha Friends,

Since the last Sangha Update there have been a number of important developments and events at Crestone Mountain Zen Center.

All of you are by now familiar with the threat that CMZC and the local community faces in the form of oil and gas drilling. In particular, there is a Canadian gas company called Lexam, which owns mineral rights beneath the newly founded Baca National Wildlife Refuge and CMZC. Lexam wished to drill two 14,000-foot test wells this fall. In response, the local community instigated a massive letter writing campaign (close to 50,000 letters from local citizens and the wider public) demanding that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service enforce National Environmental Protection Agency provisions. To the many of you who participated in this campaign, we offer our heartfelt thanks. It was your support that allowed us to delay the drilling.

Since the USFWS has recently released an Environmental Assessment, the next step for us is to demand an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). An EIS is much broader than an EA in scope and requires an in-depth study of potential adverse effects of oil and gas exploration on the natural and cultural resources of our area.

Christian Dillo, our Director, is on the Crestone Baca Planning Commission, which is an active participant in crafting oil and gas regulations on the county level. This is an essential measure for Saguache County, because the Bureau of Land Management will make available thousands of oil and gas leases in the San Luis Valley as early as this coming summer.

Local activists are tracking the possibilities for public input. Since these developments may have an immediate impact on our practice center, we will keep you, the wider Sangha, informed about appropriate action.

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In other news, Crestone Mountain Zen Center hosted two seminars with Zentatsu Baker-roshi: *Yogic Thinking* in November, and *Old Mind, New Mind* during the New Year's weekend. Both seminars were productive, with a number of practitioners joining us for the first time. The annual Rohatsu Sesshin, December 1-8, occurred as usual and was unusually powerful. During the study month in October the residents and visiting practitioners participated in an in depth examination of Madyamaka and Yogacara thinking.

We are now in the midst of the 15th Crestone Mountain Zen Center Practice Period. This year seven practitioners have joined the residents for the full three months. We are discussing and critiquing excerpts from Zentatsu Baker-roshi's work-in-progress, *Original Mind*. In this way Baker-roshi hopes to finish his book in the context and with the help of the Sangha.

And that's what's happening on the mountain. Thank you for your continued support and participation.

Best wishes,

Seisho Craig Hase