

For Immediate Release: December 20, 2007

Contact: Heather Feeney, (202) 452-5031

<http://ostseis.anl.gov>

Draft Environmental Study Addresses Oil Shale Resources on Public Lands

In response to congressional direction in the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the Bureau of Land Management today announced publication of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) to guide future management of public lands containing oil shale and tar sands resources. Under the proposal in the Draft PEIS, the BLM would amend land use plans to allocate approximately 1.9 million acres of public lands in Utah, Colorado and Wyoming for potential commercial oil shale development.

The BLM is developing the PEIS pursuant to direction in Section 369(d) of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The Act declares oil shale and other unconventional fuels to be strategically important domestic energy sources that should be developed to reduce the Nation's growing dependence on imported oil.

"The potential of America's oil shale resources to meet future U.S. demand for fuel is significant," said BLM Director Jim Caswell. "Oil shale deposits on public lands hold the equivalent of 1.23 trillion barrels of oil. The lands we are proposing to make available are estimated to hold, at a minimum, the equivalent of 61 billion barrels. At the low end of the range, that would yield enough gasoline to keep American tanks filled for 18 years."

Most U.S. oil shale resources are found in the Green River Formation of Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. The federally owned portion of this resource is more than 50 times the country's proven conventional oil reserves and nearly five times the proven reserves of Saudi Arabia.

Because there is no existing program for leasing these federal resources, the BLM is taking a thoughtful, deliberate approach to completing the PEIS. In cooperation with 14 federal, state and local government agencies, the BLM has been engaged in developing the Draft PEIS for nearly two years.

Caswell noted that the PEIS will not authorize any commercial development projects, provide for any leases to be issued, or commit the BLM to any particular course of action in the future. "The action proposed in the Draft responds to concerns expressed by the States and local communities serving as cooperating agencies," he said. "With their help, we've developed a proposal that will allow development of this vital asset while protecting other resources found on these lands and minimizing the impacts on local communities."

Between 305,000 and 1.5 million acres of BLM-managed lands would be excluded from oil shale leasing under the alternatives presented in the Draft PEIS. No leasing would be allowed in Wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, other units of the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern that are closed to mineral development, among other areas. The PEIS proposes that oil shale resources on identified lands would be leased as a solid mineral, and additional site-specific NEPA analysis would be completed on each application before any lease could be issued.

The document released today is a Draft document. Publication of a Notice of Availability in Friday's Federal Register begins the 90-day public comment period called for in BLM's planning regulations. "The BLM welcomes anyone with an interest in oil shale development to review and comment on the Draft PEIS during the next 90 days," Caswell said. "Full public involvement is critical throughout the process and helps ensure that decisions about oil shale development not only protect the environment

but also serve the Nation's energy needs and support local communities and economies.

The complete Draft PEIS is available in electronic form (PDF) on the project website, <http://ostseis.anl.gov>, beginning today. Beginning tomorrow, paper and CD-ROM copies of the Draft will also be available at the BLM State Offices in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming; and BLM Field Offices in Vernal, Price, Richfield and Monticello, Utah; Meeker, Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction, Colorado; and Kemmerer, Rawlins and Rock Springs, Wyoming. The website will be enabled to take comments electronically beginning Friday, and written comments may be mailed to: BLM Oil Shale and Tar Sands Resources Draft Programmatic EIS Comments, 9700 South Cass Avenue, Argonne IL 60439.

The BLM previously issued six 160-acre leases for oil shale projects on public lands in Colorado and Utah under its research development and demonstration (RD&D) program. Information available from these projects is included in the PEIS and was considered during development of the alternatives presented in the Draft. For additional information on the BLM's efforts to develop federal oil shale and tar sands resources, visit http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/energy/oilshale_2.html.

-BLM-

For Immediate Release: Dec. 20, 2007

Contact: Steven Hall, Communications Director, 303-239-3672

David Boyd, Public Affairs Specialist, 970-947-2832

Department of the Interior Response to Governor Ritter's Roan views

Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management C. Stephen Allred today welcomed Colorado Governor Bill Ritter's views concerning oil and gas leasing on the Roan Plateau. "I appreciate Governor Ritter's commitment to the responsible development of the Roan Plateau and its significant resources," Allred said. "Bureau of Land Management Director Jim Caswell and I will continue to work with BLM Colorado State Director Sally Wisely and the State of Colorado as this process moves forward."

