

**Western Resource Advocates ~ Colorado Environmental Coalition
Natural Resource Defense Council ~ Sierra Club ~ EcoFlight ~ Friends of the Earth
Wilderness Workshop**

For Immediate Release
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A New Round of Oil Shale Leases Remains Same Bad Idea

DENVER, CO – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced today it was issuing a second round of research leases to three companies, Exxon-Mobil, Natural Soda, and Aura Source, to test and develop oil shale production technologies on federal lands in Colorado and Utah. Conservation groups oppose this second round of leases because the energy and water intensive processes and resultant high CO2 emissions are counter to the best interests of western states and the nation.

At stake with oil shale development are air and water quality, and water availability in an arid region. BLM's decision to continue pursuing oil shale development also calls into question the Obama Administration's commitment to reducing the amount of our nation's climate changing carbon emissions.

"Oil shale is nothing more than a dirty, expensive pipedream," said Bobby McEnaney, lands advocate for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "This administration is making smart decisions by investing in clean energy that will create jobs and reduce our dependence on oil. Oil shale undermines that effort." McEnaney said.

As federal and independent studies conclude, oil shale would consume huge quantities of water (the West's most precious resource), require vast amounts of electricity, foul the air, and release 20% - 75% more greenhouse gasses than conventional fuel. Conservation groups advocate that, instead of promoting dirty fuels such as oil shale, the Obama Administration should focus on renewable energy technologies, efficiency, and conservation.

The water impacts from commercial oil shale development would be felt throughout the region. As research from Western Resource Advocates has shown, (Water on the Rocks <http://www.westernresourceadvocates.org/land/wotrreport/index.php>), oil shale will have profound effects on western water. These impacts have not yet been addressed.

“Washington is making poor decisions about lands and water resources its insiders do not see and do not live on and rely upon,” said Karin P. Sheldon, President of Western Resource Advocates. “Impacts to the West’s communities and economy would be terrible and long-lasting. Oil shale development would diminish already limited water supplies, harm wildlife, and increase the threat of climate change.”

Progress on the four existing research, development and demonstration (RD&D) leases issued by the Bush Administration in 2007 to Shell Oil, Chevron, AMSO, and OSEC has been stalled or have made minimal progress. The new leases are for 160 acres, with the opportunity to secure an additional 480 acres should the companies produce commercial quantities.

“The current federal oil shale research lease program is in its infancy with ground barely being broken on the initial six research leases, and there is no compelling case that federal lands are now necessary to support additional research,” said Elise Jones, Colorado Environmental Coalition. “Despite over 100 years of attempts to develop oil shale, not one barrel of oil has been commercially produced. But Colorado communities have been devastated by the economic busts that accompany these attempts,” said Jones.

Timeline:

- June 9, 2005: BLM publishes notice in the *Federal Register* announcing the start of a federal research, development and demonstration (RD&D) program.
- 2007: Six RD&D leases are issued. Shell Oil (3 leases in Colorado); Chevron (Colorado); American Shale Oil (Colorado); Oil Shale Exploration Company (Utah)
- November 2008: BLM issues commercial leasing regulations.
- January 15, 2009: BLM publishes notice in the *Federal Register* announcing a call for nominations for second round of RD&D leases
- February 27, 2009: BLM publishes notice in the *Federal Register* announcing withdrawal of the January 15, 2009, notice, and seeking comments on elements of a RD&D program.
- May 28, 2009: Comments are due on February 27, 2009, notice.
- November 3, 2009: BLM publishes notice in the *Federal Register* announcing a call for nominations for second round of RD&D leases
- January 4, 2010: Companies interested in RD&D leases submit lease nominations. The press reports that three companies (Exxon-Mobil, Natural Soda, and AuraSource) submitted applications.

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