

Silt reaffirms no-drilling stance for Roan Plateau

Tuesday, August 29, 2006

By MIKE McKIBBIN

The Daily Sentinel

SILT — The town of Silt reaffirmed its opposition to natural-gas drilling on top of the Roan Plateau Monday night.

Town trustees approved a resolution reiterating that stance and endorsing the official comments from the City of Rifle that opposed drilling on top.

Rifle was one of several local and state governments designated “cooperating agencies” by the Bureau of Land Management last year, when a draft management plan and environmental impact statement for the 73,602-acre plateau planning area between Rifle and Parachute was discussed last year.

Pete Kolbensschlag, co-chair of the Save the Roan Plateau coalition, said while Silt’s previous resolution opposed drilling, the Rifle comments add more specificity and detail.

“It reaffirms the earlier positions by the towns in the area to preserve at least some public lands for purposes other than oil and gas,” he said.

Rifle’s comments stressed the need to protect the top and cliffs of the plateau from gas development and urged the BLM to preserve and manage for “significant historical uses, which include recreation, hunting, livestock grazing, ranching, etc.”

“We feel no plan can make such uses compatible with natural-gas exploration,” Rifle commented.

“Throughout the West, it has been well documented how natural-gas activities negatively impact those uses we wish to protect and preserve, uses important to local economy and culture.”

BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office Planning and Environmental Coordinator Greg Goodenow told the board all input is welcome.

“We know we can’t accommodate all the different views people have on the plateau,” he said. “But we’ve tried to address all the specific concerns.”

Silt Trustee Ron Morgan told Goodenow “people don’t believe you’re going to do all you can to keep the top from looking like the area below” the plateau.

Earlier Monday, Glenwood Springs Field Office spokesman David Boyd said the final management plan should be released during the first two weeks of September. A 30-day protest period will follow, along with a 60-day review by Colorado Gov. Bill Owens. Then a record of decision will be issued to implement the plan’s management directions.

Kolbensschlag said a resolution against drilling on top of the plateau was approved last week by Carbondale trustees and he planned to seek similar action from other municipalities in Garfield County.

Silt trustees also agreed to consider a resolution at their Sept. 11 meeting to support a series of proposed wildlife management guidelines for oil and gas development. Retired BLM employee Bob Elderkin of Silt helped develop the guidelines.

"This isn't about stopping anything, it's about controlling the rate of development so this is still a good place to live for residents and wildlife," he said.

Mike McKibbin can be reached via e-mail at mmckibbin@gjds.com.

http://www.gjsentinel.com/news/content/news/stories/2006/08/29/8_29_1b_Roan_drilling.html