BLM Colorado State Director Sally Wisely added, "The BLM welcomes Governor Ritter's contributions to management of the Roan Plateau and we look forward to continuing our partnership with the State of Colorado. I believe we can recover the area's natural gas resources in an environmentally sensitive manner so as to meet the Nation's energy needs and generate revenue for the people of Colorado."

-BLM-

For Immediate Release: December 20, 2007

Contact: Mel Lloyd BLM 970-244-3097

Public comments sought on West-wide Energy Corridor Draft EIS

MONTROSE, Colo. — The Bureau of Land Management Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) is seeking public review and comment on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Draft PEIS) recently released by the BLM and the U.S. Departments of Energy, Agriculture, Commerce and Defense. The Draft PEIS proposes designation of energy transport corridors on Federal lands in 11 western states, including Colorado. The proposed energy corridors would facilitate future siting of oil,

gas, and hydrogen pipelines and electricity transmission and distribution lines on Federal lands in the West to help address growing energy demand while protecting the environment. Designating these corridors would minimize the dispersal of rights-of-way for energy transport projects on public lands managed by the UFO and located in Montrose, Delta, San Miguel, and Ouray Counties, as well as elsewhere in the West. The planning effort is in accordance with Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

The Act further directs that environmental reviews be completed for the designation of such corridors, and that the designated corridors be incorporated into relevant agency land use and resource management plans.

“We have been working with Washington office staff for the past two years to provide them with information they in turn used to help develop the locations presented in the Draft EIS,” said Field Manager Barb Sharrow. “My staff spent a considerable amount of time ensuring that our special and unique resources were avoided wherever possible and that what Washington was going to propose made the most sense for public lands managed by the UFO.” For the most part, the proposed corridors are located along existing transmission lines, highways, pipelines or other rights-of-way.

The Draft PEIS evaluated factors that constrain where a network of energy transport corridors could be located – including topographical, environmental and regulatory constraints – as well as the overall suitability of particular lands to support development and operation of energy transport infrastructure. Eighty-four percent of the corridors proposed and analyzed in the Draft PEIS are located on BLM-managed lands, while 14 percent are on USDA Forest Service lands. The remaining fractional percentages are on lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation and National Park Service, or by the Department of Defense. The proposed corridors are agency-preferred locations for siting of future pipelines and transmission lines.

Several public meetings to take oral comments on the Draft PEIS are being held in each of the 11 states and in Washington, D.C. One meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 15, 2008, at the Courtyard Marriott located at 765 Horizon Drive in Grand Junction. There will be two sessions, one from 2 to 5 p.m. and another from 6 to 8 p.m.

The Draft PEIS was published in the Federal Register on November 16, 2007, which initiated a 90-day public comment period. Interested members of the public, government agencies, American Indian tribes, States, and non-governmental organizations are invited to submit comments on the Draft PEIS. To submit comments and to review the Draft PEIS and related documents, including detailed maps, visit the project website at <http://corridoreis.anl.gov>. Review copies of the PEIS are also available at the UFO. For information specific to the UFO, contact Teresa Pfifer at (970) 240-5316.

-BLM-

For Immediate Release: December 20, 2007

Contact: Mel Lloyd BLM 970-244-3097

BLM publishes Notice of Intent for Gateway recreation management plan

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo.—The Bureau of Land Management Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO) has kicked off a recreation planning effort for the 198,000-acre Gateway Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) that would amend the 1987 Grand Junction Resource Area Resource

Management Plan. The amendment would change the current RMP by designating travel opportunities; addressing commercial, competitive, special area, and organized group activities and events; identifying recreation needs; and defining recreation management objectives. The planning area is located in remote Mesa and Montrose Counties; the planning process is anticipated to take about 12 months to complete.

“Public lands in the Gateway area are no longer a secret—the word is getting out,” Field Manager Catherine Robertson said. “BLM has a unique opportunity to be proactive in planning for the increased use the area is already seeing. We think it’s important to make changes now to provide for better resource protections and quality recreational experiences in the future.”

