

## **Lessons learned from the oil shale RD&D environmental assessments**

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The Energy Policy Act of 2005 solicited the nomination of 160-acre parcels to be leased for research, development, and demonstration (RD&D) of oil shale recovery technologies. Early in 2006, BLM received proposals from a number of companies and chose four companies for six RD&D projects. Five of the projects are located in Colorado, and one is in Utah, all of which are being analyzed in environmental assessments (EAs). Those projects that are found to have no significant environmental impacts will be awarded leases on the nominated tracts and will be allowed to proceed with the RD&D work. After completion of the RD&D phase, technologically and economically successful projects will have an opportunity to expand into commercial production on approximately 5,000 acres of adjacent BLM land.

While the scale of the RD&D projects is small relative to the full-scale commercial projects that are envisioned, the RD&D EAs provide insight into the environmental challenges that will be faced by the full-scale projects. Much has changed since the early 1980s when oil shale development was last contemplated. There are new socioeconomic circumstances and new pressures on the region's environment. The RD&D technologies are different from the technologies that were previously evaluated and implemented 30 years ago. As a result, the detailed environmental studies from those earlier projects, while still very important, may not be the best indicator of critical resources and the magnitude of likely environmental impacts.

This presentation will discuss the conclusions of the RD&D EAs and their implications for full-scale development.