

America's Redrock Wilderness Act

Ensuring a Balance Between Wilderness Preservation & Energy Production



Smoky Mountain on the Kaiparowits Plateau, Grand Staircase
Escalante National Monument © Lin Alder



Drilling operation near Dead Horse Point © James W. Kay



southern utah wilderness alliance



The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as a tract of public land 5,000 acres or more “where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man is a visitor who does not remain . . . [it is] undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions..“

America's Redrock Wilderness Act would provide lasting protection for pristine Utah landscapes like the towering ochre-colored mesas of the San Rafael Swell, the serpentine sandstone canyons of southeastern Utah near Moab and the vast expanses of the Basin and Range territory of western Utah. These are some of the most cherished and spectacular jewels of our western heritage. They should be protected, not drilled by oil and gas companies.

President Bush has gone too far in compromising our environment

Drilling America's last remaining wild lands, like lands within *America's Redrock Wilderness Act* and the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, would ruin an irreplaceable legacy and do nothing to solve the energy problem.

The Bush administration has already gone too far in rolling back environmental protection. Now it is poised to give away spectacular lands within *America's Redrock Wilderness Act* to oil and gas companies.

The Bush administration can – and will – permit drilling in wilderness-quality lands and it doesn't need permission from Congress to do so. Oddly, the administration targets sensitive lands like wilderness-quality lands and national monuments first. Instead, these cherished landscapes are the last places we should drill for oil and gas.

In Utah, the Bureau of Land Management, the federal agency that manages these lands, has already sought to

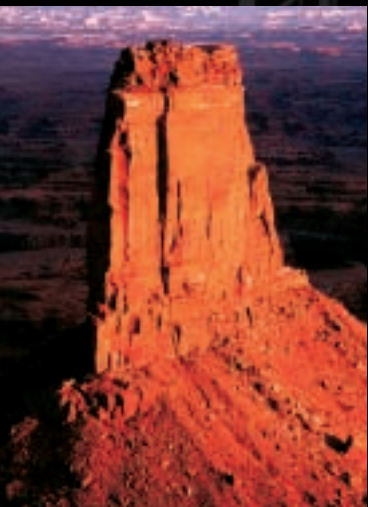
allow oil and gas drilling in areas included in *America's Redrock Wilderness Act*. Already this year, it has explicitly rejected the need to protect the wilderness qualities of these landscapes from the destruction of oil and gas drilling, and treats 90% of the land it manages in Utah as open to oil rigs.

The BLM's fiscal year 2002 budget provides additional insight into what the future holds. It recognizes that the oil and gas industry has targeted most of eastern Utah as the next "goldrush" for oil and gas drilling. These lands, many of which are within the borders of *America's Redrock Wilderness Act*, are incredibly rich with ancient archeological sites, wildlife habitat, stunning scenery, and abundant quiet. They provide a refuge for all Americans, and a place where nature can be found in its unspoiled grandeur.

According to BLM's April 25, 2001 testimony before the House Committee on Resources, BLM's primary focus now is inventorying oil and gas reserves and accelerating the approval process for drilling – at the expense of meaningful public involvement, wildlife protection, wilderness preservation and other non-fossil fuel resources.²

"Fewer than four in ten Americans approve of President Bush's work to date on the nation's energy woes – and most prefer conservation over fossil-fuel and nuclear power production as the prime solution, contrary to the administration's position."

ABC News.com, May 15, '01
(abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/DailyNews/poll010515.html.)





In Southern Utah, oil companies have laid seismic lines right through the middle of cultural sites and have trampled areas rich with ancient artifacts like kivas, granaries, burial sites and middens.

Our last remaining wilderness must be preserved for the future

Oil and gas drilling on Utah's pristine lands would sacrifice our wilderness heritage for ballooning oil company profits, and would not make a meaningful contribution to America's energy reserves.

Oil and gas drilling causes devastating impacts to pristine landscapes. Not only does it require the construction of towers and pumps, but oil companies also scrape the land clear of vegetation in the area surrounding the drilling equipment, construct miles of pipelines, grade a dense spider web of roads, dig large waste pits, and install numerous large tanks. Additionally, oil and gas fields lead to a marked increase in traffic, first from the construction and road building equipment, then from workers and maintenance teams traveling to and from the wells. Soon, off-road vehicle users discover this web of roads and use them as jumping-off points to outlying, pristine areas, making a bad problem even worse.

And while the oil companies claim that modern slant drilling, where one well can access enormous quantities of oil and gas, is eco-friendly, they have resisted this approach in Utah. In these fragile desert soils, oil companies have chosen instead to build dense networks of roads servicing countless wells. One oil company proposal recently rejected slant drilling as an option because they claimed it was too "complicated."

Wildlife is also put at risk from oil and gas drilling and the related construction activities, heavy equipment and truck traffic. In Utah, many lands targeted for drilling are in critical winter habitat for deer and elk forced out of their summer home in the mountains by heavy snow.

