

# Commercial Oil Shale Public Meetings Talking Points

*These are our communities and doing it right means protecting our quality of life!*

## Background

The federal Bureau of Land Management (or BLM) recently released its draft plan for commercial oil shale and tar sands leasing on our public lands in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. This plan is called a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, or DPEIS, and is intended to analyze the likely environmental, economic, and social impacts of oil shale development. Since research and development of new technologies will not be completed for years, there is no way that the analysis in this document can fully anticipate potential impacts. The commercial leasing plan also proposes to amend nine BLM Resource Management Plans (RMPs) and puts in place the necessary framework for a commercial leasing program that might begin as early as 2009. The plan details the extensive impacts to air, water, wildlife, communities and special places in western Colorado as well as Wyoming and Utah. The deadline for public comment is March 21<sup>st</sup>.

Among other things, the BLM plan proposes the following:

- Industrial oil shale production will monopolize 319,710 acres of public land and 41,940 acres of split estate private lands in Colorado alone, spread out within the Glenwood Springs, Grand Junction and White River BLM resource areas in Colorado.
- The plan assumes a commercial industry production estimate of 250,000 barrels of oil a day.
- The plan would require creation of a dozen new giant coal fired power plants.
- The plan would require 15 percent of all of the water of western Colorado.
- The BLM did not even bother to analyze the global warming impacts.
- The impacts could be even greater than the BLM assumes.

### **Colorado is already experiencing a boom of natural gas, uranium, and coal mining**

We can't afford additional impacts that promise to compromise our quality of life, especially from speculation about an industry that devastated this region thirty years ago. As outlined in the plan, oil shale development would take priority of *all* other uses on our public lands including agriculture, grazing, natural gas development, recreation, hunting and fishing. BLM's White River Field Office is forecasting 22,000 gas wells to be drilled in the next 20 years in addition to oil shale development, essentially creating an industrial sacrifice zone of nearly 2 million acres.

### **Commercial oil shale development would require vast amounts of water**

Mining and producing **oil shale will consume up to five barrels of water for each barrel of oil produced**. BLM asserts that oil shale development may result in an 8.2 percent reduction in the annual flow of the White River. High-saline runoff from shale tailings will likely degrade water quality and/or require costly treatment

### **Mining and producing oil shale produces a huge amount of spent rock**

A 250,000-barrel-per-day industry will require disposal of up to 150,000 tons of waste rock each day, or 55 million tons annually. Additionally, crushing and retorting oil shale increases the volume of the spent shale by up to 30 percent, creating shale piles that may cover 1,500 acres in each lease area to a depth of 250 ft.

### **The potential community impacts from a new oil shale industry are staggering**

With new industry come significant numbers of people and increased demands on our government and infrastructure, as well as education, social services, health care and justice systems. Oil shale would exacerbate the strain caused by the recent boom of oil and gas development in northwestern Colorado

### **Mining and processing of shale produces numerous toxic air pollutants**

All the areas primed for oil shale development currently enjoy high-quality air. However, oil shale development will result in emission of air pollutants such as sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, ozone, and particulates. The coal-fired power plants required for *in-situ* development alone would release **ten million tons of greenhouse gases**. Combine these impacts with the emissions from increased natural gas drilling and diminished air quality in the region is a foregone conclusion.

### **BLM does not know where this energy would come from or what impacts generation will have on the landscape, communities, and air quality**

A 250,000 barrel-per-day oil shale operation using Shell's *in-situ* conversion technology would require 1,200 megawatts (MW) of electricity -- which would require new power plants as large as any currently operating in Colorado, enough to serve a city of 500,000. This power plant, costing about \$3 billion, would consume five million tons of coal each year. To produce one million barrels of shale oil a day (as has been proposed) would require ten new power plants and five new coal mines to serve them. When it comes to greenhouse gas emissions, the Draft PEIS does not include any comparison of oil shale with cleaner alternatives, not even with conventional petroleum, which can be considered the default. This is contrary to the intent of any NEPA analysis.

### **Elk, deer, and aquatic species including native fish will be seriously impacted by a full-scale oil-shale industry**

BLM has estimated that large-scale oil shale development would result in the permanent loss of nearly 50 percent of BLM stream fisheries and water disruptions that would cause the loss of 35% of Colorado River cutthroat trout fisheries. Oil shale would also adversely impact Colorado's largest elk herd by severing migration corridors and destroying the winter range of all big game species.

### **Snapshot of special places in Colorado that will be impacted:**

Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness Area BLM  
Canyon Pintado National Historic District BLM  
McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area BLM  
Grand Mesa National Forest USFS  
Colorado National Monument NPS  
Dinosaur National Monument NPS  
Routt National Forest USFS  
Vega Reservoir and State Park BOR and CSP  
Rifle Gap Reservoir and State Park BOR and CSP

Highline Lake State Park CSP  
Colorado River State Park CSP  
Sweitzer Lake State Park CSP  
Rifle Falls State Park CSP  
Maroon Bells Wilderness Area USFS  
Raggeds Wilderness Area USFS  
Horsethief Canyon State Wildlife Area  
White River National Forest USFS