

Strategic Energy Resources: The Roan Plateau, Colorado

Stipulations requiring careful planning would ensure environmentally sensitive development of natural gas on the Roan Plateau



Photo Courtesy of EnCana Oil & Gas USA, Inc.

The Roan is a strategic resource – Estimates from 2006:

- Roan Plateau Planning Area (RPPA) (federal and private): 127,007 acres total
- Private surface/private mineral lands in RPPA (no BLM jurisdiction in land use decisions): 53,405 acres (41%)
- Estimated recoverable federal natural gas resource in the RPPA: 8.9 Tcf*
- On top of the Plateau: 4.2 Tcf*; Below the rim (including cliffs): 4.7 Tcf*
- Estimated federal and private recoverable natural gas resource in RPPA: 15.4 Tcf*
- *Enough natural gas to heat over 13 million homes for 15 years*

* Tcf = Trillion cubic feet

The Roan Plateau has long been recognized for its mineral resources

- 56,238 acres was originally set aside as the Naval Oil Shale Reserve until 1997, when Congress transferred management to BLM's Glenwood Springs field office.
- Congress also directed BLM to enter into leases for the purpose of oil, gas and mineral exploration, development and production under applicable federal law.
- The current planning area encompasses 127,007 acres of public and private lands. BLM planning policy includes adjacent private lands that may be affected by public land management decisions.
- About one-half of the public lands on top of the plateau would be off limits.

Colorado could receive over \$175 million/yr in royalties and bonus bids from Roan production. By some estimates, Garfield County would receive as much as \$57 million/yr for the next 20 years.

BLM's plan contains careful restrictions on development

- Only 350 acres of disturbance atop the plateau would be allowed at any given time, and BLM's plan would place 38,427 acres off limits from any surface development, including nearly 23,000 acres of wildlife security areas identified by the Colorado Division of Wildlife.
- Drilling and related activities are limited from December through April in nearly 35,000 acres deemed critical to big game winter range below the rim.
- Development would proceed in a planned, phased manner, so that only one of six designated areas would experience development drilling at any one time. Drilling would be restricted to areas away from sensitive riparian and valley bottom habitat.
- Clustered development and directional drilling of multiple wells would occur from common pads, with the density of well pads to be about four per square mile. Existing roads would be used to the maximum extent possible and existing but unnecessary roads would be reclaimed.
- A drilling area would have to be restored before work could begin in another area.
- No new roads or pipelines would be allowed on the sides of the plateau visible from I-70.