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Penry wants fair share of energy bucks

By AMY HAMILTON The Daily Sentinel

Sunday, August 19, 2007

State Sen. Josh Penry, R-Fruita, said Saturday that he hopes to push federal lawmakers to consider increasing the amount of federal mineral leasing dollars returned to energy-affected states, including Colorado.

Penry said during a news conference in Grand Junction that he would present ideas next week to Gov. Bill Ritter and other lawmakers on trying to increase the state's share of those dollars.

Under current law, all funds derived from mineral leasing on federal lands are split 50-50 between the federal government and the states where the leasing occurs.

"I think it's appropriate that Colorado be compensated and benefit fully from the responsible production in the area," Penry said during the stop with U.S. Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo., in a meeting billed as a forum to discuss drilling on the Roan Plateau and Vermillion Basin.

"Rather than the state of Colorado getting 50 cents on the dollar back from federal royalties," Penry said, "we get 60 or 75 cents on the dollar which ... over a span of 30 or 40 years in production would be tens and probably hundreds of millions of dollars in additional revenue that would flow back on top of what's already projected."

The idea is one of the many being tossed around as the Bureau of Land Management's plan for leasing on the Roan is being stayed by a 120-day review period that was granted by the Department of the Interior, Penry said.

Allard said Saturday that he supports the BLM plan, which allows restricted drilling on top of the plateau.

But the senator said he was disappointed about the "top-down" decision of a provision that would restrict drilling on the Roan.

Colorado Reps. Mark Udall and John Salazar, both Democrats, inserted language into a massive energy bill for "no surface occupancy" on public lands atop the plateau. The bill passed the House by bipartisan vote.

If the bill passes the conference committee without alterations, energy companies will be forced to drill indirectly from private land in order to access the Roan's minerals.

"This action by the House wipes out years of effort by locals who support energy exploration and completely ignores the history of the area," Allard said. "The BLM has been engaged (in the plan) for past seven years. I've been supportive of that all along. I think it'd be harmful to the process if all of a sudden I took a different position from where they're going."

Pete Kolbensschlag of Mountain West Strategies said he agrees with Penry's idea of wanting to return more dollars to energy-affected areas, but he questioned why the senators are in a hurry to lease the Roan. Technology for drilling will be more advanced in the future and 95 percent of the Piceance Basin already is leased out, Kolbensschlag said.

"What's the rush to lease the Roan?" he said. "There's already oil and gas (drilling) all over the place, but it doesn't need to be every place."

Cathy Kay of Western Colorado Congress said she also supports Penry's idea to try to get more money for the Western Slope.

She said a number of the area's rural communities lack adequate infrastructure, have deteriorating roads and lack affordable housing in the face of booming energy development.

"If it's going to be the sacrificial area, mitigate it somehow," she said.

"At least let us see some gain from the activity."

Sentinel reporter Mike Saccone contributed to this report.

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By John Loschke

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I'm elated that Salazar and Udall have jumped into the fray that has become the Roan. I'm also elated that my constituents and I were asked to spend so much time on the committee that made the recommendations to the BLM and Salazar and Udall felt so comfortable throwing all that work out the window. Who says public input is wasted? I do!!!!!!!!!!!!

By John Loschke

Aug 19, 2007 6:35 AM | [Link to this](#)

Dollars coming back into the communities affected? What a concept. Any and all are invited to Parachute to observe the daily impacts that we are faced with. I will personally take the day off and give a tour. Remember the oil shale "boom" of the early '80s. That lasted 2 years. This "gas boom" has already gone for the last 5 years and will continue for a while? longer. When is the rhetoric going to stop and the help start? Let's quit politicking and start doing something.

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