



Oil Shale and Tar Sands PEIS Scoping Fact Sheet

The BLM is initiating a planning process for the future of oil shale development in the West, based on Secretary Salazar's decision in February to take a fresh look at the oil shale plan that was released in 2008, which opened up 2 million acres of western public lands to oil shale.

The impacts to water quality and quantity in Utah, Colorado and Wyoming could be far reaching. Oil shale development is a water use intensive process. As the BLM moves forward, it is important that they consider the effects that oil shale and tar sands development would have on water supplies and trout streams, and ensure that trout fisheries are protected.

Oil shale research and development will continue through this planning process. With 3 new research leases just approved by Secretary Salazar and 6 research leases issued in 2007, industry will continue to try to develop technologies to unleash oil shale. The question at hand is whether millions of acres of western landscapes should be opened for leasing before technologies to responsibly extract this resource have been developed and the impacts fully understood. Please let the BLM know what you think about the potential implications of oil shale development in Colorado, Wyoming and Utah.

Specific Facts About Oil Shale Development

- The affected area includes parts of northwest Colorado, southwest Wyoming and northeast Utah. Link to map: http://ostseis.anl.gov/documents/maps/osts015_4StateShadedRelief.pdf
- Areas of known oil shale basins are located in Colorado River cutthroat trout habitat, a native trout that no longer exists in 86% of its historic range.
- Techniques for oil shale development remain in the research and development phase, meaning that it is difficult (if not impossible) for the BLM to determine what the actual impacts of large-scale commercial development would be.
- For every barrel of oil produced, anywhere from 1 to 4 barrels of water would be required.
- An individual oil shale plant capable of producing 200,000 barrels of oil per day (the benchmark used by the BLM in its 2008 analysis) would require anywhere from 9,000 to 37,000 acre-feet of water per year.
- Methods for large-scale oil shale development have the potential to cause significant changes to river flows and water quality in the region.
- The disposal of waste products and produced water could have severe impacts on the quality of the receiving waters.
- At least one previous BLM analysis (the 1997 White River Resource Management Plan) estimated that large-scale oil shale development would lead to a loss of over 50% of all stream fisheries, including 35% of Colorado River cutthroat trout fisheries, in the resource area.
- The use of in-situ mining techniques for oil shale would leave hydrocarbons, salts, trace metals, and chemical reagents underground for later groundwater leaching.
- The secondary impacts of large scale oil shale development (e.g. additional power generation, population growth, etc.) would form a significant additional demand for the limited water resources of the region.
- Individual oil shale or tar sands production sites would disturb anywhere from 1,600 to 5,760 acres, depending on the mining technique used.
- Additional information can be found at:
http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/energy/oilshale_2/PEIS_details.html