Recreation Area Management Plans (RAMP) are becoming an important tool to public land managers as more people make public lands their choice destination. There will be several opportunities for the public to participate in this planning process, beginning today with a 30-day public scoping comment period intended to identify issues and concerns, and provide BLM valuable information about the project for consideration during the environmental review process.

A Recreation Benefit Study was conducted by Arizona State University, with assistance from Mesa State College, to provide a better snapshot of what kind of experiences those visiting the Gateway area were having and to find out what they wanted to see more of in the future. Both surveys and focus group meetings were used last summer during the study to develop a report on the findings.

To also facilitate the planning process, the SRMA has been segmented into ten Recreation Management Zones (RMZ). Public meetings will be held in Grand Junction and Gateway to discuss these zones and the project in further detail. The Grand Junction meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 8, at the GJFO located at 2815 H Road, and the Gateway meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 10, at the Gateway Community Center near Highway 141-mile marker 111.

The public may submit written comments to the BLM Grand Junction Field Office, ATTN: Gateway Plan, 2815 H Road, Grand Junction, Colorado 81506; by fax to (970) 244-3083; or by e-mail to GJFO_webmail@blm.gov. Planning documents will be available for review at the Grand Junction Field Office or on-line at www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo.html. For additional information, contact Outdoor Recreation Planner Ken Straley at (970) 244-3031.

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Editor’s Note: Map of planning area and description of RMZs available upon request.

FOR RELEASE DECEMBER 19, 2007

Contact: Mike Blakeman, Public Affairs (719) 852-6212

Proposed Land for Water Exchange

MONTE VISTA – The Bureau of Land Management is seeking comment on a proposal to exchange up to 10 parcels of land (approximately 2,693 acres) in Rio Grande County for up to 189.8 acre feet of water annually from the Anderson Ditch in Monte Vista.

The purpose of the proposed exchange is to acquire a permanent source of augmentation water for the Blanca Wetlands. The acquired water would be used to offset depletions to the Rio Grande caused by the operation of confined aquifer wells that supply water to the wetlands. Securing a permanent source

of augmentation water is critical as Blanca Wetlands provides habitat for more than a dozen threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. The wetlands also provide nesting and migratory habitat for thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds.

The land parcels proposed for exchange were previously identified as eligible for disposal or exchange in BLM's San Luis Resource Management Plan. The number and acreage of land parcels that will ultimately be exchanged will consider resource values, including wildlife habitat, open space and cultural resources.

For more information about the proposed exchange, please see the BLM's website at www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/slvplc.html or contact Sue Swift-Miller, La Jara Field Office, at 719-274-8971; or Tom Malecek, Divide Field Office, at 719-657-3321.

Written comments should be mailed before February 2, 2008 to Sue Swift-Miller, La Jara Field Office, 15571 County Road T-5, La Jara, CO 81140; or faxed to Sue Swift-Miller at 719-274-6304.

-BLM-

Dec. 19, 2007

Contact: David Boyd, Public Affairs Specialist, (970) 947-2832

Melodie Lloyd, Public Affairs Specialist, (970) 244-3097

BLM seeks public comment on well-development proposal near DeBeque

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colo. – The Bureau of Land Management is seeking public comment on an oil and gas exploration and development proposal two miles east of DeBeque, Colo.

EnCana Oil and Gas (USA) Inc. proposes drilling 95 wells over two-to-three years beginning this spring. The proposed Orchard II development area encompasses approximately 12,067 acres of federal lands and minerals within the Little Alkali Creek, Alkali Creek, Smith Gulch, Horsethief Creek and Little Horsethief Creek watersheds.

The wells would be drilled from 25 proposed well pads and one existing pad, and would require the improvement or construction of 8.8 miles of roads. Additionally, the gathering system for the proposed wells would require installation of 15.5 miles of buried pipelines. Directional and closed loop drilling technology would be used to drill the majority of the wells.

BLM requires operators to submit these Master Development Plans so that a broad evaluation of plans and impacts can be completed, and environmental impacts and appropriate measures to mitigate these impacts can be identified.

Before BLM completes an Environmental Assessment on this plan, it wants to hear any specific issues, concerns and comments the public has on the proposal and would like to see addressed through the assessment. Comments will be most helpful if received by Jan. 18, 2008.

