

# Campaign to Save Roan Plateau

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## Community Alternative Unveiled for Roan Plateau

Balanced solution, supported by Town Councils, gets the gas and keeps drilling off the top

Community leaders, citizens, businesses, conservationists and elected officials today publicly unveiled the "Community Alternative for Roan Plateau," a four-step solution to the contentious issue of oil and gas drilling on the popular public lands of the Roan Plateau. The Alternative reconfigures elements from various alternatives presented by the Bureau of Land Management's recently released draft plan for Roan Plateau to provide a new plan that balances increased drilling with protection of the top and cliffs of Roan Plateau.

"The BLM asked communities and citizens to provide specific comment on its draft plan, on the entire range of alternatives, and propose a plan that provides the best mix of options. And that's exactly what we have done," said Duke Cox, president with the Grand Valley Citizens Alliance, a local community group. "This is a fair, well reasoned approach that provides for very significant volumes of gas production over the next 20 years, while preserving the best recreation, wildlife, and scenic values of the area. This is the win-win plan that communities have asked for."

As its centerpiece, the Community Alternative strengthens the unique idea of deferring leasing on top of the Plateau, provided in the agency's so-called "preferred alternative," to achieve the protection that nearly everyone has asked for: keeping drilling off the top and cliffs.

The Community Alternative provides for a mix of public uses, from developed recreational areas at Hubbard Mesa to protected backcountry opportunities atop Roan Plateau. The Community Alternative would also provide strong unchanging protections for important habitat, roadless backcountry, and other special lands. It would require use of the most environmentally protective practices available wherever energy might be developed in the Roan Plateau area.

Western Colorado and Garfield County, where Roan Plateau is located, is facing a historic natural gas development boom, with upwards of 10,000 wells projected in the county within the next two decades. Local communities are becoming increasingly concerned that they have a role in determining how this development will proceed and input into where this development is appropriate.

Considering Roan Plateau in this regional context, the towns of New Castle, Silt and Carbondale have all unanimously passed resolutions this month supporting the Community Alternative. The City of Glenwood Springs passed a resolution (5:2) last week opposing any drilling on top of Roan Plateau, and decided unanimously to become a 'cooperating agency' with the BLM to help formulate the final plan.

"The future of our communities is not only as a gasfield or in oil services. The combination of provisions in the Community Alternative would ensure a great future for Roan Plateau and for the gateway communities that depend on these public lands for a diverse economy," said Greg Russi, New Castle town councilor. "Around here, hunting and recreation are as important as gas development. Coloradans should not have to choose between a healthy economy and a healthy environment, which is why New Castle supports this common sense solution."

Under the Community Alternative, the unique natural resources, including pure strains of native fish and plants that occur nowhere else on earth, would be safeguarded, while responsible energy development would continue in most of the Planning Area.

"We commend BLM's efforts to identify and describe the importance of habitats on top of and at the base of Roan Plateau for native Colorado cutthroat trout, rare plants, sensitive bats, deer, and elk, as well as the potential impacts on those resources," said Dennis Buechler of the Colorado Wildlife Federation. "However, the Colorado Wildlife Federation remains concerned that key management approaches for conserving these resources are scattered throughout the document. Those management approaches should be consolidated into one cohesive alternative, such as no drilling on top combined with protection of big game migration corridors and wintering habitat."

Taken together, the various components of the community plan would offer a consolidated management approach that would preserve wilderness quality lands, maintain high quality habitat for rare native cutthroat trout and other wildlife, and make sure that the Plateau's popular and successful hunting opportunities continue, all while ensuring a steady and reliable gas supply and industry for the region.

Since most of the natural gas that will be developed during the plan is already going to come from drilling at the base, the Community Alternative offers the perfect solution to honor community support for protecting the top and cliffs for other public uses and resources than intensive drilling and development.

"The Community Alternative would provide something for everyone and leave the important public lands on top of the Plateau and the striking cliff faces mostly as they are today, undeveloped, beautiful, quiet and natural," said Pete Kolbensschlag with the Colorado Environmental Coalition. "Analysis of the BLM's draft plan shows that between 85% and 99% of the gas likely to be produced over the next twenty years would come from the base. The Community Alternative would allow for that gas to be extracted, with more lands likely available for leasing as technologies develop."

Through allowing for the production of most of the natural gas likely to be developed under the plan, the Community Alternative would ensure that jobs and revenue from the energy industry continues to flow into Garfield County, while also protecting important public lands for other public uses and the growing economic activity that relies on recreation, quality-of-life and access to public lands.

"The Community Alternative works to meet everyone's needs: it helps supply the nation its energy, it allows gas development and the revenue and jobs it creates to continue, and it protects the top and cliffs like everyone has asked. The Community Alternative is a rare thing—a solution in which the words "win-win" really apply," said David Kins, director of the Colorado sub-district with the United Steelworkers of America.

Citizens and community leaders will next present the Community Alternative to the Garfield County Board of County Commissioners on February 2, when the Board is scheduled to take public comment on Roan Plateau and on the BLM's draft plan.

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Attachment: Community Alternative

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.