



Mountain biking in Canyonlands National Park | Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

# Best Practices for Balancing Recreation and Energy Development on Our Public Lands



Truck traffic near Dead Horse Point State Park | Photo Credit: Whit Richardson

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# I. Executive Summary

As the recreation economy grows as an economic driver across the country, potential conflicts between the recreation experience and energy development on our federal public lands are increasing. However, there are a variety of tools that can be used—and in many places are already being used—to alleviate these conflicts and optimize public land use. Implementation of these tools both benefits nearby communities and helps goals related to energy production. This paper discusses the characteristics of prosperous communities who are benefitting from thriving recreation economies, and identifies solutions to common problems related to energy developments on federal public lands that impact recreation assets and experiences. As demand for multiple uses of public lands increases, these policies and tools provide options for land managers and local communities to balance energy development and recreation.

The recreation economy is growing like never before and exceeding many other more conventional sectors such as pharmaceuticals and household utilities. Indeed, many case studies exist of local communities that have invested in recreation assets and have successfully diversified and expanded their economic prospects. These locations—such as Moab, Utah, Lander, Wyoming, and Durango, Colorado—attract not only tourists, but also quality of life recruits and new businesses hoping to attract and retain a talented work force. Non-labor income for these communities, such as retirees, is also a significant benefit to communities that have chosen to protect and enhance access to outdoor recreation opportunities.

However, poor land use planning decisions can limit the ability of recreation economies to grow, especially when those decisions fail to account for the impacts that industrial activity and energy development can have on recreation resources. A number of policy solutions are available to federal land man-

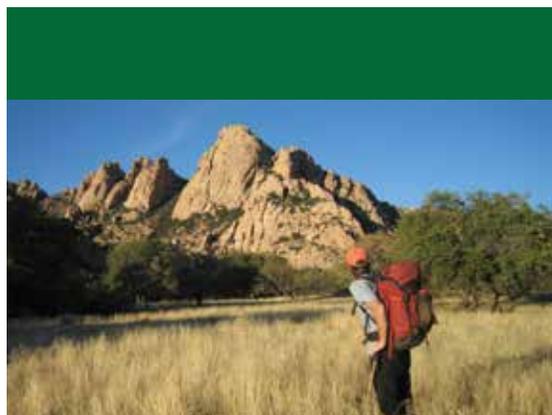
agers to avoid these conflicts and better support communities that currently depend on resource extraction but who would like to build diversity through outdoor recreation opportunities and related economic benefits. These solutions include established planning tools like Master Leasing Plans; utilizing best management practices and technologies; and conducting forward thinking environmental reviews for leasing and development proposals which include identifying and evaluating potential impacts on recreation assets in and around project areas. By considering creative measures to balance development with the protection of recreation assets, such as master development plans and phased leasing and development, communities can supplement existing oil and gas development with long term planning for recreation infrastructure.

Land managers can also better coordinate public input through improved community outreach and workshops that provide more opportunities for synthesizing public input and information related to specific development proposals. State recreation directors, county public land officials, and county sponsored public land committees all increase opportunities for stakeholders to communicate and coordinate with industry and avoid conflicts. Through these efforts, local communities can continue to receive economic benefits from energy development while also building a stable and durable recreation economy.

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Sheepshead, Arizona in the artemoon light | Photo Credit: Jason Keith

## II. Status of Recreation Economies

The outdoor industry is growing like never before and is outperforming all other economic sectors that depend on public land access. In 2017 the Outdoor Industry Association updated their economic numbers which show that outdoor recreation generates over \$887 billion in consumer spending, provides \$65.3 billion in federal tax revenue and \$594 billion in state and local tax revenue, and supports more than 7.6 million jobs nationwide.<sup>1</sup> All this success was acknowledged in 2016 when Congress passed the REC Act, a law ensuring that the outdoor recreation economy, including outdoor industry jobs and associated economic impacts, are measured by the federal government and accounted for as part of the national Gross Domestic Product. Broadly supported bipartisan legislation, the REC Act directs the Department of Commerce to work with the Department of Labor and the land and water management agencies to quantify the outdoor recreation economy and provide annual, objective federal government statistics quantifying the outdoor industry's contributions to the U.S. economy.<sup>2</sup>

These economic benefits are the direct results of 1) specific actions taken by local communities to protect and enhance public access to outdoor recreation, and 2) specific policies that support the success of those actions. Prosperous communities<sup>3</sup> across the country are choosing to invest in access to recreation in natural places, including financial support for trails, rivers, lakes, cliffs and canyons where recreation of all types takes place. These activities include hiking, biking, fishing, hunting, climbing, paddling, motorized recreation and skiing to name just a few. Cities and towns that can offer both citizens and visitors a chance to get outside are seeing increases in visitation along with business recruitment. In the footloose economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many businesses can locate wherever they choose which leads

to economic diversification opportunities for places that were previously dependent on one or two major employers.

In some communities near public lands, the major employer has been related to energy development in the form of coal, oil and/or gas production. As commodity prices for these resources fluctuate, communities suffer in terms of both jobs and royalty revenues that support local budgets. Several states and local county governments are facing budget challenges due to the dramatic drop in fossil fuel prices.<sup>4</sup> State budgets that rely as much as 35% on energy production benefit during boom periods, but suffer significantly during downturns. Many of the top energy producing states have now fallen into recession,<sup>5</sup> and among other budget reduction measures state governments are slashing education budgets.<sup>6</sup>

In light of this dynamic, communities in the West are increasingly looking to outdoor recreation on public lands as a reliable and growing source of revenue. Protected landscapes near communities throughout the country—in particular, the West—offer growing high-tech and service industries a competitive advantage. As the West shifts toward a knowledge-based economy, new research shows that protected federal public lands support faster rates of job growth and are correlated with higher levels of per capita income.<sup>7</sup> These communities attract more non-labor income, such as retirees, and bring advantages related to business recruitment and retainment. Entrepreneurs and talented workers are choosing to live where they can enjoy outdoor recreation and natural landscapes.