Written comments and questions should be directed to the Glenwood Springs Energy Office at 2425 S. Grand Ave., Suite 101, Glenwood Springs, CO 81601. Electronic comments may be submitted to gsfomail@co.blm.gov.

Copies of the Orchard II Master Development Plan, which further details the proposed oil and gas

development, are available for review at the BLM Glenwood Springs Energy Office, 2425 S. Grand Ave., Suite 101, Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Digital copies of the Master Development Plan proposal and project maps are available at http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gsf0/GSFO_MasterPlansOfDevelopment.htm

-BLM-

For Immediate Release: December 14, 2007
Contact: Denise Adamic 303-239-3671
Jim Sample 303-239-3861

BLM February 14 Oil & Gas Lease Sale Information Available

DENVER – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Colorado today announced that information on its February 14, 2008, quarterly oil and gas lease sale is now available. In response to public requests that oil and gas lease sale information be made available as soon as possible, the BLM is posting the sale notice for 60 days, rather than the 45 days required by law.

The BLM's February lease sale includes 45 parcels covering 33,987 acres, including 30 parcels involving split-estate lands, where a private entity owns the surface rights and the federal government owns the subsurface mineral rights.

The lease sale will offer parcels in 11 counties (several parcels overlap county lines) including:

- Archuleta, 2
- Baca, 2
- Delta, 3
- Dolores, 11
- Garfield, 3
- Gunnison, 2
- Montezuma, 12
- Montrose, 5
- Rio Blanco, 2
- San Miguel, 6
- Yuma, 1

National BLM policy requires that all protests filed on nominated parcels must include the specific serial number of the parcel being protested and must be received by the BLM either by mail, hand delivery, or fax by 4:00 p.m. by January 30, 2008. If a protest is filed by fax, it must be sent to 303-239-3799. This policy allows the Bureau to review protests in advance of the sale, make an appropriate announcement of protests at the sale, and meet the statutory deadline for issuing leases. While protested parcels may still be offered, bidders are notified that no lease will be issued until protests are resolved.

The Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 and the 1987 Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act authorize leasing of federal oil and gas resources. The 1987 law, which amended the Mineral Leasing Act, requires each BLM state office to conduct oil and gas lease sales on at least a quarterly basis where there is interest to do so.

“Of the total acreage managed by the BLM, less than one percent experiences surface disturbance from

oil and gas activity,” said Acting BLM Colorado Deputy State Director () Duane Spencer. “To minimize impacts to the land, the Bureau analyzes the potential environmental effects from exploration and development before offering any leases for sale.”

All leases come with stipulations (general requirements) on oil and gas activities to protect the environment; leases can also include specific restrictions, such as limits on seasons when drilling can occur and restrictions on surface occupancy by oil and gas operators. BLM Colorado holds oil and gas lease sales on the second Thursday of February, May, August, and November. Lease sale information can be obtained online at: http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Programs/oilandgas/leasing.html, at each of the Bureau’s field offices, and the Public Room at the Colorado State Office in Lakewood.

Parties interested in receiving regular notification of oil and gas lease sales are encouraged to contact the State Office Public Room at 303-239-3600. Notice documents may also be obtained by calling the Public Room up to 60 days before the sale and requesting a copy of the sale notice be sent to you. There is a \$5 charge for the sale notice. Sale results can be requested approximately one week after the sale for an additional \$5.

The BLM manages over 8.3 million acres of public lands in Colorado. These lands are managed for a multitude of uses including recreation, mining, wildlife habitat and livestock grazing. The BLM oversees more than 27 million subsurface acres for mineral development in the state.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 13, 2007

San Juan Public Lands Center to Release Combined USFS/BLM Draft Management Plan for Public Comment

The San Juan Public Lands Center will release a draft Revised Land Management Plan guiding long-term management for some 2.4 million acres of Bureau of Land Management and National Forest lands in southwestern Colorado on Friday, December 14, 2007. An accompanying draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) offers four alternatives proposing differing scenarios for multiple-use management of the San Juan’s BLM and National Forest lands. An oil and gas leasing availability analysis is also included as part of the draft EIS.

