

# News Release

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June 8, 2007

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## **BLM announces first Record of Decision on Roan Plateau Plan**

GLENWOOD SPRINGS – The Bureau of Land Management today announced the availability of the first of two Records of Decision for managing the Roan Plateau.

This first Record of Decision covers about 70 percent of the 73,602 acres in the Roan Plateau planning area. The Record of Decision provides critical protections for fish and wildlife habitat, plants, special places, viewsheds, and traditional recreation and other uses of the plateau. The Decision also allows for very restricted and limited energy development that would require using the latest directional drilling techniques.

The first Record of Decision does not include decisions regarding the 21,034 acres of the planning area proposed as “Areas of Critical Environmental Concern,” or ACECs, in the Proposed Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan Amendment, which was released in Sept. 2006. A second Record of Decision will address these areas following a 60-day public comment period specific to proposed ACECs.

The Decision is the result of a highly collaborative public planning process that began in 2000, with the first public scoping period.

“We developed this plan with significant help and time from our cooperating agencies, which include the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Garfield and Rio Blanco counties, the town of Parachute, and the cities of Glenwood Springs and Rifle,” said Glenwood Springs BLM Field Manager Jamie Connell. “The innovative approach we are taking for tightly controlled energy development on top of the plateau comes from a proposal submitted by the Colorado Department of Natural Resources.”

The Decision follows clear direction Congress gave BLM in 1997, when the lands of the Naval Oil Shale Reserves 1 and 3 on top and below the Roan Plateau were transferred from the Department of Energy to BLM. The transfer legislation instructed BLM to develop a multiple-use resource management plan for the area and enter into leases for the exploration, development and production of petroleum on these transferred lands “as soon as practicable.” This included the top of the Roan Plateau.

This first Record of Decision authorizes an innovative, highly restrictive approach to oil and gas development. Development on top of the Plateau will be conducted in a staged, ridge-by-ridge approach, with well pads no closer than ½ miles apart. Surface disturbance



on top is limited to approximately one percent of the total acres at any one time. This highly restrictive approach still allows more than 90 percent of the federal natural gas in the planning area to be recovered.

BLM received 42 protest submissions during the 30-day public protest period that followed the September 2006 release of the Proposed Roan Plan. As part of one protest resolution, BLM is holding a 60-day public comment period limited to the 21,034 acres of ACECs proposed in the Roan Plan. A second Record of Decision specific to the ACECs will be issued following analysis of the public comments.

The four proposed ACECs, which will be addressed in this second Record of Decision, help lay the framework for the Proposed Plan's innovative approach to oil and gas development. Virtually all of the 21,034 acres of proposed ACECs would be managed under no surface occupancy stipulations, which means no surface disturbance. When the proposed ACECs are taken with the additional 17,336 acres stipulated no surface occupancy in today's Decision, more than 50 percent of the planning area would be stipulated no surface occupancy to create wildlife seclusion areas, protect Colorado River cutthroat trout and water resources, and protect scenic views.

In reviewing the protests, BLM found that the proposed ACECs were not adequately described in the November 2004 Federal Register Notice announcing the availability of the Draft Plan, as required under BLM regulations. Today's Federal Register Notice provides additional detail and announces the public comment period specific to the proposed ACECs.

"The Draft and Proposed plans both clearly detailed the boundaries and purposes of the proposed ACECs, and we received numerous comments about the ACECs. However, the Federal Register Notice announcing the availability of the Draft Plan did not provide the detail required by BLM regulations," Connell said.

BLM's Preferred Alternative in the November 2004 Draft Plan proposed two ACECs totaling 11,529 acres. Based on public and local government comments on that Draft, BLM nearly doubled the acres of proposed ACECs in the September 2006 Proposed Plan. This included adding two ACECs below the rim of the plateau, which brought the total acres of proposed ACECs to 21,034.

More information about the proposed ACECs, copies of the Record of Decision, Proposed Plan and additional information can be found at <http://www.blm.gov/rmp/co/roanplateau> or the Glenwood Springs Field Office, 50629 Hwy 6 & 24, Glenwood Springs, CO 81601.

All comments on the proposed ACEC designations must be in writing and sent to: Bureau of Land Management, Glenwood Springs Field Office, 50629 Hwy 6 and 24, Glenwood Springs, CO 81601. Comments must be received by Aug. 10, 2007.

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