

Oil Shale Threatens Our Water, Air & Communities



Oil shale has long been promoted as the fuel of the future, but it is a future that has yet to be realized. Despite over 100 years of attempts to develop oil shale, not one barrel of oil has been commercially produced.

The Facts:

Air

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated that oil shale development “may have significant, **adverse impacts to air quality.**”¹
- Oil shale will produce 25-75% more GHGs than conventional oil.²



Shell Oil, maintains it will be 15+ years before they know whether they can develop a viable technology, and until 2050+ until they might be able to produce large quantities.

Water

- Thirty million people depend on water from the Colorado River Basin.
- According to the Colorado Statewide Water Supply Initiative, water demands are expected to increase 55-83% (without oil shale production) from 2008 levels by 2050.³
- The GAO states that **4-5 barrels of water per barrel of oil produced will be needed.** Based on that analysis, annually large-scale commercial development would require approximately 50% more than the Denver-metro area.⁴
- The Bureau of Reclamation’s biggest concern about oil shale is “that technologies are not presently available to prevent salt loading and the introduction of other contaminants into the Green and Colorado rivers.”⁵

¹ EPA comments on BLM Draft Oil Shale and Tar Sands Programmatic EIS. March 2008

² Brandt, Boak and Burnham, “Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Oil shale Derived Fuels,” draft, 2009

³ Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI), 2010

⁴ GAO, “Energy-Water Nexus...” October 2010

⁵ Bureau of Reclamation comments on BLM Draft Oil Shale and Tar Sands Programmatic EIS. March 2008

Energy

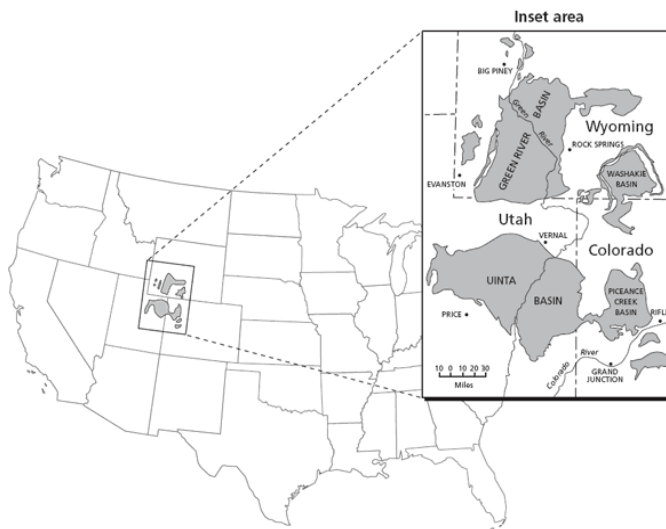
- Two leading companies hope to produce roughly 59,500 barrels/day around 2020. Each day, the United States consumes 20,000,000 barrels of oil. That means, together they would produce roughly 0.3% of the United States' daily oil consumption.⁶
- Oil shale is estimated to generate **returns at 1:1 to 2:1**, while conventional crude oil has an energy return of 20:1.⁷



Communities

- The region overlying oil shale resources hosts approximately 28,000 hunters annually, attracted by elk herds, mule deer and antelope.⁸
- Much of the traditional habitat of these big game herds will be effectively wiped out with oil shale development.
- The BLM's assessment of socioeconomic impacts concludes that "communities hosting these developments are likely to be required to adapt to a different quality of life."⁹

Where is oil shale?



As we look for sustainable energy solutions, it is important to consider the potential implications of large-scale oil shale production to western water, air and wildlife. Developing these deposits in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming would come at great expense to local communities and the region as a whole.

⁶ Western Resource Advocates. *Oil Shale's Questionable Energy Return: Huge Energy Consumption for Limited Energy Production.*

⁷ Accessed at: <http://www.centerwest.org/publications/oilshale/7new/?m=201105> & <http://www.westernresourceadvocates.org/land/OSN/OSN5-25-11.pdf>

⁸ Center for the American West. *What every Westerner should know about oil shale.*

⁹ BLM, *Final PEIS 2008*



For more information contact:

Petrika Peters, Colorado Environmental Coalition
petrika@ourcolorado.org, 970-243-0002