The San Juan Public Lands Center manages 1.9 million acres of National Forest and more than a half million acres of BLM land, ranging from high-desert mesas to high-alpine peaks. Since the original management plans were finalized two decades ago, new pressures have been put on these public lands. Recreation has boomed, bringing with it environmental and social impacts. Timber-harvest practices have evolved, as new science has become available. Fuels reduction is a new focus, and energy development is of high interest.

Beginning in January 2005, many southwestern Colorado citizens participated in community study groups to help the agencies identify ways to improve the existing plans. “We hope to see those people again, along with other interested citizens, at our new set of meetings early in 2008,” said Thurman Wilson, San Juan Public Lands Assistant Center Manager for Planning. “We look forward to hearing everyone’s ideas about how to improve the current draft proposal. What we learn over the next three months will help shape the final plan.”

The Draft Plan and EIS address the main issues raised by the public, including balancing management

between maintaining working forest and rangelands and retaining core undeveloped lands, providing recreation and travel management within a sustainable ecological framework, managing special area designations and unique landscapes, and managing impacts from oil and gas leasing and development. The four alternatives outline different management scenarios varying by land allocations in response to issues and concerns.

Public comments will be taken on the draft plan and EIS for the next 90 days. During that time, public meetings will be held in the following communities to allow the public to learn more:

- Cortez – Wed., Jan. 16, 2008, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Cortez Holiday Inn/Cortez Conference Center, 2121 East Main;
- Durango – Wed., Jan. 23, 2008, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Durango Community Recreation Center, 2700 Main Avenue;
- Pagosa Springs – Tues., Jan. 29, 2008, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Pagosa Springs Community Center, 451 Hot Springs Blvd.;
- Silverton – Thurs., Jan. 31, 2008, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Silverton Town Hall, 1360 Greene Street;
- Rico – Wed., Feb. 6, 2008, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Rico Town Hall, 2 North Commercial.

Comments will be accepted until March 12, 2008, and can be offered via Web site at:

<http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/forestPlan>, by FAX to: 916-456-6724, or by mail to San Juan Plan Revision, P.O. Box 162909, Sacramento, CA 95816-2909

The draft Plan and draft EIS can be viewed and downloaded in Portable Document Format (PDF), at the following Web site: <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/forestPlan>. The documents are also available on compact disks (CD). Requests should be sent to San Juan Plan Revision Team, 15 Burnett Court, Durango, Colorado 81301. Requests can also be made by phone to Laura Stransky at 970-385-1216 or via email at lstransky@fs.fed.us.

A limited number of printed copies will be available at the following government offices during regular business hours:

- Columbine Public Lands Office, 367 Pearl Street, Bayfield, CO 81122 (970-884-2512);
- Dolores Public Lands Office, 29211 Highway 184, Dolores, CO 81323 (970-882-7296);
- Pagosa Public Lands Office, 180 Pagosa Street, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147 (970-264-2268);
- BLM Colorado State Office, 2850 Youngfield Street, Lakewood, CO 80215; and
- USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region, 740 Simms Street, Golden, CO 80401.

For more information, contact Thurman Wilson, Assistant Center Manager for Planning at (970) 385-1246.

-BLM-

For Immediate Release: December 11, 2007

Contact: Tom Gorey BLM 202-452-5137

Denise Adamic BLM 303-239-3671

BLM Proposes Changing Right-of-Way Rental Fees to Better Reflect Fair Market Value

The Bureau of Land Management today proposed revising the rental fees it charges companies or individuals for rights-of-way so that these fees more adequately reflect changes in land values over the past two decades. The BLM, which published its proposed regulatory revision in today's Federal Register, is undertaking this effort in accordance with Section 367 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which directs the Department of the Interior to revise the existing rental fee schedule for linear rights-

of-way to reflect current land values. A 60-day public comment period on the regulatory proposal starts today.

The rent schedule covers most linear rights-of-way granted under the Mineral Leasing Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. Both laws require the holder of a right-of-way to pay fair-market value to occupy, use, or traverse public lands for such facilities as power lines, fiber-optic lines, pipelines, roads, and ditches. The proposed revised rental fee schedule would also be adopted by the U.S. Forest Service for uses on National Forest lands, consistent with existing practices and as required by the Energy Policy Act.

