

Stop at the top *Drilling should stay at base of plateau*

By MIKE MCKIBBIN
The Daily Sentinel

GLENWOOD SPRINGS — Garfield County commissioners were asked Monday to support an "evenhanded" management plan for the Roan Plateau west of Rifle.

A letter signed by about 70 business owners in the county supported a stance that would prevent natural-gas drilling on top of the 73,000-acre plateau and focus it at the base where wells are already producing gas.

The Bureau of Land Management plans to release a draft plan and environmental impact statement for the plateau within a few weeks. It will include a preferred alternative and identify how much of the area will be set aside for gas development.

Garfield County is a cooperating agency with the BLM and has offered input during two earlier comment periods. The commissioners plan to wait until the draft plan is released before making further comments.

The group that helped obtain the letter signatures is known as Save Roan Plateau, an environmental-led coalition that wants to preserve the top of the plateau from gas development.

The plateau contains an estimated 5.5 trillion cubic feet of recoverable natural gas, according to the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. It could take 24 years to get that much gas out of the ground.

Three business owners spoke at a news conference before presenting the letter to the commissioners.

Scott Brynildson of Rifle owns E&B Plumbing and Heating and has taken legal action against EnCana Oil and Gas over the location of a road to a gas well on his ranch south of Rifle.

"I'm not against the production of natural resources and I use gas in my home and my business," Brynildson said. "I'm against the indiscriminate view taken by the industry about how and where they drill."
Brynildson said he wanted

the top of the plateau preserved for its current uses such as livestock grazing and hunting.

"I don't think they need to drill out every inch of Colorado," he said.

Duke Cox owns and operates Escalante Builders LLC in Silt. He is also the recently named president of the Grand Valley Citizens Alliance, a western county group that monitors gas development in the area.

Cox said high-country areas such as the Roan Plateau are what help draw people to the area and into its businesses.

"The commissioners need to take into account what is best to nourish our economy in the long term," he said. "The 40,000 or so acres of unspoiled high country atop the Roan is a speck compared to the 13.5 million acres in the immense Piceance gas field" that covers much of northwest Colorado and northeast Utah.

Dean Moffatt owns Sundesigns Architects and Planners of Glenwood Springs and said he and other architects depend on a balanced, sustainable economy.

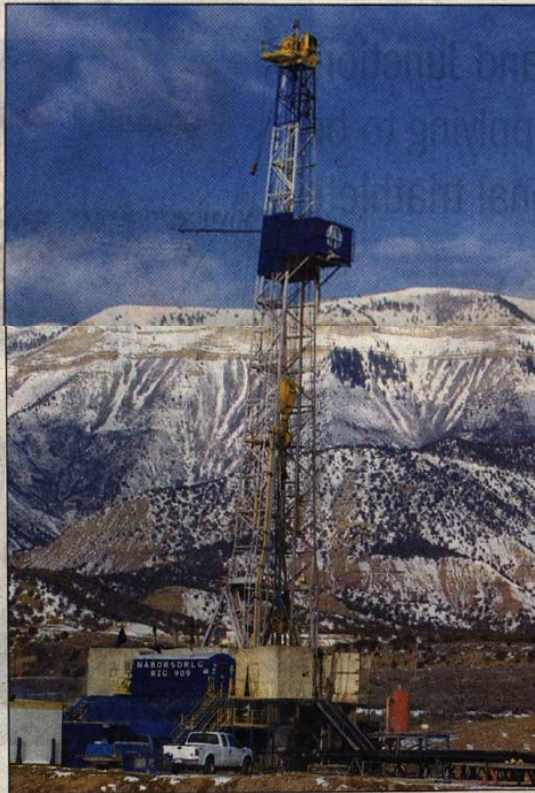
"This area has been through many boom and bust cycles with the energy industry and we know how it damages our economy," Moffatt said. "In this case, rampant gas development in western Garfield County and especially on the Roan Plateau will devastate the environment and our economy through a slow degradation."

Moffatt recalled how citizen involvement played a key role to change the design of Interstate 70 through Glenwood Canyon and protect its unique environment.

"Citizens stood up with one voice then, and we won," he said. "Let's go to Washington again."

On the Web: www.saveroanplateau.org.

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CHRISTOPHER TOMLINSON/The Daily Sentinel
A DRILLING RIG STANDS at the base of the Roan Plateau in Garfield County. A letter signed by about 70 business owners supported a stance that would prevent natural-gas drilling on top of the plateau.

Judge Buss rebukes child molester

By MIKE WIGGINS
The Daily Sentinel

A Judge Monday blistered a Grand Junction man for raping an 8-year-old girl before sentencing him to five years to life in prison.

Mesa County Chief District Judge Charles Buss rejected overtures from Teddy Glaha's defense attorney and the Mesa County Probation Department to sentence Glaha to either probation or community corrections.

Buss, who traditionally does not question defendants and their actions, did so with Glaha.

"How could you do this — an 8-year-old girl?" Buss said. "What did you think you were doing? Did you think she was some little piece of meat or property?"

Glaha, who pleaded guilty in August to sexual assault on a child, did not respond.

Glaha, 39, was arrested in December 2002 after he had sex with the girl in a motel room at El Rio Rancho, 750 U.S. Highway 50, while the girl's mother was at work.

A nurse conducted a sexual-assault examination on the girl and found evidence that she had been assaulted.

Police found semen on the girl's body, but there was not enough genetic material to determine whether it matched Glaha's DNA.

Deputy District Attorney Jon Levin said Glaha wavered in his stories when he was questioned by police, initially denying anything happened, then claiming he and the girl were wrestling



TEDDY GLAHA
Gets five to life

See JUDGE, page 6B