

For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

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Save Roan Plateau campaign will use comment period to win fair, middle-ground plan

Citizens renew call for no drilling on top as plan release looms

GLENWOOD SPRINGS—The Save Roan Plateau campaign today announced its wide-scale efforts to involve citizens during the public comment period on the long-awaited plan for the Roan Plateau Planning Area, which the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is likely to release this Friday, November 19. In spite of strong support for protection, the BLM's preferred alternative is widely expected to open portions of the Plateau's undeveloped lands to oil and gas drilling.

The Roan Plateau—about 25 miles west of here, near the City of Rifle—has been the subject of growing controversy. The Bush Administration has targeted the area for drilling and energy development while local communities and citizens from near and far have called for no drilling on the public lands on the top and cliffs of the Plateau. Once released, there will be a 90-day comment period on the draft plan.

Well pads, drill rigs, roads, pipelines, waste pits and other infrastructure already stretch for miles in every direction from the Roan Plateau, but the top remains relatively undisturbed, with broad expanses of wildflower meadows, immense stands of aspen, and a 200 foot waterfall, one of the taller in Colorado. Renowned for its biological importance, the Roan Plateau is home to some of the state's prized deer and elk herds, plants that grow no where else, and one of the more pure strains of native trout in the world.

In 2002 and 2003, as the BLM was considering a set of preliminary alternatives, a strong chorus of voices—including every municipal government in Garfield County where the Plateau is located—agreed to a plan that would allow drilling at the base but not in the sensitive lands on top. In addition to every local government, dozens of area businesses and newspapers across the state all supported this plan.

During previous comment periods, the campaign helped generate over 10,000 comments to the Bureau of Land Management urging the adoption of this popular plan. Now, during the pending comment period, the campaign will again rally citizens to call on the BLM to adopt this thoughtful, middle-ground proposal for energy development and good management at Roan Plateau. That proposal would:

1-Allow responsible energy development to continue inside the Roan Plateau Planning Area at the base, outside of sensitive areas;

2-Encourage and require (on private and public lands) Best Management Practices for all oil and gas development, and ensure that such activity is done in a manner that is respectful of communities, neighboring residents, and natural values; and,

3-Manage the Roan Plateau's scenic, high-quality recreational, and sensitive public lands for uses other than oil and gas drilling and development, through no drilling on the top and cliffs. These other public land values include wildlife habitat, watershed protection, grazing, hunting and outfitting, naturalness, and backcountry recreation.

And although this balanced approach will likely not be among the specific alternatives presented, the BLM has assured the public that the components of its favored plan will be somewhere in the draft alternatives.

*NEWS RELEASE: Save Roan Plateau Campaign rallies citizens for comment period
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"Local communities have already gone on record supporting a balanced solution for energy development at the Roan Plateau," said the Colorado Mountain Club's Clare Bastable, a campaign coordinator and a supporting member of Garfield County's Energy Advisory Board. "This solution would allow drilling on about half the public lands in the planning area and protect the rest for recreation and other uses. Already, the majority of public lands in the County are open to gas drilling. We need a balance, and we will continue to advocate for this compromise plan."

According to the BLM's own calculations, 86% of the natural gas that might be produced from the area during this plan can be developed without any drilling on the top of the plateau. And with improving technologies comes increased likelihood that all the gas can be extracted without drilling on the top.

"It is quite possible that, with continuing improvements in technology, all the projected gas production can come from the base, where drilling and production infrastructure already exists," said Steve Smith with The Wilderness Society, a campaign spokesman. "For the time-being industry can already extract almost all the gas without drilling on top. Given the public support for protection, sound stewardship and basic fairness urge restraint. The top should not be, and does not need to be, opened to drilling."

Galvanizing local action around this middle-ground plan, the Save Roan Plateau campaign will include an array of media, outreach, and organizing strategies, such as the action-oriented website www.SaveRoanPlateau.org, to share information, engage citizens, and to help win protection for this inspiring Western Colorado landscape.

"The campaign will engage thousands of Americans to support this balanced approach. Through effective democratic action, citizens will demonstrate that people everywhere treasure special public lands like the Roan Plateau," said Gregg Cassarini, with the Colorado Environmental Coalition and a campaign organizer.

Once the draft plan is released for review, the campaign will issue its initial response. Within a few days of release, community partners and the campaign will present a more detailed position. Once the comment period begins, citizens will be able to submit comments from the campaign web site, and to sign up for alerts and updates. Many other citizens are likely to be contacted via mailings, through allied organizations and community groups, and by the BLM or local governments, in efforts to facilitate public involvement.

The Save Roan Plateau Campaign is a collaboration of citizens, communities, businesses and conservation organizations standing together behind a balanced plan for the Roan Plateau. This broadly-supported plan would keep drilling off the top and cliffs to protect scenic landscapes, wildlife and native trout, rare plants, recreational choice, and wild public lands, while also allowing for energy development elsewhere in the planning area, outside of sensitive habitats.

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High quality photos, digital video, maps and GIS information are available. These materials, and media overflights of the Roan Plateau Planning Area with campaign partner EcoFlight, can be arranged by calling Gregg Cassarini at 970-243-0002, or Pete Kolbenschlag or Clare Bastable at the numbers above.

www.SaveRoanPlateau.org contains an extensive campaign archive, with previously issued news releases and reports, media articles, local government resolutions, fact sheets, and agency information.

The Wilderness Society's website (www.wilderness.org) also includes numerous resources on the Roan Plateau, including a 3-D computer modeled "fly-over" of the Plateau without oil and gas wells and with a simulation of such development; a detailed technical analysis of potential energy reserves at the Roan Plateau; and other materials. For information on The Wilderness Society's resources or efforts, contact Steve Smith at 303-650-5818, extension 106, or at the number above.

www.SaveRoanPlateau.org