Communities that have recreation revenue sources are weathering changes in prices for oil, gas, and coal precisely because they

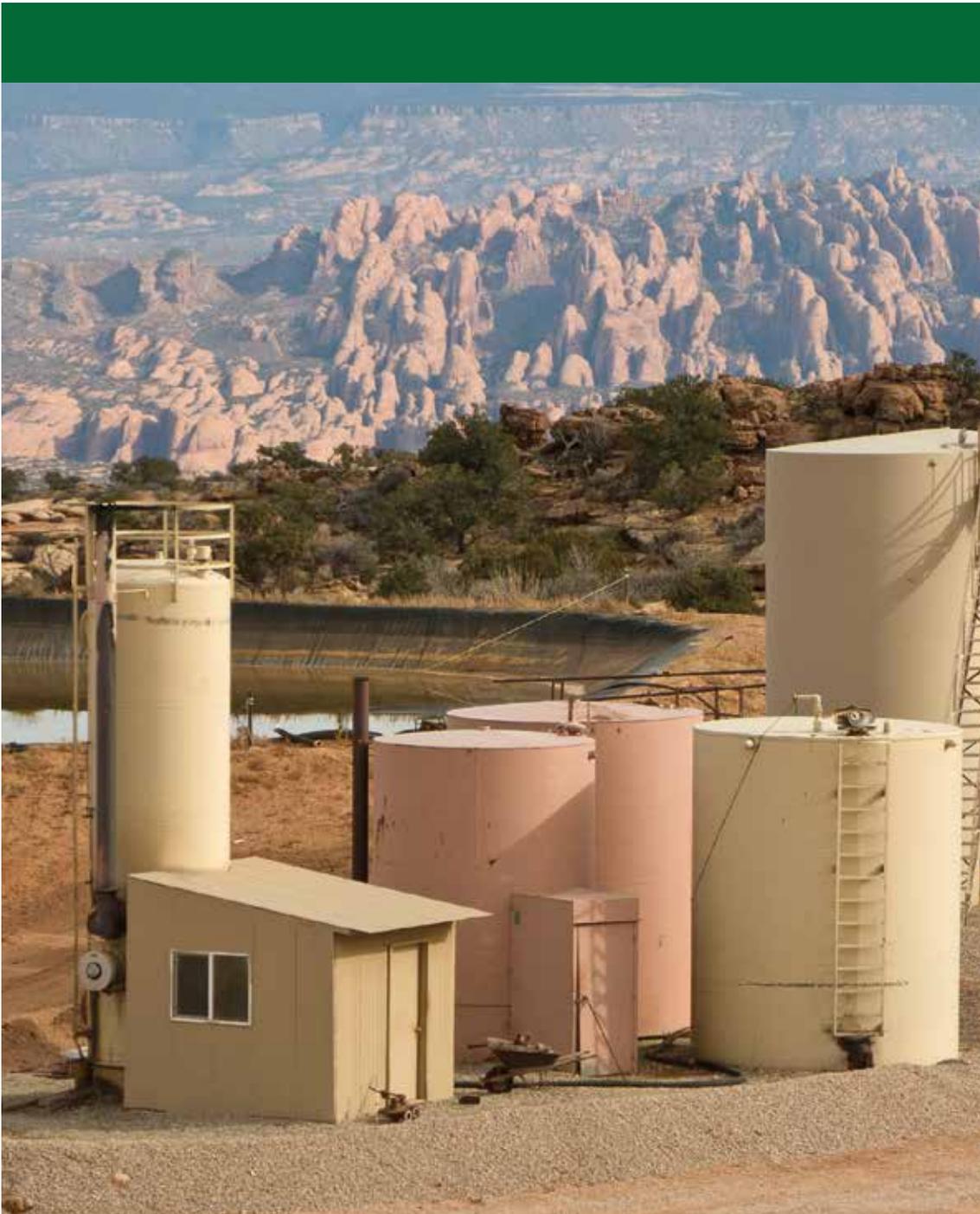
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have alternative economic drivers in the form of both recreation visitors and diverse businesses. By working to balance revenue sources, communities are able to optimize their public lands. One strong example can be found in Durango, Colorado—a community that benefits from recreation and oil and gas. In Durango, citizens formed a trails group called Trails 2000 that has long been work-

ing in partnership with oil and gas interests in the region.<sup>8</sup> In Moab, Utah the recreation economy<sup>9</sup> was well developed when the most recent oil and gas boom led to increased demand for drilling permits and leases in the area.<sup>10</sup> Through careful planning and use of the tools listed below, both communities are now much better prepared for future developments in both energy and recreation.



Oil tanks near Island in the Sky District of Canyonlands National Park | Photo Credit: Whit Richardson

### III. Common Problems from Energy Developments that Impact Recreation Resources on Our Public Lands

A variety of problems can and do result from poorly managing the interface between recreation and resource extraction, including alternative energy installations such as wind and solar. These issues require consideration not just with regard to the general effect of

energy development on the environment in terms of wildlife, air, soil, and water, but with regard to their specific effect on the outdoor experience and related recreation assets. Some common conflicts between energy development and recreation activity include:

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If access roads cross trails at multiple points, the trail experience can be significantly impacted. In addition, in places like climbing areas, waterfronts, or camping areas where visitors remain in the same place for extensive periods of time, noise, dust, and congestion from nearby road traffic can undermine the outdoor experience.

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Placement and design of **industrial infrastructure** and necessary access roads. If access roads cross trails at multiple points, the trail experience can be significantly impacted. In addition, in places like climbing areas, waterfronts, or camping areas where visitors remain in the same place for extensive periods of time, noise, dust, and congestion from nearby road traffic can undermine the outdoor experience. For example, these issues remain a serious concern for the Big Flat area north of Canyonlands National Park in Utah where climbers spend much of the day on nearby cliffs, and mountain bikers cross roads in multiple nearby places.<sup>11</sup> As the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has recognized, the presence of infrastructure and traffic related to energy development in recreation areas can “create poor road conditions, industrial level traffic, and fugitive dust that could degrade the recreation experiences and could conflict with recreational use. . . .”<sup>12</sup>

**Views of surrounding landscapes** are an important component of any outdoor experience, including those from national parks. Poorly designed infrastructure—such as power lines and pipelines—can extensively degrade iconic views. For instance, this is a problem for oil and gas development near Cortez and Durango, Colorado, where recent oil and gas proposals potentially affect views from Mesa Verde National Park. The La Plata County Commissioners echoed this concern while considering a plan for as much as 3,000 new oil and gas wells in the area.<sup>13</sup> The degradation of adjacent lands can also have a significant impact on visitation numbers.<sup>14</sup> In the Moab Master Leasing Plan the Bureau of Land Management acknowledged the effect of nearby drilling on visitation to Dinosaur National Monument: “In Uintah County, for example, Dinosaur National Monument (a major recreation amenity) has seen a decline in visitation of over 40 percent from 1999-2014 (1999 being the year in which Uintah County reversed years of declining oil and gas production); oil production increased over 358 percent during the same time period. During that time period, natural gas production increased over 339 percent.”<sup>15</sup> This shows that poorly planned development can impact recreation resources not only on BLM-managed project areas, but also on adjacent lands, including national parks and other recreation areas managed by local, state, and federal agencies.