Since 1987, when rental fees for linear rights-of-way were last updated, there have been substantial changes in public land values. The result is that the Federal government may be receiving inadequate compensation for the use of these lands. The proposed regulations would update the fee schedule based on current land values and would adjust these values, whether up or down, every five years.

“The American taxpayer deserves to be compensated fairly for the use of public lands for commercial enterprises,” said BLM Director Jim Caswell. “This proposed new rule would ensure that the Federal government receives an adequate return for right-of-way rentals now and into the future.”

The proposed set of regulations also contains provisions not directly related to the rent schedule. These cover such topics as flexible rental payment periods and reimbursements of processing and monitoring fees for leases and permits.

The BLM published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking describing these proposed changes in the Federal Register on April 27, 2006. The BLM received 10 responses from the public to the Advance Notice, which were generally supportive of the rule proposal.

There are currently more than 96,000 right-of-way grants on BLM lands, of which about half are subject to rent, generating more than \$20 million annually in revenue. Revenue from right-of-way rentals goes to the Treasury, along with a share to the states, as required by the Mineral Leasing Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

The BLM manages more land – 258 million surface acres – than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1.8 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM’s multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, and cultural resources on the public lands.

-BLM-

For Immediate Release: December 10, 2007
Contact: Mel Lloyd BLM 970-244-3097

McInnis Canyons Advisory Council to meet

Grand Junction, Colo. — The McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (NCA) Advisory Council will hold a meeting at 4 p.m., on Thursday, Dec. 13, 2007, at the Mesa County Administration Building, 544 Rood Avenue, in Grand Junction. The meeting will be held in the multipurpose room.

Agenda topics for the Dec. 13 meeting include:

- Rabbit Valley Implementation Plan
- 2007 NCA Manager's Report
- Advisory Council Charter and Standard Operating Procedures
- 2008 Meeting Schedule

All meetings are open to the public. For additional information, please contact Leah Quesenberry at (970) 244-3020.

-BLM-

**U.S. FOREST SERVICE AND
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
NEWS RELEASE -- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
US Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region . Golden, Colorado
Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Office . Lakewood, Colorado**

Contact: Janelle Smith, 303-275-5359 (office) or 720-289-7587 (cell)

The Colorado Recreation Resource Advisory Committee to Convene for its First Meeting

DENVER, Colo., Dec., 6, 2007 – The Colorado Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (Recreation RAC) will convene for its first meeting in Lakewood on December 10-11, 2007. The Recreation RAC was established as part of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide recommendations on fee proposals for the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management in Colorado.

Recreation RAC members were selected among applicants to represent 11 interests to include motorized, non-motorized, environmental, Indian tribes, local government and others from throughout the state.

The two-day meeting will be devoted to organizing the group, electing a chairperson, developing by-laws, determining the format for proposals, and receiving training on the legal requirements of a FACA (Federal Advisory Committee Act) committee. Fee proposals will not be discussed at this initial meeting.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 1:00 p.m. on December 10 and will conclude at approximately 3:00 p.m. on December 11. The meeting will be held in the Rocky Mountain Regional Office auditorium at 740 Simms in Lakewood.

Members of the public interested in recreation fees in Colorado may attend; however, a specific time for public comments has not been established. Those who are interested in commenting, please contact Pam DeVore at 303-275-5043 or pdevore@fs.fed.us. Individual comment presentations will be limited to three minutes. Written comments are encouraged, particularly if the material cannot be presented within three minutes, and should be sent to Greg Griffith, Deputy Regional Forester (also the Designated Federal Official for the Recreation RAC) at the US Forest Service Rocky Mountain Regional Office, 740 Simms Street, Golden, Colorado 80401.

For Immediate Release: December 6, 2007
Contact: Mel Lloyd BLM 970-244-3097

Mark your calendar for the 108th Annual Christmas Bird Count

MONTROSE, Colo. — The Bureau of Land Management Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) and Black Canyon Audubon Society are organizing the 2007 Christmas Bird Counts for the tri-community area of Montrose, Delta and Hotchkiss. The counts will take place on December 15 in Hotchkiss, December 16 in Montrose, and December 22 in Delta. Local birders and nature enthusiasts will join others across the Western Hemisphere from December 14 to January 5, 2008, to participate in Audubon's century-long wintertime tradition, the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This year's counts are expected to exceed the 2,052 individual counts that occurred in 2006 across the Americas, Caribbean, and in the Pacific Islands. About 70 million birds were tallied by a record 58,000 volunteers last year.

