



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILD

# Protecting Public Lands from Oil & Gas Development

## Fact Sheet

Every year millions of acres of our public lands are offered up to oil and gas companies for exploration and development. In 2017 an area twice the size of the State of Vermont was put on the auction block - giving big corporations the opportunity to lock up these lands for their private gains, and denying us the ability to protect them for wildlife habitat, recreation, and other non-consumptive uses. Today, there are over 36 million acres of federal land and minerals under lease to the oil and gas industry.

### How does it work?

Businesses and individuals who are interested in leasing public lands for oil and gas development can submit an Expression of Interest (EIO) to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The EIO is a request to have specific lands analyzed and included in a competitive oil and gas lease auction. The BLM does a review of these parcels, and if they meet regulations the parcels are offered up for lease at one of their quarterly lease sale auctions. Along the way the BLM is required to analyze the environmental impacts of leasing the parcels, and the public has the opportunity to comment on and protest BLM decisions. (For more details see Rocky Mountain Wild's Oil & Gas Leasing flow chart.)

### Why Comment?

Commenting on oil and gas lease sales is not for the faint of heart. Short deadlines, complicated maps, and confusing directions can make this process a challenge, even for dedicated activists. But, it is an action that is critically important. Public comment is one of the few ways that we can protect our wild open spaces for future generations of humans and wildlife.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you work through the commenting process:

- 90% of America's public lands are available for extractive industries to lease. That means that only 10% are set aside for wildlife habitat, recreation, water conservation, wilderness, and other uses that we value.
- The opportunity to participate in public land management decisions is unique to the United States. You can't do this in other countries!
- The drilling, mining, processing, and transport of fossil fuels from our public lands has enormous environmental impacts. If our U.S. public lands were their own country, they would rank 5th in the world in CO2 emissions.
- Public lands contain many of our country's biodiversity hot spots. With species going extinct at a rate of 1,000 to 10,000 times than they were just 200 years ago, protecting these areas is critical in slowing the 6th mass extinction.
- Once a company has a permit to drill, it is almost impossible to stop the process. The most effective way to protect these lands is to engage in the process early on.



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## How to Comment?

- Head to [http://rockymountainwild.org/oil\\_and\\_gas](http://rockymountainwild.org/oil_and_gas) - and hover over the “Oil & Gas Watch” tab. You’ll see a list of several states to choose from: Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, New Mexico, Montana, Nevada.
- Click on the state you’re interested in. You’ll be able to see dark boxes on the map outlining the specific areas where leases are occurring.
- Underneath the map, you’ll see the deadline for comments as well as a link to the BLM planning website - this site is where you’ll find the BLM’s email address for those specific parcels. This email address is where you will send your comments!
- You can use the map to see exactly where conservation conflicts lie by turning specific conflicts off and on, but we’ve outlined major conflicts for you in the text below the map. Use these in your comments!
- In your comment, write not only the specific conservation conflicts you can see on the map, but also add any personal experiences you have had in these places. Be specific, polite, and state the facts.
- Show your expertise. Back up your requests with facts and science. Tell the agency something they may not already know and need to add to the record. Site examples if you have them. (Don’t let this step intimidate you - even one fact can make a difference. Pro tip: Google)