**Safety of visitors** and industry employees must be considered at places where the two are expected to interact. For example, in 2017 the oil and gas industry nominated lease parcels just outside of Zion National Park that, if issued, could lead to safety concerns on mountain bike trails that currently go directly through one of the parcels. This and many other concerns about the affect on the national park led the Washington County Commissioners to vote unanimously on a resolution that raises concerns for oil and gas leasing on these parcels.<sup>16</sup> In similar situations elsewhere, the BLM has acknowledged the safety concerns presented by encouraging development in recreation areas, stating that “ac-

idents/injuries could occur," particularly without additional measures to protect recreation users. Noise, smell, air quality concerns from industrial operations can also affect outdoor visitors including the potential for oil and gas spills. These problems have posed a continual threat to visitors to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota where visitation to the Maah Daah Hey Trail decreased amid concerns about safety and air quality around oil well pads.<sup>17</sup>

**Noise, smell, air quality concerns** from industrial operations can also affect outdoor visitors including the potential for oil and gas spills. These problems have posed a continual threat to visitors to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota where visitation to the Maah Daah Hey Trail decreased amid concerns about safety and air quality around oil well pads.<sup>18</sup>

**Water quality** is another important consideration in places where people will have direct contact with the water. On May 20, 2014 an oil production well began leaking 100 barrels per hour into a dry wash near the Green River, and a subsequent storm pushed the crude oil into the river itself. This section of the river between the town of Green River, Utah and Canyonlands National Park—Labyrinth Canyon—is a popular paddling destination.<sup>19</sup>

Successful communities have worked to ensure that the outdoor experiences available near them meet visitor expectations in terms of quality. If there are concerns about too much traffic, the possibility of low air quality, the degradation of views, to name a few, the "product" or experience is seen to be inferior to that which may be available in another location. Well-managed communities have developed their own brands with regard to the experiences they can offer. If federal land managers do not appropriately balance energy development with the need to preserve these experiences, long-term damage can result making it more challenging for a

community to attract either visitors or residents when resource extraction operations have run their course.

As recreation revenues grow in communities with public lands, development proponents can expect protests, legal challenges, and delays if the need to maintain quality outdoor experiences is ignored or minimized.<sup>20</sup> Businesses that depend on visitation to multiple use public lands are likely to get increasingly involved if the quality of outdoor experiences which their customers demand is not maintained.

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Mountain biking at Amasa Back near Moab, Utah | Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

## IV. Legal Framework for Managing Recreation as a Multiple Use of Public Lands

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**As outdoor recreation grows as a “principle” and increasingly economically important use of our public lands, recreation assets should be given the same level of consideration during land use planning as energy development.**

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Outdoor recreation is one of the “principal” or “major” uses of public lands, alongside grazing, energy development, fish and wildlife, rights-of-way, and timber production.<sup>21</sup> This principle, set forth in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), clearly places outdoor recreation on equal footing with development and other multiples uses. While the multiple use principle provides the overarching framework for managing public lands, the development of oil, gas, and coal on federal lands is governed primarily by the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920<sup>22</sup> and the Energy Policy Act of 2005.<sup>23</sup> A multi-step approval process determines whether specific lands may be leased; however, FLPMA, along with the Multiple Use - Sustained Yield Act of 1960<sup>24</sup> (MUSY), requires that BLM and USFS managers administer federal public lands “for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes.” Further, under the multiple use mandate of FLPMA, BLM must “balance” the management of those resources<sup>25</sup> and not “prioritize development over other uses.”<sup>26</sup>

Under MUSY “multiple use” is defined as the “management of all the various renewable surface resources ... so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people ...”<sup>27</sup> “Sustained yield” is defined as “the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high-level annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of the national forests without impairment of the productivity of the land.”<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, any one use of federal public lands cannot impair the productivity of another use. Thus, MUSY is the first law to have the five major uses of [public lands] contained in one law equally, with no one use given greater preference over any other, and with an emphasis on balanced land use planning to address the often competing interests and sometimes conflicting uses.

In 1976 Congress passed two more laws affecting management priorities of each agency: the FLPMA<sup>29</sup> for the BLM and the National Forest Management Act<sup>30</sup> (NFMA) for the United States Forest Service (USFS). Both these laws reaffirmed the multiple use mandate of MUSY;

NMFA, among other directives, prescribed how the USFS is to prepare its land use plans and “in particular, include coordination of outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, and wilderness” and “insure consideration of the economic and environmental aspects of various systems of renewable resource management, including ... to provide for outdoor recreation (including wilderness), range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish.”<sup>31</sup> In FLPMA Congress declared that “the public lands be managed in a manner ... [to] preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition; that will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals; and that will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use.” Neither NFMA nor FLPMA diminished the MUSY mandate that no multiple use has priority over any other. Under all these laws federal land agencies have promulgated regulations that are intended to carry out the directives of each law and which reflect a wide range of discretion regarding place-based specifics for managing multiple uses. As outdoor recreation grows as a “principle” and increasingly economically important use of our public lands, recreation assets should be given the same level of consideration during land use planning as energy development.

