

BLM News Release

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BLM's Roan Plateau plan moves forward

With the issuance of a second Record of Decision, the Bureau of Land Management has completed planning for the Roan Plateau and will implement decisions throughout the entire planning area affecting oil and gas leasing, travel management, recreation and grazing.

The BLM's second Record of Decision (ROD) for the Roan Plateau designated 21,034 acres as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and upholds strict protections for these areas.

"This second ROD marks the completion of a 7-year planning effort that has involved thousands of people, the State of Colorado, local governments, communities, various organizations and industry," said Sally Wisely, BLM Colorado State Director. "This decision provides one of the most environmentally sensitive plans the BLM has ever developed to address oil and gas development. The BLM appreciates the hard work of everyone involved, particularly Governor Ritter who provided input that has improved this plan and will help guide our implementation."

The Roan plan outlines 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 more than ½ miles apart to minimize wildlife habitat fragmentation. Development on top of the Plateau will be confined to corridors along existing roads. Surface disturbance on top is limited to one percent, or approximately 350 acres, at any one time. This phased approach to development encourages innovation in minimizing disturbance and reclaiming disturbed areas. Leases for the top of the Plateau will require operators to enter into a single federal unit. A federal unit requires consolidation of planning and operations under a single unit operator. This approach reduces impacts to other natural resources by consolidating infrastructure and providing for a more orderly, planned approach to development.

An estimated nine trillion cubic feet of recoverable natural gas underlies the federal lands in the Roan area. Federal revenue from oil and natural gas royalties and lease sales are expected to generate between \$857 million and \$1.13 billion over the next 20-years. The State of Colorado would receive an estimated \$428 to \$565 million as the state's share of federal royalties and federal leases.

The two RODs follow direction Congress gave the Department of the Interior (DOI) 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 DOI. The transfer legislation instructed DOI to enter into leases for the exploration, development and production of oil and natural gas on these transferred lands "as soon as practicable." This direction included the top of the Roan Plateau. The plan governs 73,602 acres of federal lands and minerals. This second ROD follows the earlier ROD issued in June 2007, which made a number of land management decisions and authorized oil and gas leasing.

More than half of the federal acres in the Roan Planning Area – 38,470 acres – are designated with No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulations, which mean no ground disturbance. Included in this total are the 21,034 acres of ACECs, all of which carry NSO stipulations.

NSO stipulations are in place to protect steep slopes, fish and wildlife habitat, views from I-70 and surrounding towns, and rare plants. The Roan Plan also includes 30,833 acres of Controlled Surface Use stipulations, which allow the BLM to determine where and when disturbance can occur to protect other resources like wildlife habitat or viewsheds.



“The current plan reflects important input from the State of Colorado received throughout the process,” said Jamie Connell, Glenwood Springs Field Manager. “We look forward to working with our colleagues in state and local government in the implementation phase of this plan to ensure responsible, environmentally sensitive management of the Roan Plateau.”

With completion of the ACEC ROD, the BLM will begin preparing for a possible lease sale later this year. Additional planning and environmental analysis will be required before development on leases could occur.

For more information visit: <http://www.blm.gov/rmp/co/roanplateau/>

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