

Energy Development Would Damage the Top and Cliffs of the Roan Plateau

Gas development would forever fragment the undeveloped public lands on top of the Roan Plateau and would irreparably scar its cliffs and ridgelines. With an infrastructure of compressors, pump stations, roads and pipelines, security areas for elk and deer would be carved up by miles of roads, waste pits and drill-pads. Clean air, solitude and quiet would all be degraded. Industrial operations would threaten the Plateau's native trout fisheries. Noxious weeds would spread along with development.



Jeff Widen/Colorado Environmental Coalition. Flight courtesy of EcoFlight

Once an Area is Leased—There are No Spacing Guarantees; BLM stipulations and other protections are waivable

Once an area is leased (at whatever well spacing), there is no guarantee that well spacing won't increase. If a field is successful, companies typically come back and ask for higher and higher well densities; this has already happened twice on public and private lands inside the planning area at the base of the Roan Plateau.

While the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has the authority to establish maximum densities to protect federal lands, in practice the BLM always defers to state spacing regulations. In practice, COGCC rarely denies a request for more wells.

At the Roan Plateau, as across the state, the Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) sets well spacing. If economically recoverable gas were found, little would prevent the Roan Plateau from becoming an industrial gas field of new roads, well pads, compressors, and other infrastructure.

Once an area is leased, BLM recognizes a right for the lessee to extract the resource with whatever spacing the state approves. BLM limits its decision to which of its lands to make available for leasing and under what protective stipulations, such as for wildlife or watersheds. These stipulations, however, are **always waivable**, according to the BLM.

Garfield County is already facing a future of thousands of new wells, along with loss of open space and undeveloped public and private lands, increased traffic, noise and pollution. And that's only if nothing goes wrong.

Industrial development could also lead to degraded water quality, unhealthy air, fire risk, and toxic exposure. **Not leasing the top and cliffs of the Roan Plateau is the only way to ensure it will not be converted into a high-density gas field** and its clean air, clear streams, and undeveloped landscapes forever defiled.



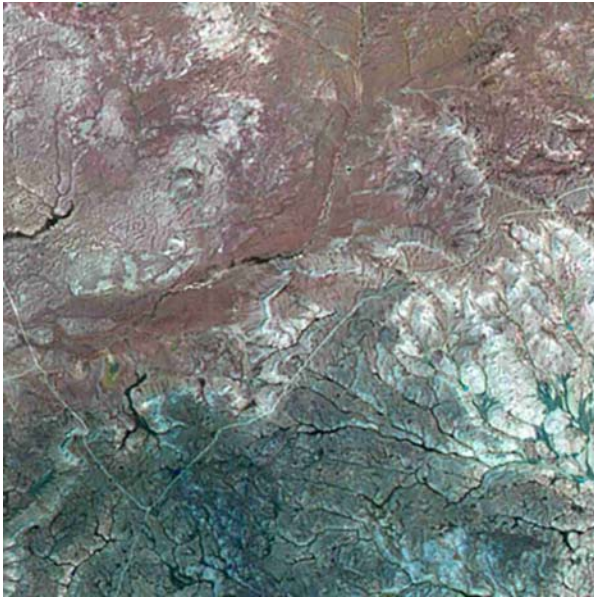
Kurt Kunkle/Colorado Environmental Coalition Flight courtesy of LightHawk.

Current development on public and private land at the base of the Roan Plateau, inside the planning area, where industry has already won approval on private lands for two spacing increases. Drilling would continue here, but not on the top or cliffs a widely-supported plan that BLM was, at one time, considering.

Some of our shared lands should be protected for other public uses... Save Roan Plateau.

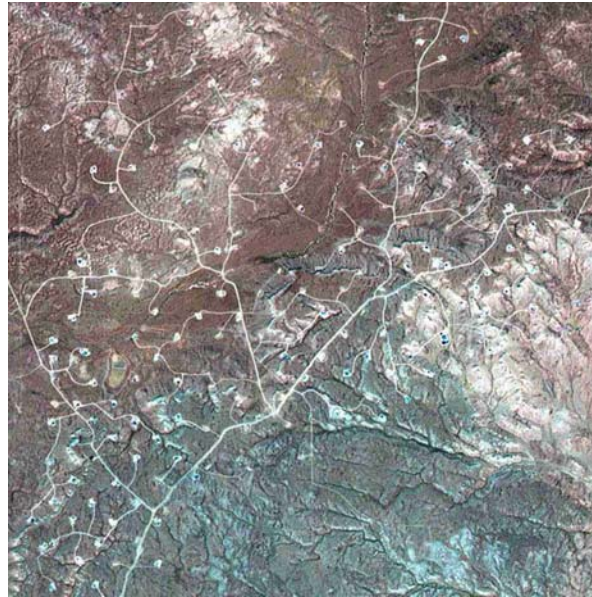
The attached satellite photos of the Jonah Field, where both Williams and EnCana have been active, just south of Pinedale in Wyoming aptly illustrate the typical “fill-in” or the spread of industrial development that often occurs once an area is leased and gas is found. This field represents state-of-the-art drilling technology for extracting “tight sands” gas like that found in the Piceance Basin where the Roan Plateau is located.

Let there be no doubt -- If the top and cliffs of the Roan Plateau are leased and the field proves successful, past history shows that there will be major new development—roads, well pads, compressors, etc.—and there will be few controls, if any, on the density of gas wells that are eventually developed.



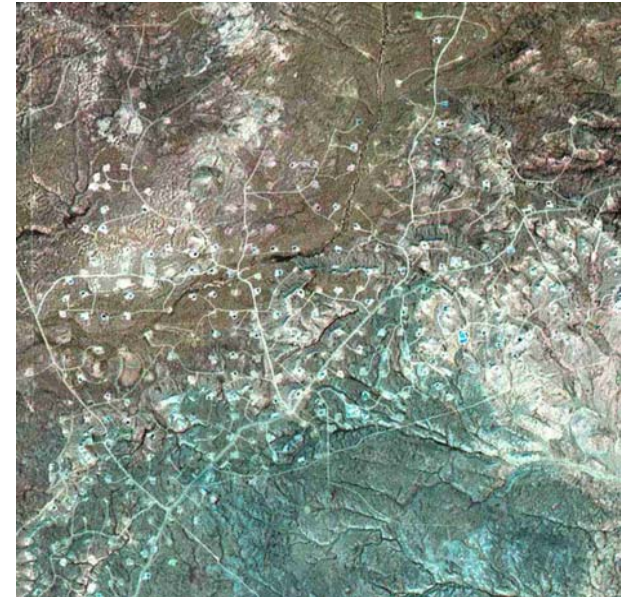
The first photo shows the Jonah Field in 1986, before any gas development.

In its 1998 Environmental Impact Statement, BLM stated that full extraction would require no more than 487 wells over a 10-15 year period.



The second photo was taken in 1999, when nearly 150 new gas wells had been installed with 80-acre spacing (8 pads/square mile).

Just two years later, in 2001, 40-acre spacing (16 pads/square mile) had been approved and the number of drilled wells had been expanded to more than 300.



The third photo shows that by 2002, the Jonah field had over 400 wells with hundreds of miles of connecting roads.

If the latest infill-drilling proposal from the gas industry is approved, up to 850 new well pads will be added to the field, bringing the total number of wells to over 3,000 at a 16-acre well spacing (40 pads/square mile) – well in excess of the original proposal and even later estimates of full field development.

SaveRoanPlateau.org

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