Many of the challenges described in this paper can be avoided through improved planning, better coordination with public stakeholders and implementation of best practices, both with regard to energy development and recreation management. As leases are sold and trails are designed, programs that encourage coordination between energy companies and recreation interests can lead to pro-active energy development in both traditional and alternative sources, while simultaneously planning for current and future recreation. Unlike other public land values like wildlife habitat or archeological sites, there are no organic acts like the Endangered Species Act or the Antiquities Act whose purpose it is to protect recreation assets. As a result, the need to protect recreation resources when planning for energy development by employing the correct tools, practices and technologies takes on even greater importance.

## V. Solutions and Policy Recommendations

As noted above, competing uses can sometimes diminish the recreation experience. However, there exist several planning tools, best practices, improved technologies, and public engagement strategies that federal land managers and local communities adjacent to BLM and USFS lands can employ to safeguard recreation resources and support lasting recreation economies. Smart from the start planning tools such as Master Leasing Plans are an established, proven mechanism for protecting recreation assets on BLM lands while bringing diverse local stakeholders together to achieve, balanced common-sense solutions.

### A. Planning Tools

Several planning tools exist that can help effectively balance energy development and the need to protect and enhance recreation opportunities.<sup>32</sup>

#### Master Leasing Plans

A Master Leasing Plan is a proven approach from the BLM that helps minimize conflicts and achieve an optimal balance between development and the protection of outdoor recreation and other multiple uses. Master Leasing Plans are already helping to resolve long-standing conflicts between development and outdoor recreation in several places around the West, including around Dinosaur National Monument in Colorado and Arches National Park in Utah.

Master Leasing Plans work by employing a smart from the start process that includes early and often coordination with local stakeholders, including recreation users and businesses that may be operating in the planning area. This coordination, along with creative approaches to managing development and resolving conflicts, are the hallmark of MLPs which allow operators to efficiently develop

oil and gas resources without encountering surprises such as the presence of bike trails or the realization that a well pad is within the viewshed of a nearby state or national park. This also provides recreation-focused businesses and communities with the certainty that development will not harm key recreation assets that attract tourists and generate important revenue. By identifying and analyzing these concerns up front and developing a leasing plan that addresses these issues before a parcel is auctioned and a lease is awarded, development can proceed more efficiently.

In many cases, what is best for the operator is also best for the recreation asset. In places where existing well pads are present, directional drilling from these pads can be cost effective while limiting additional surface occupancy on nearby areas. Appropriate well pad design in terms of tank height, paint color, and utilization of natural features such as ridge lines and natural depressions can also be identified more effectively if potential effects on viewsheds are determined in advance. These kind of measures can be mapped out in an MLP, such as the widely supported plan for the Moab area which provides ample opportunities for new resource development while also protecting the popular recreation locations that bring visitors back to Moab every year. In Moab, local residents and businesses know their recreation amenities form the bedrock of the highly successful local recreation economy which brings in over \$200 million each year, and this is why local government and 75 Utah-based businesses enthusiastically supported this plan.

#### Other Conflict-Avoiding Planning Tools

To avoid problems between competing multiple uses the BLM can guide energy

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development and limit negative impacts on recreation and other non-energy resources by utilizing planning tools that are specifically designed to avoid conflicts and ensure an appropriate balance between outdoor recreation, development and other multiple uses of the public lands. By including the types of details included in the MLP process, a large variety of conflicts and development challenges can be avoided, thereby allowing communities to have the benefit of resource development and begin preparing for increased demand for outdoor access. Some additional measures that BLM can use and has successfully used to protect recreational resources include:

### **Master Development Plans and Unit Agreements**

In areas where a significant amount of new drilling is expected, the BLM can require that operators and lessees coordinate construction of new roads, rigs and other infrastructure to minimize impacts to recreation resources and the broader landscape. Master Development Plans can provide a more localized blueprint for coordinated drilling and development activity on a smaller scale than a Master Leasing Plan. A Master Development Plan addresses two or more applications for a permit to drill (APDs) that share a common drilling plan (Surface Use Plan of Operations, and plans for future development and production). Submitting a Master Development Plan facilitates early planning, orderly development, and the cumulative effects analysis for all the APDs expected to be drilled by an operator in a developing field. For example, as part of a new planning process<sup>35</sup> the BLM is currently considering the use of Master Development Plans to reduce impacts to water resources that are popular with anglers in the South Park area of Colorado, where hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation are generating almost \$17 million in annual revenues.<sup>36</sup> BLM is also requiring the use of MDPs around Dinosaur National Monument as a means of limiting infrastructure and visual and auditory impacts.

Similarly, where oil and gas operators are accessing a common reservoir of minerals, BLM can require, or operators can voluntarily agree, to “unitize” their leases. Under a unit agreement, multiple leaseholders agree to cooperatively develop minerals, which generally reduces the amount of wells and other infrastructure required. This in turn can minimize conflicts with other multiple uses. Master development plans and unit agreements are both planning tools that, when used appropriately and include specific protections for outdoor recreation and other multiple uses, can reduce conflicts in areas projected for high resource development.

### **Development Density Limits**

In recreational areas open to energy development, BLM can limit the allowable density of well pads, production facilities, pipelines and utilities to protect recreational uses and experiences. The BLM is currently considering this type of development density restriction to protect recreation areas on federal lands in the San Rafael Desert west of Canyonlands National Park.<sup>37</sup>

### **Phased Leasing and Development**

Phased leasing and development allow the BLM to prioritize new leasing and energy development authorizations on lands with industry interest and high potential for successful energy development and low levels of conflict with other resource values. BLM adopted such an approach in the Dinosaur Trail MLP, where it has prioritized leasing on higher development potential lands away from Dinosaur National Monument before leasing on lands with lower potential for successful development and closer to the Monument. Similarly, in the Absaroka Front, where migrating herds of big game from the nearby Yellowstone National Park attract sportsmen and wildlife watchers from across the country, the BLM is employing phased leasing to limit development in the most important habitats. By issuing leases incrementally through a strategic geographic

approach, land managers can limit the degree of impacts to a planning area while also allowing for responsible resource development.

All of these planning tools provide land managers an opportunity to better analyze planning areas through landscape level plans and consider ahead of time whether conflicts between multiple uses can be reduced or eliminated. In particular, MLPs are proven effective strategies for ensuring that appropriate oil and gas development can go forward while protecting recreation experiences.

