

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall II  
Chairman, House Natural Resources Committee  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

April 16, 2007

Dear Chairman Rahall:

We, Northwestern Colorado elected officials, write to inform you of our serious concerns regarding efforts by the Interior Department to fast-track commercial leasing of federal oil shale resources in our region without following the procedures or adopting the safeguards recently set forth in federal law. Please include these comments in the record for your series of hearings on the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPACT).

It has come to our attention that the Bureau of Land Management has apparently decided to move aggressively forward with the adoption of a full scale commercial oil shale leasing program, even though they have not completed the programmatic environmental impact statement authorized by Section 369 of the EPACT. Moreover, it appears from budget documents submitted to Congress by the Department of the Interior, that the BLM has reached a foregone conclusion - despite language in Section 369 requiring extensive consultation with elected officials and the interested public before making a decision - that a commercial oil shale lease sale will occur by the end of calendar year 2008. This sale would occur long before the results from the current oil shale research and development program are in. According to the *United States Department of the Interior Budget Justifications and Performance Information Fiscal Year 2008, Bureau of Land Management*:

BLM plans to spend \$4.4 million within the Oil and Gas program on Oil Shale activities in 2007. This amount is retained in the 2008 request in order to finalize the programmatic EIS, manage the ongoing RD&D leases, prepare the commercial leasing rule and *to perform site-specific NEPA analyses required to offer commercial leases by the end of 2008...* (Page III-139, emphasis added)

Nowhere in the budget document cited above is there any mention of the BLM's obligation under Section 369 (e) for the Secretary of the Interior to consult with the Governor of Colorado, representatives of local governments, Indian tribes, or other interested persons prior to making a decision about moving forward with a commercial oil shale leasing program.

We believe that this headlong rush to develop a commercial oil shale program and the commitment to issuance of long-term commercial leases is ill-advised. It is vitally important that interested Coloradoans have the most complete information about the potential impacts of oil shale development in Colorado, an understanding of any proposals for a commercial program that the Administration might have in mind, and the results of the RD&D program established, before we commit federal oil shale resources to full development.

Given the fact that some companies with an interest in the development of oil shale have stated publicly that their research programs will not determine whether or not their proposed technology is commercially viable for some years, we can afford to take a cautious, careful approach to this issue.

We therefore urge Congress to review the current statutes that apply to the BLM's oil shale development program, and take the steps necessary to assure that we do not imprudently rush into a commercial scale program before we understand the full array of impacts from the development of this resource.

This letter has also been sent to each Member of the Colorado Congressional delegation.

Sincerely,

Keith Lambert  
Mayor of Rifle, CO

Scott Chaplin  
Trustee of Town of Carbondale, CO

Roy McClung  
Mayor of Town of Parachute, CO

Alice Hubbard-Laird  
Trustee of Town of Carbondale, CO

Frank Breslin  
Mayor of Town of Newcastle, CO

J. Russell Criswell  
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Tod Tibbetts  
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John Foulkrod  
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