“Each CBC volunteer observer is an important contributor, helping to shape the overall direction of bird conservation,” Geoff LeBaron, National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count Director said. “Audubon and our partners at Bird Studies Canada, the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, and the Boreal Songbird Initiative rely on data from the CBC database to develop Audubon's ‘State of the Birds’ report.” The Audubon's WatchList, published in last season's CBC report of American Birds and used to prioritize Audubon's bird conservation work, also depends on the annual CBC.

“The BLM supports the local Christmas Bird Count because it provides essential data needed for conservation,” BLM Biological Staff Supervisor Missy Siders said.

The CBC is vital in monitoring the status of resident and migratory birds across the Western Hemisphere, and the data, which are 100 percent volunteer generated, have become a crucial part of the U.S. Government's natural history monitoring database. Because of this data, scientists, as well as you, can monitor the status of your local birds, discovering whether populations have changed during the last 100 years.

“Our partnership with the Black Canyon Audubon Society complements BLM's Healthy Lands Initiative, for which public land managers are setting priorities and managing across landscapes to mitigate resource impacts,” Field Manager Barb Sharrow said. The CBC helps us by telling us how we're doing in managing for wildlife and riparian habitat.”

The CBC began over a century ago when 27 conservationists in 25 localities, led by scientist and writer Frank Chapman, changed the course of ornithological history. On Christmas Day in 1900, the small group posed an alternative to the “side hunt,” a Christmas Day activity in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds and small mammals. Instead, Chapman proposed that they identify, count, and record all the birds they saw, founding what is now considered to be the world's most significant and oldest citizen-based conservation effort.

Those planning to participate in the local counts should meet at 8 a.m. at City Market in Hotchkiss, volunteers in Montrose should meet at 8:30 a.m. in the south City Market parking lot near Java Hut, and Delta-area counters should meet at 7:30 a.m. at City Market. For more information about CBC participation or to view real-time count results, visit Audubon's website at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc. For local information on the counts, in Montrose contact George Steele at (970) 327-0262 or gsteele05@centurytel.net, in Delta Jacob Cooper at certhia@bresnan.net, and in Hotchkiss Jason Beason at (970) 527-4625 or jasonbeason@tds.net.

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For Immediate Release: December 5, 2007

Contact: Mel Lloyd BLM 970-244-3097

BLM issues decision on development near Vega Lake State Park

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo.—After two months of considering public comment and conducting additional review, the Bureau of Land Management Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO) has issued a Finding of No Significant Impact on an Environmental Assessment (EA) conducted for a gas well development proposed by Delta Petroleum Corporation of Denver, Colorado. The Vega Unit, which contains private and federal leases dating back to 1967, is located about 13 miles east of Collbran, Colorado, and one mile east/southeast of Vega Reservoir.

“This process is a great example that shows how the quality of comments is far more important than the quantity. We received very few comments from the public,” Field Manager Catherine Robertson said. “But the few we did receive provided us with solid input that helped staff strengthen the EA and ultimately lessen resource impacts.”

The project will impact a total of 26 acres; eight of those on public lands managed by the BLM and 18 acres on private lands. Overall, surface disturbance on public lands has been reduced from the initial proposal to disturb 11.7 acres to a permitted disturbance area of about 6.5 acres, a reduction in resource impacts of nearly 50 percent. To aid in reducing resource impacts, Delta will utilize closed-loop directional drilling to drill 27 wells from only three new well pads.

Major stipulations, improvements, and protective measures added to the final EA are:

- Energy development on public lands will be regulated through an unprecedented number of comprehensive and restrictive Conditions of Approval (COAs).
- A 5-acre, or 15 percent, reduction of the impact footprint.
- Use of a closed-loop drilling system; allowing for the reduction in pad disturbance, minimization of the surface footprint, elimination of a reserve pit, decreased use of fresh water, and reduction of heavy truck traffic to transport water and drilling fluids.
- Elimination of nearly a mile of access roadway, lessening wildlife habitat fragmentation, and cutting dust and the loss of vegetation.
- Pipelines will follow roadways on public lands managed by the BLM.

