Drill, drill, drill: BLM plan for Carbon, Emery counties goes for the gas

Tribune Editorial

In Price, they take to heart the Bush administration's order to drill, drill, drill. For natural gas, that is. They like to mine coal, too.

The Price Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management has just issued its preferred resource management plan for the 2.5 million acres of public lands it oversees in Carbon and Emery counties. In language only a bureaucrat could love, the plan would “maximize mineral development in areas with the greatest potential for maximum resource recovery.”

Which would be fine if mineral development were always the highest and best use of these lands. But in some cases, it's not. This is, after all, the neighborhood that includes such scenic and archaeological wonders as Nine Mile and Desolation canyons. In its attempt to balance mineral development with environmental preservation, the BLM folks in Price have leaned far too heavily on the side of the scale that holds mineral extraction.

For example, they took another look at 937,440 acres of land that had been previously identified as having wilderness characteristics, but had not been formally designated as wilderness study areas. Of those, they set aside only about one-tenth, that is, 97,100 acres in five areas, as worthy to protect their wilderness characteristics. Even these will be subject to mineral leasing so long as no surface occupancy is involved. In other words, they will be available for extraction by slant drilling.

The rest could become ineligible for further consideration as wilderness if development criss-crosses them with roads. Under federal law, wilderness must be roadless.

The folks in the Price office considered six alternative management plans. They chose the one that would have the second-largest overall impact in terms of environmental degradation. Even maintaining the status quo would have less.

Viewed in that light, it is clear that this plan would move these lands toward exploitation rather than preservation.

In Price, they take to heart the Bush administration's order to drill, drill, drill. For natural gas, that is. They like to mine coal, too.

The Price Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management has just issued its preferred resource management plan for the 2.5 million acres of public lands it oversees in Carbon and Emery counties. In language only a bureaucrat could love, the plan would “maximize mineral development in areas with the greatest potential for maximum resource recovery.”

Which would be fine if mineral development were always the highest and best use of these lands. But in some cases, it's not. This is, after all, the neighborhood that includes such scenic and archaeological wonders as Nine Mile and Desolation canyons. In its attempt to balance mineral development with environmental preservation, the BLM folks in Price have leaned far too heavily on the side of the scale that holds mineral extraction.

For example, they took another look at 937,440 acres of land that had been previously identified as having wilderness characteristics, but had not been formally designated as wilderness study areas. Of those, they set aside only about one-tenth, that is, 97,100 acres in five areas, as worthy to protect their wilderness characteristics. Even these will be subject to mineral leasing so long as no surface occupancy is involved. In other words, they will be available for extraction by slant drilling.

The rest could become ineligible for further consideration as wilderness if development criss-crosses them with roads. Under federal law, wilderness must be roadless.

The folks in the Price office considered six alternative management plans. They chose the one that would have the second-largest overall impact in terms of environmental degradation. Even maintaining the status quo would have less.

Viewed in that light, it is clear that this plan would move these lands toward exploitation rather than preservation.

In Price, they take to heart the Bush administration's order to drill, drill, drill. For natural gas, that is. They like to mine coal, too.

The Price Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management has just issued its preferred resource management plan for the 2.5 million acres of public lands it oversees in Carbon and Emery counties. In language only a bureaucrat could love, the plan would “maximize mineral development in areas with the greatest potential for maximum resource recovery.”

Which would be fine if mineral development were always the highest and best use of these lands. But in some cases, it's not. This is, after all, the neighborhood that includes such scenic and archaeological wonders as Nine Mile and Desolation canyons. In its attempt to balance mineral development with environmental preservation, the BLM folks in Price have leaned far too heavily on the side of the scale that holds mineral extraction.

For example, they took another look at 937,440 acres of land that had been previously identified as having wilderness characteristics, but had not been formally designated as wilderness study areas. Of those, they set aside only about one-tenth, that is, 97,100 acres in five areas, as worthy to protect their wilderness characteristics. Even these will be subject to mineral leasing so long as no surface occupancy is involved. In other words, they will be available for extraction by slant drilling.

The rest could become ineligible for further consideration as wilderness if development criss-crosses them with roads. Under federal law, wilderness must be roadless.

The folks in the Price office considered six alternative management plans. They chose the one that would have the second-largest overall impact in terms of environmental degradation. Even maintaining the status quo would have less.

Viewed in that light, it is clear that this plan would move these lands toward exploitation rather than preservation.

In Price, they take to heart the Bush administration's order to drill, drill, drill. For natural gas, that is. They like to mine coal, too.

The Price Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management has just issued its preferred resource management plan for the 2.5 million acres of public lands it oversees in Carbon and Emery counties. In language only a bureaucrat could love, the plan would “maximize mineral development in areas with the greatest potential for maximum resource recovery.”

Which would be fine if mineral development were always the highest and best use of these lands. But in some cases, it's not. This is, after all, the neighborhood that includes such scenic and archaeological wonders as Nine Mile and Desolation canyons. In its attempt to balance mineral development with environmental preservation, the BLM folks in Price have leaned far too heavily on the side of the scale that holds mineral extraction.

For example, they took another look at 937,440 acres of land that had been previously identified as having wilderness characteristics, but had not been formally designated as wilderness study areas. Of those, they set aside only about one-tenth, that is, 97,100 acres in five areas, as worthy to protect their wilderness characteristics. Even these will be subject to mineral leasing so long as no surface occupancy is involved. In other words, they will be available for extraction by slant drilling.

The rest could become ineligible for further consideration as wilderness if development criss-crosses them with roads. Under federal law, wilderness must be roadless.

The folks in the Price office considered six alternative management plans. They chose the one that would have the second-largest overall impact in terms of environmental degradation. Even maintaining the status quo would have less.

Viewed in that light, it is clear that this plan would move these lands toward exploitation rather than preservation.

In Price, they take to heart the Bush administration's order to drill, drill, drill. For natural gas, that is. They like to mine coal, too.

The Price Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management has just issued its preferred resource management plan for the 2.5 million acres of public lands it oversees in Carbon and Emery counties. In language only a bureaucrat could love, the plan would “maximize mineral development in areas with the greatest potential for maximum resource recovery.”

Which would be fine if mineral development were always the highest and best use of these lands. But in some cases, it's not. This is, after all, the neighborhood that includes such scenic and archaeological wonders as Nine Mile and Desolation canyons. In its attempt to balance mineral development with environmental preservation, the BLM folks in Price have leaned far too heavily on the side of the scale that holds mineral extraction.

For example, they took another look at 937,440 acres of land that had been previously identified as having wilderness characteristics, but had not been formally designated as wilderness study areas. Of those, they set aside only about one-tenth, that is, 97,100 acres in five areas, as worthy to protect their wilderness characteristics. Even these will be subject to mineral leasing so long as no surface occupancy is involved. In other words, they will be available for extraction by slant drilling.

nine Mile Canyon, whose petroglyphs have been described as the longest art gallery in the world.

This plan would open more lands to similar treatment. So long as there is gas to drill, the BLM is saying, that's what matters most.

It is clear that this plan would move these lands toward exploitation rather than preservation.