## B. Implementation of Best Practices and Improved Technologies

After the planning stage when development proposals are made, the BLM and operators can also limit impacts to nearby recreational resources by adopting best management practices and improved technologies. A range of options is available to federal land managers and oil and gas developers to minimize their impacts to local communities and other public land uses, including:

- Alternatives to pits used to store hydraulic fracturing fluids, produced water, and other drilling materials; containment tanks or closed loop drilling systems should be considered
- Directional drilling to minimize surface occupancy and consolidate drill rigs and pumps as a means of limiting surface impacts
- Technologies that minimize methane leaking and flaring to prevent wasteful, unnecessary and harmful emissions, and reduce light pollution
- Other strategies to limit air, noise, and water pollution, and to limit visual impacts

These best management practices,<sup>38</sup> which can and should be evaluated at the development stage given BLM's broad authority and

obligation to manage for outdoor recreation and other multiple uses, are all drilling/development techniques that allow for smaller surface disturbance, the ability to access multiple locations in a reservoir, and reduce emissions and impacts on recreation assets while simultaneously helping to avoid conflicts and costly delays.<sup>39</sup>

## C. Engaging the Public and Key Stakeholders Early and Often in Planning for Energy Development

Land managers should consider creating communication opportunities for recreation interests, business owners and investors, and resource extraction companies to optimize multiple land uses and foresee and address potential conflicts with energy development. Through detailed on the ground conversations with stakeholders knowledgeable about local needs and conditions, many conflicts can be avoided and stakeholder goals maximized.

### Community Workshops

A productive method that land managers can pursue is to conduct—themselves or with a 3rd party facilitator—workshops bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss proposed plans for energy development on public lands. Many communities, like Moab, Utah, boast popular recreation opportunities in addition to significant potential for energy development. In an effort to assess current and future land uses in the Moab area the BLM pursued its Master Leasing Plan to provide planning and analysis prior to new leasing of oil, gas and potash. To support this community conversation and collaborative process, the Keystone Policy Center facilitated two Moab Master Leasing Plan Stakeholder Mapping workshops in 2014<sup>40</sup> that were independent of the BLM's formal MLP process. These workshops brought together a comprehensive range stakeholders, along with federal land managers, to share and discuss map data lay-

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ers reflecting their conservation, recreation, and energy and mineral development interests within the Moab MLP area. The workshops enabled participants to better understand the various concerns and interests held by each stakeholder.

Keystone's work resulted in a final report in April 2014 outlining the various stakeholders' detailed needs and perspectives on specific regions within the MLP planning area ahead of the BLM's formal process.<sup>41</sup> This in turn greatly informed the BLM's decision making process, brought meaningful protections to recreation experiences, and avoided unnecessary conflicts between outdoor enthusiasts and energy developers in the region.

## **Enhancing Information Sharing and NEPA Processes**

The BLM has in place a strong foundation for providing the public with information and opportunities to engage in the NEPA process for proposed energy development.<sup>42</sup> This includes several opportunities for the public and key stakeholders to review and provide comments on proposed leases and the preparation of environmental analyses for those leases. The BLM also shares critical information, including GIS data, maps, and reports about proposed leases, that allows recreation users and businesses to identify potential conflicts, such as mountain bike trails, camping areas, and OHV routes before leases are issued. Doing so not only helps ensure that BLM has the right protections in place for recreations assets, but also avoids conflicts down the road when leases are proposed for development. The BLM should build on this existing framework to enhance the information that is being shared with the public about development proposals, and create more and better opportunities to engage with the public and stakeholders.

## **County Public Land Officials**

To date many counties that are fortunate enough to have full time public land employ-

ees, do not include recreation management in that person's job description. Traditionally, industry representatives have been much more present and engaged in county activities and have thus been the primary focus of county public land officials. However, as local businesses and their investors learn more about risks to recreation assets on public lands which could affect their investment or relocation decisions, they will be increasingly active at the county level. Similar trends are being seen with recreation groups, such as mountain biking or climbing clubs and advocacy groups. Counties have the opportunity to be liaisons to recreation interests and take responsible steps to protect income-generating recreation assets on nearby public lands. But this will require an explicit commitment by local governments to require public land officials to communicate regularly, not just with extractive industry representatives, but also with recreation interests and others who depend on our public lands. In addition, counties should take steps to support policies that foster a supportive business environment for outdoor recreation, including the protection of recreation assets. An example of this is in Utah's Emery County where a fulltime staff position actively conducts field checks and monitors a wide range of activities to optimize public land uses and ensure that development proposals do not unnecessarily conflict with other uses such as recreation and events.<sup>43</sup>