The spectacular canyon country of America's Redrock Wilderness Act is at risk:

LOCKHART BASIN AND HATCH POINT
Just to the east of spectacular Canyonlands National Park, Lockhart Basin is on the BLM's "most-wanted" list of new areas to permit oil drilling. In every way as beautiful as its National Park neighbor, this breathtaking area contains towering salmon and purple cliffs, ancient Native American sites, and is home to bighorn sheep.

THE DESOLATION CANYON AREA

Named by John Wesley Powell in the 1800's during his storied exploration of the Green River, this area still lives up to its name. Because of its remoteness, it offers a rugged wilderness where bear, cougar, deer and elk outnumber human inhabitants. Just to the southeast of the Uinta Basin, where oil production is concentrated, it is also the subject of intense interest by oil and gas companies. Much of the land with drilling potential serves as crucial winter range for deer and elk.

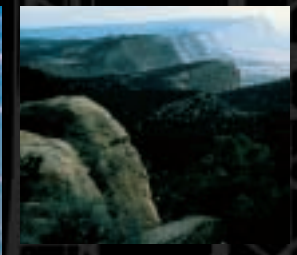
THE GRAND STAIRCASE ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT is under siege by those who want to open it to oil and gas exploration. In fact, there were already about 100 valid oil leases in the Monument when President Clinton established the Monument in 1996, all of which are recognized as valid existing rights. Now, the Monument is eyed for coal and coal bed methane (a type of natural gas). Yet according to data obtained from the U.S. Geological Survey, the Monument could meet just one hour of U.S. demand for natural gas, (and just four hours of U.S. demand for oil.)³ Needless to say, drilling in the Monument would ruin a precious, irreplaceable legacy for no real energy benefit.



Anasazi cultural site © James W. Kay



Drill pads and access roads in the Uinta Basin © Lin Alder



Desolation Canyon / Book Cliffs © Clive Kincaid



We don't need to drill our last remaining wilderness for gas.

The increase in natural gas prices does not reflect an exhaustion of natural gas resources,⁴ but a convergence of relatively unusual events that led to skyrocketing prices. Factors influencing gas prices include recent low prices which made it unprofitable to develop and store gas, and a pipeline explosion in the southwest. Increasing prices have already led to resumption of development in established areas.

Utah's scenic treasures should be the last place for oil drilling

Plenty of oil and gas can be recovered now without spoiling wilderness lands and National Monuments.

Fortunately, we don't have to drill in our remaining special landscapes to meet our energy needs. Instead, drilling for oil and gas in fields that are already developed and still have more resources makes much more sense. It does not, however, make sense to drill in pristine proposed wilderness designation areas, national monuments, or other special places.

Oil and gas development can and should occur – where it's appropriate.

In Utah, the most sensible place for oil and gas production is in an area known as the Uinta Basin, where over half of all wells drilled in Utah are located. This is an area of abundant oil and gas, and drilling for petroleum is at an all time high, with more rigs operating and more applications for permits to drill (or "APDs") than ever.

For example, the BLM expects to approve 525 new wells in this area in 2001. **That is more than three times the average number of wells approved since 1990.**

Moreover, while gas production in Utah is making a resurgence after a period of low prices that left gas companies reluctant to invest in exploration, the state still accounts for only 1.1% of total U.S. reserves, according to the Utah Division of Natural Resources.⁴ While increased gas production in Utah may be appropriate in some places, even full development would not make a meaningful contribution to the nation's energy stores.



¹ Salt Lake Tribune, April 2, 2001. Enormous profits at other energy companies have boosted them to the top of the Forbes list as well: Enron Corp. jumped this year from No. 18 to No. 7; Duke Energy jumped from No. 69 to No. 17, and Reliant Energy shot from No. 144 to No. 55. Texaco went from No. 28 to No. 16; and Chevron went from No. 35 to No. 20.

² The testimony can be found at <http://resources.committee.house.gov/107/cong/energy/2001apr25/culp.htm>.

³ Based on U.S. Geological Survey 1995 National Assessment of United States Oil and Gas Resources, with Geographic Information Service (GIS) data applied by The Wilderness Society to identify resources within the Monument boundaries.

⁴ Utah Energy Statistical Abstract, Sixth ed. 1999.



Act NOW to prevent the destruction of our heritage

Americans are worried that President Bush and Vice President Cheney will turn over our priceless national public lands – America's heritage – to their friends at Exxon, Texaco, Chevron and other multi-national oil companies. While these companies are earning record profits – Exxon is now at the top of the Forbes 500 list, with \$210 billion in revenue¹ – they are seeking even higher profits, and are eyeing the jewels of our national public lands, including areas proposed for wilderness designation.

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Conoco well in the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument
© John Palmeri



Hatch Point Cliffs near Lockhart Basin © Tom Till