

The Maybe Boom Generation: Planning for the socioeconomic impacts of oil shale development

Jason Hanson, Patty Limerick, Ryan Rebhan

Center of the American West, University of Colorado Boulder

Energy development booms often seem like a mixed blessing to the communities experiencing them. A historical survey of these economic cycles in the West testifies to the multifaceted impacts and challenges that community leaders face as they work to balance the benefits and burdens of sudden prosperity. As interest in oil shale on the Western Slope of the Rocky Mountains remains strong, how can Shale Country communities and companies apply the lessons of past energy booms to potential oil shale development in the future? Based on case studies of energy development cycles in the West, the authors offer observations about anticipating and addressing the socioeconomic challenges presented by **a “maybe boom.”** With particular emphasis on past oil shale cycles as well as more recent oil and gas development, the presentation examines what lessons can be drawn from the past and strategies for turning predicted problems into “self-falsifying prophecies.”