## **County Sponsored Public Land Committees**

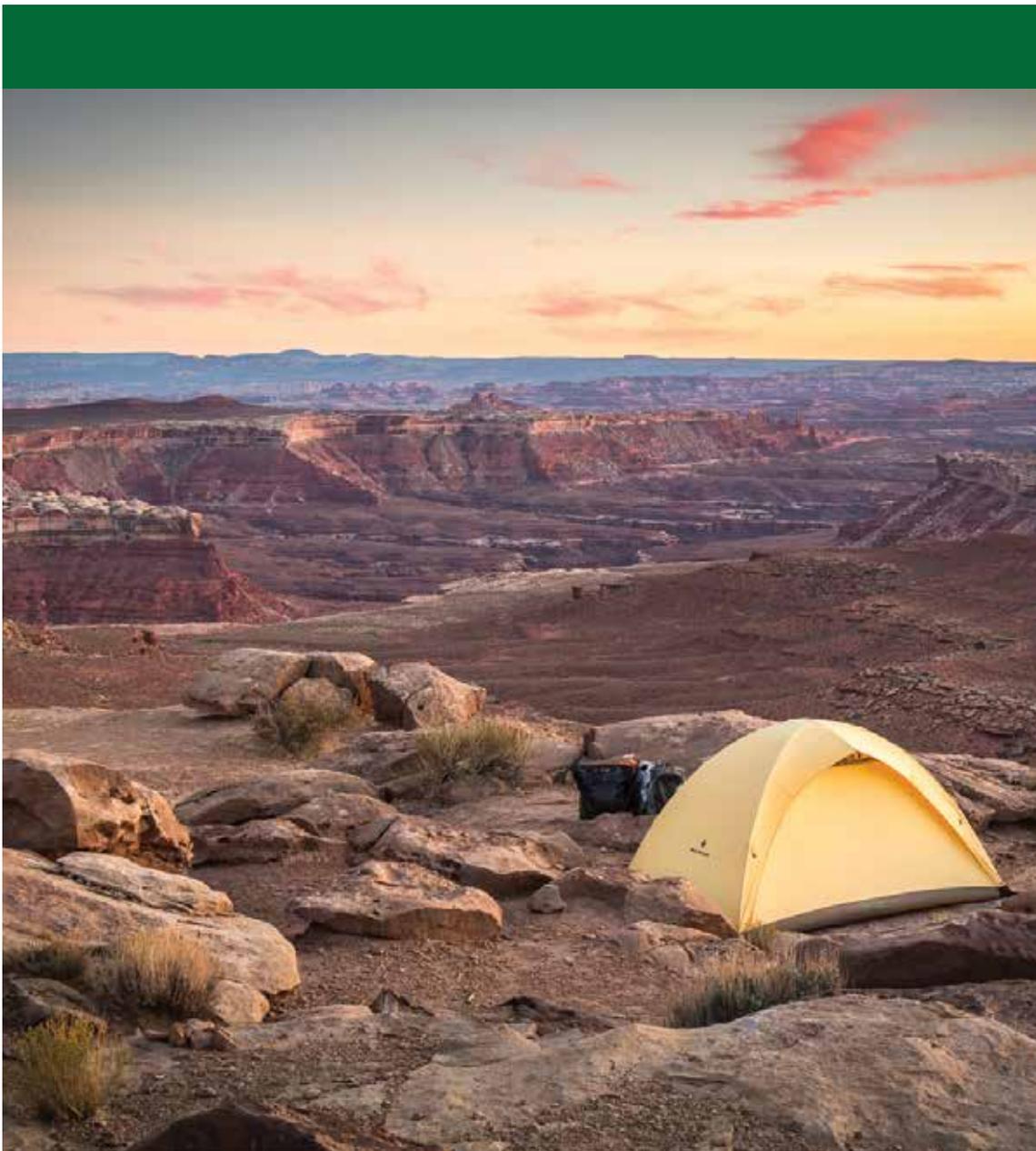
County sponsored public land committees are generally populated by volunteers, sometimes with a paid volunteer coordinator. Often they begin with a particular focus on trails for both motorized and non-motorized use, but on occasion the need for additional public land discussion can lead to groups with a broader focus. Monthly committee meetings allow the public to interface with county and public land officials at regular intervals, as opposed to only when there is a crisis or during an official

public comment period. Information exchanged and relationships built via county sponsored public land committees, can provide a regular platform to optimize the needs of all public land users including groups involved in conservation, recreation, and resource extraction. An example of this type of county-based trails committee is the Grand County-sponsored Trailmix committee based in Moab, Utah.<sup>44</sup>

## Supporting State Recreation Directors

Public land decisions greatly affect nearby communities, and more and more states are

hiring recreation directors to lead projects related to economic development in their states, and to coordinate with state energy departments.<sup>45</sup> Currently Washington, Colorado and Utah have state recreation directors; these officials work to better incorporate the recreation economy needs of their communities with those of industry for improved long-term public land management. By working to recognize and address the changing needs of the public land system, state recreation directors can coordinate the needs of the industry with those of the growing recreation economy.



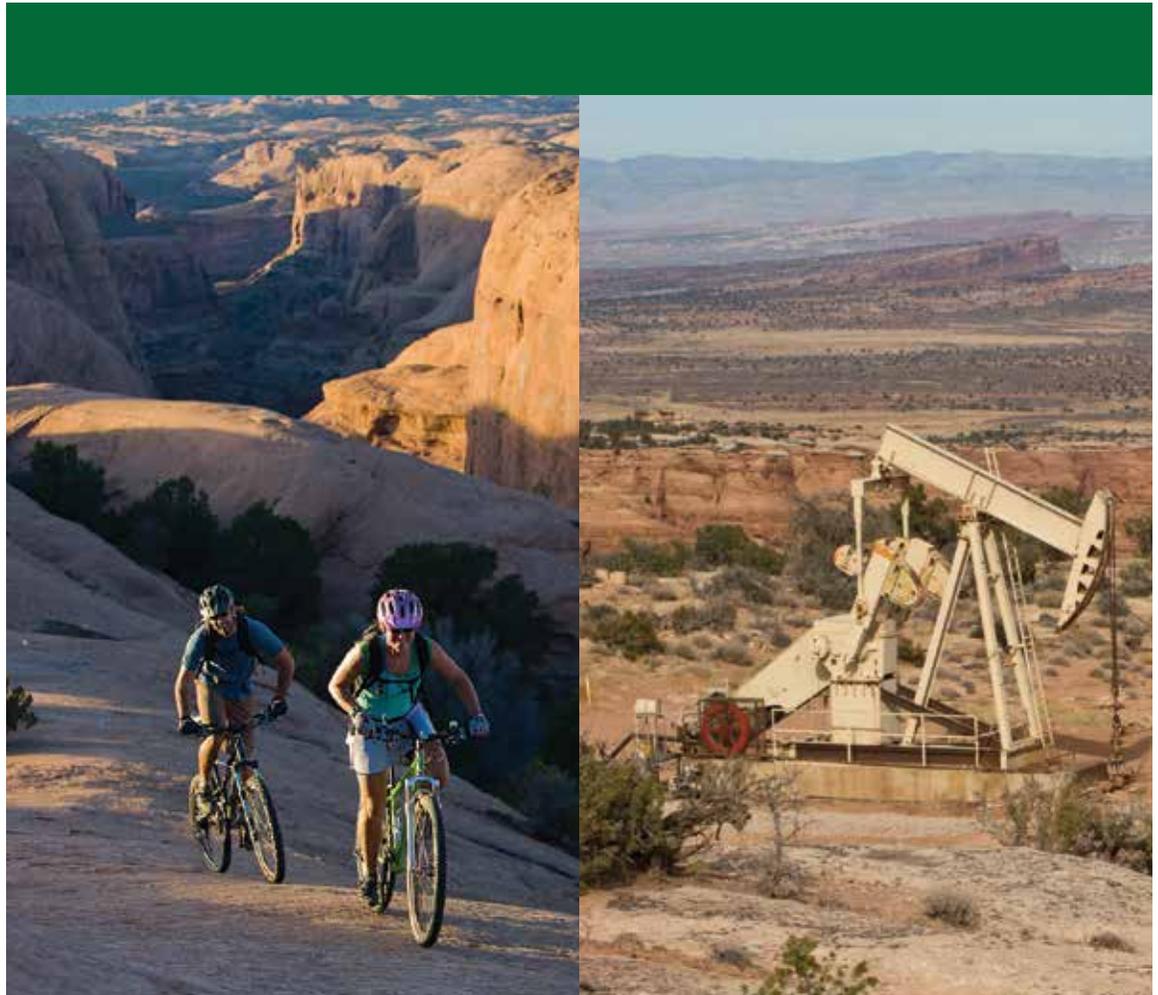
| Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

