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**SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL™ SET TO PREMIERE DOCU-SERIES CHRONICLING
BLACK GOLD RUSH IN NORTH DAKOTA AND MONTANA**

BOOMTOWNERS

Six Episode Series To Debut Sunday, April 26 At 9 PM ET/PT

NEW YORK – March 11, 2015 – The oil boom that has been drawing thousands of workers to the Bakken shale region of North Dakota and Montana is the subject of a new Smithsonian Channel docu-series. BOOMTOWNERS, comprised of six one-hour episodes, will debut Sunday, April 26 at 9:00 p.m. ET/PT. The announcement was made today by David Royle, Executive Vice President of Programming and Production, Smithsonian Channel.

The series chronicles the daily lives of people who live and work in the Bakken region, the epicenter of the area's oil boom. Oil was originally discovered in the area in 1951, but the recent development of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has rapidly transformed the Bakken into one of the world's leading oil-producing regions. Since 2010, when the boom began, production has grown to over one million barrels of oil a day, which has led to lower gas prices in the United States.

But with that black gold, the towns surrounding the Bakken may have been changed forever. And while many seek their fortunes amid the boom, others worry about potential environmental damage from fracking. The region struggles mightily to keep up with the infrastructure needs, housing demands, and the massive influx of workers and their families. Schools are beginning to be overrun and can't keep up with the demand for teachers. Restaurants and grocery stores can't keep employees as many favor the big checks coming from the oil fields.

"The Bakken Boom is a modern-day gold rush, fueled by the American dream of rags to riches," said Royle. "It's like the Wild West all over again, with compelling characters from all walks of life and from all across America seeking their fortunes. And like the Wild West, it's transforming some lives but leaving others with shattered dreams. It is certainly one of the most important economic developments of our time...but at what cost?"

BOOMTOWNERS plunges into the lives of people who are experiencing this historic transformation – like Ben and Phoebe Moorhead, the parents of two young boys who left Phoenix, Arizona for steady work in the Bakken. Ben is a truck driver for one of the

oil companies, while Phoebe is a court reporter in Sidney, Montana. They've always talked about doing more with their lives and see the oil boom as a means to get to where they'd really like to be.

The series also follows Ray and Deanna Senior, parents of four, who picked up their entire family and moved from Rancho Mirage, California. They are struggling with their new way of life as Ray works non-stop and the kids are combining teenage angst with their unfamiliar surroundings. Judge Greg Mohr of Sidney, Montana experiences the dark side of the boom in a way few, if any, can. Every day his courtroom is packed, so he knows firsthand the pitfalls of a boom town. "No one could sit there and predict what was going to happen," Judge Mohr says of the early days. "We woke up and here's an 800-pound gorilla in bed with us called the Bakken."

Others followed in BOOMTOWNERS include Sean Banks, a street preacher/oil worker, who spreads his gospel to anyone who will listen and even some who don't; Dan and Hannah Dooley, who see the Bakken boom as their ticket to entrepreneurial wealth; Tony Miller, an oil supervisor who has put his career before his happiness; Sandi Beagle Angel, a lifelong resident of Sidney, who yearns for the town she grew up in, not the one it has become; and Travis and Justin, young men in their late 20's who know that it takes hard work to unearth the riches of the Bakken.

On April 19 Smithsonian Channel will make the first episode of BOOMTOWNERS available for free at www.smithsonianchannel.com/boomtowners, as well as on its mobile platforms, and on Apple TV, Roku and Amazon Fire TV.

The series is produced by Partners in Motion in association with Smithsonian Channel and Landmark Media Productions. Executive Producer for Partners in Motion is Jeff Stecyk and Supervising Producer is Steve Allen. Production Executive for Landmark Media is Peter Hartogs and Supervising Producer is Michael Watts. Executive Producers for Smithsonian Channel are Tim Evans, David Royle and Charles Poe.

Smithsonian Channel™, owned by Showtime Networks Inc. and the Smithsonian Institution, is where curiosity lives, inspiration strikes and wonders never cease. This is the place for awe-inspiring stories, powerful documentaries and amazing entertainment across multiple platforms. Smithsonian Channel combines the storytelling prowess of SHOWTIME® with the unmatched resources and rich traditions of the Smithsonian, to create award-winning programming that shines new light on popular genres such as air and space, history, science, nature, and pop culture. Among the network's offerings are series including *Aerial America*, *L.A. Frock Stars*, *Secrets*, *Mighty Ships*, *Mighty Planes* and *Air Disasters*, as well as critically-acclaimed specials that include *Civil War 360*, *9/11: The Heartland Tapes*; *MLK: The Assassination Tapes* and *The Day Kennedy Died*. Find out more at www.smithsonianchannel.com.

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