Delta Petroleum Corporation began drilling wells on private land in the Vega Unit two years ago. Most of the proposed new wells are on private lands with private minerals that are not under the jurisdiction of BLM. Impacts of these private wells were also analyzed in BLM’s EA so that cumulative impacts could be addressed. The EA is available for review on the GJFO web site at www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo.html, or at the GJFO located at 2815 H Road in Grand Junction.

For more information, contact David Lehmann at (970) 244-3021, or Julia Christiansen at (970) 244-3093.

-BLM-

For Immediate Release: Dec. 4, 2007

Contact: David Boyd, Public Affairs Specialist, (970) 947-2832

Glenwood BLM winter closures begin

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colo. – Winter closures on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management’s Glenwood Springs Field Office are in effect to protect critical big game winter range and prevent road damage.

These seasonal gate closures occur annually from Dec. 1 to April 30 at several points in the Castle Peak area in Eagle County, East Elk Creek in Garfield County, and Light Hill and the Crown in Pitkin County.

All of the areas continue to be open to non-motorized recreation opportunities such as hiking, snowshoeing, horseback riding and skiing.

The lower gate at Transfer Trail above Glenwood Springs will be closed Dec. 6 to maintain snow conditions for snowmobiling.

“We appreciate the public’s cooperation in helping us protect wildlife and public lands,” said Jamie Connell, Glenwood Springs Field Manager.

At the request of the Colorado Division of Wildlife, BLM is continuing to allow motorized access through one gate at Windy Point near State Bridge and two gates in Gypsum Hills through Jan. 15 to facilitate more hunter harvest of elk. Normally these areas are closed to motorized access Dec. 1 as well.

BLM’s Wolcott and Gypsum campgrounds are closed for the winter and will reopen this spring when conditions allow.

For additional information or to report violations in these areas call the Glenwood Springs Field Office, (970) 947-2800.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 12/02/07

CONTACT: Michael Williams, 970-882-5600

ENGLEHART LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS EXHIBIT OPENS AT ANASAZI HERITAGE CENTER

Light and color fill the Special Exhibit Gallery at the Bureau of Land Management Anasazi Heritage Center thanks to the inspiration, perspiration, and vision of artist Stanton Englehart.

Englehart’s paintings, representing a lifetime of work, are the subject of the exhibit “Seasons on the Plateau” on display through the end of March. A public opening celebration begins at 1:00 p.m. on

Sunday, December 9. Museum admission is free throughout the winter season.

Stanton Englehart grew up in Lewis, Colorado, about 10 miles northwest of Dolores. After earning his Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Colorado, he returned to the Four Corners to live and paint. He founded the art department at Fort Lewis College in Durango, and retired in 1991 after 30 years on the faculty.

Landscape painting was not fashionable during the 1950s when Englehart was a student. His teachers tried to steer him elsewhere, but they eventually realized that his love-affair with land and sky was not a passing fancy.

Englehart's signature subject and style —huge, vivid landscapes of space and form rendered in oils—are well-represented in this show and prized by collectors throughout the world. The title piece is a four-panel work almost 25 feet wide. It is accompanied by 12 individual canvases named for the months of the year, as well as others in similar style.

Earlier paintings, featuring different techniques and materials, offer insight into Englehart the man. Many paintings in the exhibit have never been shown in public before. “The Women,” a series of 20 works in mixed media, teases the viewer with tales untold from behind pursed lips and challenging stares. Another mixed-media series, featuring barnyards and farm animals, hints at grisly facts under a veneer of false innocence.

An opening celebration will take place at the museum on Sunday, December 12 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. A new book, entitled Stanton Englehart: A Life on Canvas, will be available for the first time at this event. Published by Durango author Jules Masterjohn, the book examines the artist's career and includes a half-hour DVD featuring interviews with Englehart in the locations that most inspire him. Profits from the book will benefit the Stanton Englehart Scholarship Fund for art students at Fort Lewis College.

The Anasazi Heritage Center is three miles west of Dolores on State Highway 184, and is open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. seven days a week except on Christmas and New Year's Day. For more information, call the Center at 882-5600, or visit the museum's web site at www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/ahc.html.

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