## VI. Conclusion

The economic and quality of life benefits that recreation brings to communities across the country are growing with each year. The recreation economy now boasts over \$887 billion in consumer spending and many communities are choosing to invest in recreation assets as a way to diversify their local economies. However, while federal law requires that land agencies provide equal opportunities for multiple uses of public lands—including recreation—energy development can negatively impact recreation experiences and limit associated economic and health benefits. The good news is that many of the common problems brought by energy developments on recreation assets and experiences can be ameliorated through proven approaches such as smart from the start landscape level planning, the implementation of best practices,

improved technologies, and better communication among stakeholders.

Communities are demanding more from their public lands. They expect both mineral lease royalties and recreation assets. Poorly planned energy development has brought short-term booms to residents, but it has also left them with fewer options when either the resource price drops or the resource is exhausted. Local land managers and community leaders can utilize the policy recommendations outlined in this report to support appropriate energy production and meet the goals of communities who wish to diversify their public land use with investments in recreation assets. This will ensure that communities of all types are able to optimize nearby public lands today and into the future.

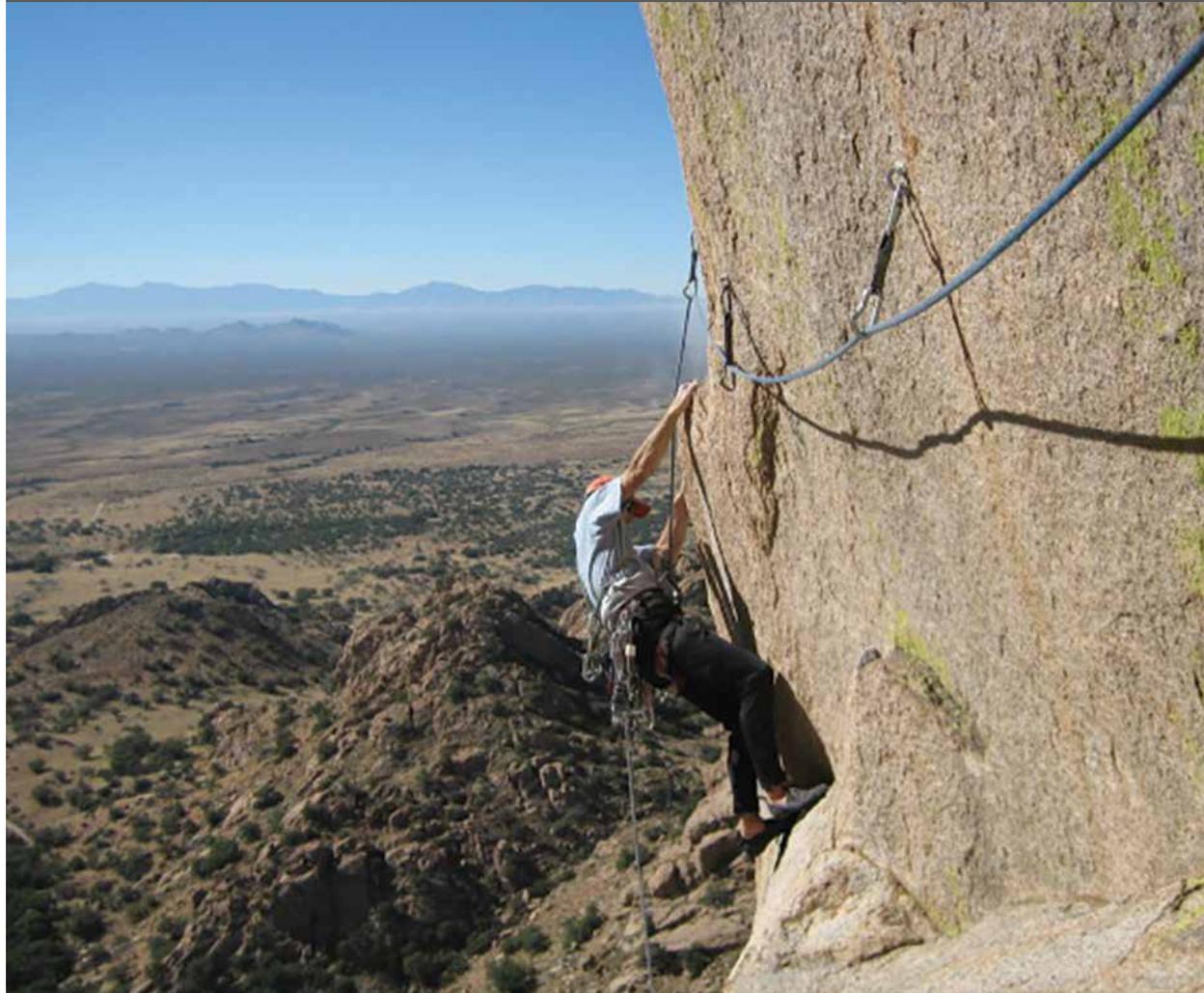


Slickrock Trail near Moab, Utah | Photo Credit: Western Spirit Cycling

Oil well near Long Canyon, Utah | Photo Credit: Whit Richardson

# End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See <https://outdoorindustry.org>.
- <sup>2</sup> See <https://outdoorindustry.org/article/policy-blog-senate-votes-to-count-outdoor-recreation-economy-as-part-of-u-s-gdp/>.
- <sup>3</sup> See <http://publiclandsolutions.org/pci/>.
- <sup>4</sup> See <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=24512> and <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/state-fiscal-implications-of-fossil-fuel-production-0809216-morris.pdf>.
- <sup>5</sup> See <http://www.cnbc.com/2016/04/18/painful-transition-for-energy-states-as-oil-revenues-evaporate.html>.
- <sup>6</sup> See <http://westernvaluesproject.org/report-states-need-more-resilient-public-lands-economies/> and <http://www.nakedcapitalism.com/2017/03/oil-gas-states-forced-cut-education-spending.html>.
- <sup>7</sup> See <https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/west-is-best-value-of-public-lands/>.
- <sup>8</sup> See <https://www.trails2000.org>.
- <sup>9</sup> See <http://www.discovermoab.com>.
- <sup>10</sup> See <https://thinkprogress.org/obama-administration-proposes-first-ever-protections-for-recreation-lands-near-moab-utah-68ca82e7472>.
- <sup>11</sup> See [http://www.moabsunnews.com/news/article\\_5c8e6134-474c-11e5-9b94-0b6727cec4cc.html](http://www.moabsunnews.com/news/article_5c8e6134-474c-11e5-9b94-0b6727cec4cc.html).
- <sup>12</sup> See Moab MLP FEIS Chapter 4, p. 4-61. [https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/projects/lup/68430/87868/105214/MLP\\_FEIS\\_Chapter-4.pdf](https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/projects/lup/68430/87868/105214/MLP_FEIS_Chapter-4.pdf).
- <sup>13</sup> See <https://the-journal.com/articles/1825-where-to-put-3-000-new-gas-wells-in-southwest-colorado>.
- <sup>14</sup> See <http://westernvaluesproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Parks-Drilling-Report-8-24-16-.pdf>.
