



THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

BLM Oil and Gas Leasing Program in the Rockies -- The Facts

Most oil and gas resources on public lands in the five Rocky Mountain States are available for leasing and development

- The 2003 “EPCA” report, prepared by the BLM, indicates that 85 percent of oil resources, and 88 percent of natural gas resources -- 122.6 trillion cubic feet -- occurring on federal lands in Colorado, New Mexico, Montana, Utah and Wyoming were available for leasing and development. Only 12 percent of federal natural gas resources were off-limits to leasing.ⁱ An additional 87.6 TCF of natural gas resources is available from non-federal lands in the region.

Over 42,000,000 acres of BLM lands are currently under lease for oil and gas.ⁱⁱ

- However, only 11,413,000 acres under lease were in production in 2002.ⁱⁱⁱ

In FY 2004, the BLM issued a record number of drilling permits on BLM lands-- 6,130.^{iv}

- But the industry drilled 2,702 wells on those permits, leaving over 3,400 undrilled.^v

Although “seasonal wildlife stipulations” are characterized by the oil and gas industry as unnecessary “impediments” to development, the record shows that these protections are usually waived at the operators’ request.

- For example, during the 2002-2003 winter season, the Pinedale (WY) BLM Field Office received 173 industry requests for “exceptions” to protective sage grouse stipulations. The BLM granted 157 of them, or 90%. Likewise, the BLM Pinedale office received 61 requests for “exceptions” to raptor stipulations, and granted 56.^{vi}

BOTTOM LINE: Despite the facts that (1) the vast majority of federal oil and gas resources occurring on federal lands in the Rockies are available for development, (3) approximately three-quarters of leased BLM lands are not in production, and (4) the BLM has issued thousands more drilling permits than the industry can actually drill, the BLM continues to issue leases on environmentally sensitive lands, and the industry continues to complain that there are “too many restrictions and impediments” to drilling on public lands.

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ⁱ BLM, “EPCA Inventory Fact Sheet,” 1/15/03, p. 3.

ⁱⁱ BLM, “Oil and Gas Leasing Statistics, March 4, 2004” (table).

ⁱⁱⁱ BLM, *Public Rewards From Public Lands 2003*, p. 2.

^{iv} BLM, unpublished AFMSS data, 11/30/04.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} BLM, “Sage Grouse Winter and Nesting Exceptions 2002-2003,” and, Raptor Winter and Nesting Exceptions 2002-2003,” Pinedale Field Office, August 1, 2003.