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BLM accepts e-mails on drilling the Roan

By BOBBY MAGILL The Daily Sentinel

Tuesday, August 14, 2007

After a short battle with environmentalists, the Bureau of Land Management announced Monday it will accept electronic public comments about the fate of 21,000 acres atop the Roan Plateau.

Those acres are split up into four "areas of critical environmental concern," or ACECs, and were excluded from the BLM's June decision opening the Roan to energy development.

A second decision on those environmentally sensitive areas is expected later this year.

Until Aug. 10, when the initial comment period ended, the BLM was accepting only paper comments about the areas. But Monday, the BLM backpedaled.

"We're reopening the public comment period on the ACECs for another 14 days to ensure that those wishing to submit comments electronically have the opportunity," BLM Glenwood Springs Field Manager Jamie Connell said.

Pete Kolbenschlag, representing the Save Roan Plateau campaign, in early August protested the BLM's decision to accept paper comments only, saying the agency ignored standard protocol for communicating with the public.

He said the BLM may be trying to thwart the public comment process so it doesn't have to hear that people don't want the Roan Plateau to be drilled for natural gas.

"It's not like these technologies are brand new," he wrote, "or that the federal government does not regularly use them to communicate with itself, with the public and to conduct all manner of business."

The deadline for e-mail comments about the sensitive areas will be early September. For information, log onto www.blm.gov/rmp/co/roanplateau/comments.htm.

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Bobby Magill can be reached via e-mail at bmagill@gjds.com.

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