- <sup>15</sup> See Moab MLP FEIS Chapter 4, p. 4-106. [https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/projects/lup/68430/87868/105214/MLP\\_FEIS\\_Chapter-4.pdf](https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/projects/lup/68430/87868/105214/MLP_FEIS_Chapter-4.pdf).
- <sup>16</sup> See [https://www.eenews.net/assets/2017/02/13/document\\_gw\\_06.pdf](https://www.eenews.net/assets/2017/02/13/document_gw_06.pdf).
- <sup>17</sup> BLM, EA for Aug. 2014 Oil and Gas Lease Sale.
- <sup>18</sup> See <http://insideenergy.org/2014/10/09/oil-development-impacts-on-theodore-roosevelt-national-park/>.
- <sup>19</sup> See <https://deq.utah.gov/locations/G/greenriver/greenriversaltwash.htm>.
- <sup>20</sup> For example, see <https://www.stgeorgeutah.com/news/archive/2017/03/13/jla-over-40000-comments-received-on-zion-national-park-oil-gas-leasing-proposal/#.W0ZrvVKZPAw> and <http://www.sltrib.com/home/5035984-155/park-service-local-governments-decry-oil>.
- <sup>21</sup> See 43 U.S.C. § 1701(l).
- <sup>22</sup> See <http://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/mla.pdf>.
- <sup>23</sup> See <https://www.congress.gov/109/plaws/publ58/PLAW-109publ58.pdf>.
- <sup>24</sup> See Multiple-Use and Sustained Yield Act of 1960, Public Law 86-517, 86th Congress (June 12, 1960), § 4(b).
- <sup>25</sup> See 43 U.S.C. § 1702(c).
- <sup>26</sup> See *New Mexico ex rel. Richardson v. BLM*, 565 F.3d 683, 710 (10th Cir. 2009).
- <sup>27</sup> See Multiple-Use and Sustained Yield Act of 1960, Public Law 86-517, 86th Congress (June 12, 1960), § 4(b).
- <sup>28</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>29</sup> See <https://www.blm.gov/or/regulations/files/FLPMA.pdf>.
- <sup>30</sup> See <https://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/includes/NFMA1976.pdf>.
- <sup>31</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>32</sup> Most of these options are discussed in the Dinosaur Trail MLP at p. 2-45 [https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/projects/lup/65266/79043/91308/2015\\_Oil\\_and\\_Gas\\_Development\\_RMPA\\_ROD.pdf](https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/projects/lup/65266/79043/91308/2015_Oil_and_Gas_Development_RMPA_ROD.pdf).
- <sup>33</sup> See <http://publiclandsolutions.org/city-of-moab-thanks-bureau-of-land-management-for-balanced-final-moab-master-leasing-plan/>.
- <sup>34</sup> See <http://publiclandsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Moab-MLP-DEIS-Business-Letter-111315.pdf>
- <sup>35</sup> See <https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/planAndProjectSite.do?methodName=dispatchToPatternPage&currentPageId=53991>.
- <sup>36</sup> See <http://www.ourpubliclands.org/news/sportsmen-blm-right-track-plan-cos-south-park>.
- <sup>37</sup> See [https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/projects/nepa/61781/93139/112238/SRD\\_MLP\\_Appendix\\_B\\_-\\_Public\\_Review.pdf](https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/projects/nepa/61781/93139/112238/SRD_MLP_Appendix_B_-_Public_Review.pdf) at p. 9.
- <sup>38</sup> [http://www.oilandgasbmps.org/docs/GEN161-DirectionalDrilling\\_BCA.pdf](http://www.oilandgasbmps.org/docs/GEN161-DirectionalDrilling_BCA.pdf).
- <sup>39</sup> <http://www.oilandgasbmps.org/resources/development.php>.
- <sup>40</sup> See <https://www.keystone.org/our-work/environment/moab-master-leasing-plan/>.
- <sup>41</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>42</sup> See BLM Instruction Memorandum 2010-117.
- <sup>43</sup> See <http://www.emerycounty.com/publiclands/index.htm>.
- <sup>44</sup> See <http://www.grandcountyutah.net/223/Trail-Mix-Committee>.
- <sup>45</sup> See <http://business.utah.gov/programs/outdoor/>.



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