



# NEWS

## U.S. Department of the Interior

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### **Interior Assistant Secretary Stephen Allred Details Management Plan for Roan Plateau**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Interior Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management Stephen Allred today advised Gov. Bill Ritter and the State of Colorado on the Department’s Roan Plateau management plan, which includes objectives proposed by Gov. Ritter, places more than half of the plateau’s federal land off limits to ground disturbance and restricts energy development to no more than one percent of the remaining land at any one time.

“We greatly appreciate the insights, questions, comments, proposals and concerns the State of Colorado has brought to our attention in this important matter,” Allred said. Gov. Ritter had identified Roan Plateau management objectives as part of the planning effort of Interior’s Bureau of Land Management. The plateau contains important wildlife values as well as significant energy potential for America.

“We are confident that we can have very restricted and limited mineral development in this area as well as provide critical protections for fish and wildlife habitat, plants, special places, view sheds, and recreation,” Allred said in a letter to the governor that identified how the Bureau of Land Management has addressed the State’s objectives.

Allred emphasized that Interior would continue the partnership with the State as the planning is implemented. “It is important to BLM and the Department of the Interior that we continue to have the State’s involvement in this on-going process. The BLM will continue to work closely with the State of Colorado on implementing the plan. Also, we continue our offer to fund state employees to be co-located with our employees to provide implementation oversight in these processes.”

In responding specifically to five key objectives proposed by Gov. Ritter in December 2007, Allred cited a variety of significant energy development restrictions that will be implemented. These include placing more than 38,000 acres of land – more than half the federal land on the plateau – off limits to surface disturbance and a phased development requirement that no more than one percent (approximately 350 acres) of the remaining federal land on top of the plateau have surface disturbance at any one time. This includes well pads, new access roads, pipelines and other types of surface disturbance. Upon reaching the acreage limit, areas that had been disturbed must be satisfactorily reclaimed before further development would be approved for new areas.

Allred expressed his gratitude to Governor Ritter, saying “We greatly appreciate the close working relationship we have had which has helped us, we believe, to strike the balance we all want and believe has been and will continue to be achieved. I look forward to continuing to work closely with you as we go forward,” he said.

*Following is a listing of the Bureau of Land Management’s approaches to meeting the key objectives identified by Governor Ritter regarding management of the Roan Plateau.*

***Ensuring protection for critical fish and wildlife habitat, such as by expanding the size of the four wildlife-protection zones, known as “Areas of Critical Environmental Concern”***

The BLM plan designates 38,470 acres of No Surface Occupation (NSO) protection, including 21,034 acres of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs). Well pads must be more than ½ mile apart, and development would be constrained to existing roads and ridges on top of the plateau. The BLM has closed nearly 100 miles of routes based on the 2007 Record of Decision. Disturbance on top of the Plateau will be capped at approximately 350 acres at any given time. All leases will require lessees to enter into a federal unit, which requires consolidation of planning and operations under a single unit operator. This more efficient approach reduces impacts to other natural resources by consolidating infrastructure and providing for a more orderly, planned approach to development. The BLM’s plan also includes additional stipulations to specifically protect important wildlife habitat such as wildlife security areas, big game winter range and raptor nesting areas.

***Exploring the concept of phased or incremental leasing to increase revenue, better protect the environment and properly pace future development***

After exploring the concept of phased leasing, the BLM determined phased development provides for greater environmental protection. By leasing all parcels on top of the plateau at once, the BLM will require all lease holders to enter into a federal unit. A federal unit allows the BLM strict control of how, when and where development can take place. Also, a federal unit will require lease holders to designate a single operator, and provide greater incentives for industry to consolidate planning and infrastructure, as well as speed up reclamation. The unit agreement is necessary to achieve our environmental objectives because otherwise each lessee would undertake individual development activities without any incentive to consolidate planning and infrastructure and, hence, lessen disturbance.

***Achieving sustainable economic prosperity for local communities and industry***

The BLM plan calls for phased development over several decades, avoiding the “boom and bust” cycle.

***Exploring a possible amendment to the 1997 federal Transfer Act to ensure that the state receives bonus payments from future leasing on the Roan***

The BLM has made great progress toward making this objective a reality, and achieving this objective would not require legislation.

***Incorporating state-of-the-art technology to minimize environmental disturbance***

This plan is adaptive, which allows the BLM to take full advantage of technical innovations now and in the future. The Roan plan makes land use allocations, but additional environmental analysis and planning will be required before development takes place. This project level planning process will involve the public as well as State and local government, and ensure the best technology available is incorporated into meeting the goals of the BLM plan. Also, by restricting disturbance to approximately 350 acres on top of the Plateau, industry will need to be innovative in reducing development's footprint and increasing reclamation efforts. With more than one-half of the Roan Plateau off limits to ground disturbance, directional drilling and other state-of-the art technology will be essential..

*Information on Roan Plateau is online at*

<http://www.blm.gov/rmp/co/roanplateau/index.htm>

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