

SPORTSMEN FOR Responsible Energy Development

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Ten treasured landscapes named to list of imperiled hunting and fishing destinations on America's public lands

Wildlife and their habitat at risk from irresponsible energy development, report released by sportsmen's coalition says

DENVER — Poorly planned energy projects could irreparably harm 10 cherished hunting and fishing destinations on Western public lands, according to a report released today by a coalition of 500 sportsmen, businesses and organizations.

The report, "[Hunting and Fishing Imperiled](#)," from Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development, focuses on the impacts oil and natural gas extraction could have on irreplaceable landscapes vital to fish and wildlife and prized by hunters and anglers. The 10 threatened places – overseen by the Bureau of Land Management or U.S. Forest Service – are in Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. (Please see list at end of document.)

The public lands cited in the report include Colorado's Roan Plateau, where natural gas development could devastate native Colorado River cutthroat trout and trophy big-game elk and mule deer. The list also includes Utah's Uinta National Forest, New Mexico's Otero Mesa and the Middle Yellowstone River Valley in Montana, among other special places where proposed oil and gas development could adversely affect fish and game populations.

During the past decade, an unprecedented energy boom transformed huge tracts of Western public lands. Between 2000 and 2008, the number of permits to develop oil and gas tripled, and an estimated 126,000 new wells are planned for the next 20 years. Another 26 million acres – an area larger than Ohio – already are leased for development, the report says.

"Oil and gas extraction can be done in a responsible manner that protects habitat and recreational opportunities," said Brad Powell, former U.S. Forest Service Regional Forester and Trout Unlimited's energy policy director. "But there are certain places where responsible development means leaving areas just as they are. By no means are we asking industry to quit drilling. We're simply asking for a cautious approach that protects the hunting and angling heritage so vital to the West."

The report serves a dual purpose, according to Steve Torbit, the National Wildlife Federation's regional executive director for the Rocky Mountain West.

“This is an alert to sportsmen that some of their favorite places to hunt and fish are in jeopardy,” Torbit said. “It also puts the energy industry and federal government on notice that sportsmen are paying close attention to the management of wildlife habitat on public lands – and we’re not about to lose them without a fight.”

All 10 places described in the report provide excellent habitat for big game or fish – and sometimes both – and therefore great hunting and fishing. Conserving some of these places simply means using a thoughtful, science-based approach to drilling that keeps irreplaceable habitat intact. In other instances, responsible development means no development at all.

“Hunting and fishing have a long and storied history in the West, particularly on the public lands that are the heart of our nation’s natural resources heritage,” said Steve Belinda, energy policy manager of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. “Sportsmen have a huge stake in perpetuating this legacy and the outdoor traditions made possible by the responsible management of these special places.”

The 10 imperiled sportsmen’s destinations included in the report are:

- Colorado:
 - **Roan Plateau**, a legendary hunting and fishing spot in western Colorado with dramatic terrain, steep cliffs, deep valleys and cascading waterfalls; and
 - **North Park**, an area in north-central Colorado offering exceptional deer, elk and antelope hunting, sage grouse habitat and Gold Medal trout fishing.
- Montana:
 - **Middle Yellowstone River Valley**, home to dramatic scenery and abundant fish and wildlife in a drainage north of Yellowstone National Park; and
 - **Powder River Basin**, in southeastern Montana, where anglers enjoy great warm-water fishing and hunters pursue wild turkeys and big game.
- New Mexico:
 - **Otero Mesa**, where deer and antelope roam on the grasslands of the biologically diverse Chihuahuan Desert in south-central New Mexico; and
 - **San Juan Mountains**, a stunning area on the New Mexico-Colorado border where elk, deer and trout provide unmatched hunting and fishing.
- Utah:
 - **Uinta National Forest**, a big-game and fishing mecca east of Provo that features Blue Ribbon fisheries and aspen-rimmed mountain meadows; and
 - **Book Cliffs**, a spectacular escarpment in eastern Utah, where hunters have chased some of the West’s best elk and mule deer for generations.
- Wyoming:
 - **Greater Little Mountain area**, a popular recreation region in southwest Wyoming that’s home to mule deer, trophy elk and native cutthroat trout; and
 - **Horse Creek-Ryegrass Rim**, an area west of Pinedale where drilling threatens irreplaceable fishing for native cutthroat trout and hunting for elk, mule deer, moose and bighorn sheep.

An executive summary of “Hunting and Fishing Imperiled” – and the full report – can be viewed at www.sportsmen4responsibleenergy.org.

Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development is a coalition of more than 500 businesses, organizations and individuals dedicated to conserving irreplaceable habitats so future generations can hunt and fish on public lands. The coalition is led by [Trout Unlimited](#), the [Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership](#) and the [National Wildlife Federation](#).