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## **BLM draft plan shows no need to drill on Roan Plateau** Campaign urges citizens to get involved and help craft better plan

GLENWOOD SPRINGS-As debate continues over proposals to drill the top of western Colorado's Roan Plateau, a new analysis of the federal projections of "recoverable" gas from the area shows that, under the government's "preferred alternative", only 4% of the federal gas likely to be produced over the next 20 years would come from the top of the Plateau.

The analysis was released today by a coalition of community leaders and concerned citizens who have consistently recommended protecting the biologically rich top of the Plateau while ensuring significant gas production at its base. The group explained that its review of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) draft planning document shows that there is no need to open the public lands atop Roan Plateau to oil and gas drilling.

The new analysis also finds that 75% of the gas likely to be produced under the preferred alternative or under another similar alternative would be available without any additional gas leasing anywhere in the Roan Plateau Planning Area.

Three of the draft plan's five alternatives—including the so-called "preferred" alternative—would make 100% of the Planning Area available to oil and gas leasing.

"The BLM's draft plan shows why it is not necessary to open the top to drilling, said New Castle town councilor Greg Russi. "Applying basic calculations to the agency's own numbers, one can see that most of the natural gas projected to be developed under any alternative in this plan would come from the base. Drilling on top is simply not worth it, not with all the other uses and resource values these lands provide."

Some citizens have expressed frustration that in spite of input from local governments, businesses and thousands of citizens that the top and cliffs of Roan Plateau should be protected from drilling, four of five alternatives in a draft management plan for the Plateau would open the important recreation and natural lands on top to energy development.

Beginning in 2002, during an earlier phase of the BLM's planning process, over 10,000 citizens, local governments across Garfield County (where the Roan Plateau is located), and editorials in newspapers across the state supported a simple, fair plan: Allow oil and gas drilling to continue along the base, but protect the top and cliffs of the Plateau by prohibiting drilling in those places.

"That so many spoke on behalf of the Roan Plateau already is unprecedented," said Gregg Cassarini, with the Colorado Environmental Coalition and a member of the Save Roan Plateau Campaign. "Now is usually the time when folks start getting involved, but local communities are way ahead of the curve here. We will win a better plan for the Roan Plateau."

Roan Plateau has been called "Colorado's Yosemite" for its scenery reminiscent of national parks. It is home to one of the more pure strains of native Colorado River cutthroat trout in the world and to rare plants that occur nowhere else on earth.

These species and other unique natural communities make Roan Plateau one of Colorado's most important "biological hotspots." All manner of wildlife thrive on this undeveloped island of natural habitat surrounded by a growing complex of oil and gas fields, making the area a prized area for wildlife oriented recreation. Hunting on Roan Plateau alone provides nearly \$4 million annually for the local economy, according to the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

"Roan Plateau is one of Colorado's natural treasures," said Peggy Utesch, a Garfield County landowner, businesswoman and secretary of the Grand Valley Citizens Alliance, a local community group. "The community has clearly demanded a plan that protects Roan Plateau's top and cliffs. Allowing drilling to continue at the base would still develop the majority of the plan's gas under any alternative. It's a win-win, middle-ground solution, and a plan the BLM should adopt. Get the gas from the base and protect the top and cliffs."

The Save Roan Plateau Campaign is an alliance of concerned citizens and community leaders working to win a better plan for Roan Plateau. The middle-ground solution proposed by those citizens would allow energy development on about two-thirds of the Roan Plateau Planning Area (on about one-half the federal lands), and could extract between 85% and 99% of the natural gas considered "recoverable" over the twenty-year life of the plan without any leasing of the public lands on top of the Plateau, according to calculations based on agency numbers. As technologies develop allowing more of the reserves below the Plateau to be extracted from the base additional gas could be developed without disturbing the top or cliffs.

See attached fact sheet for an explanation and breakdown of the developable reserve under each alternative, based on numbers from the draft plan.

The BLM's draft plan was released on November 19, 2004 for public review and comment, with a comment deadline of March 4, 2005.

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Attachment: *No Need to Drill the Top*

*"No Need to Drill the Top" Save Roan Plateau Fact Sheet-The Roan Plan by the Numbers*, published at [www.SaveRoanPlateau.org](http://www.SaveRoanPlateau.org) 12/28/04

For more information, including an extensive archive of media articles, government resolutions, and background materials, visit [www.SaveRoanPlateau.org](http://www.SaveRoanPlateau.org). Digital video, high-quality photographs, GIS information, and other materials are available by calling Gregg Cassarini at 970-2443-0002. Members of the media interested in over flights of the Roan Plateau Planning Area, including of the growing gas fields that surround the Plateau, should contact Gregg at the number above.