

Thank you for your comment, Melody Harrison.

The comment tracking number that has been assigned to your comment is OST2012D50249.

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OSTS 2012 Draft PEIS

Comment ID: OST2012D50249

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Privacy Preference: Don't withhold name or address from public record

Attachment: PEIS Comments 2012.doc

Comment Submitted:

See Attached send on behalf of the New Castle Town Council



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Adopted by the New Castle Town Council at their regular meeting on May 1, 2012

Re: Town of New Castle, Colorado
2012 Oil Shale & Tar Sands PEIS - COMMENTS
To be submitted via: <http://ostseis.anl.gov/involve/comments/index.cfm>

The Town Council of the Town of New Castle appreciates the Bureau of Land Management's review of past decisions regarding oil shale leasing and development and offers the following comments:

The Town of New Castle, Colorado (population 4,500) sits at the western edge of the Rocky Mountains, just east of the oil-shale rich Piceance Basin. When commercial development of oil shale finally occurs, our community and region will be impacted by an economic boom just as it was in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Unfortunately, in 1982, our community was also impacted by the oil shale bust that resulted in an economic depression in our region that spanned close to two decades.

In recent years our community and region has been heavily impacted by natural gas exploration and production occurring in nearby private and public lands. Natural gas development has brought significant growth to our community and placed considerable demands upon our municipal infrastructure, resulted in a shortage of affordable housing and essential community workforce, caused material and labor costs to skyrocket and strained social services and law enforcement capacities. Full-blown commercial development of oil shale will likely have similar and greater impacts on our community and region.

Furthermore, the Town of New Castle jealously guards our water supply, clean air, open space and nearby BLM land. We will seek assurance that whatever technology is developed for oil shale extraction includes safeguards for the resources we value. In particular we fear the loss of scarce water supplies. The Town returns a large percentage of the water we withdraw for consumption back into the Colorado River. We are concerned that oil shale extraction technologies might consume water that cannot be returned to the ecosystem. We believe that more research is needed to develop technologies that have smaller impact on Western Slope water supplies.

Finally, in our attempt to avoid another oil/gas industry boom and bust, New Castle is working hard to diversify our economy. A major part of that diversification is to encourage recreational tourism, exploiting the Town's easy access to the Flat Top Range and the hunting, fishing, hiking, camping and other recreational opportunities provided by the rich environment of our public lands. We oppose any industrialization which might harm this environment.

While the Town has maintained a good relationship with the oil and gas industry and is supportive of well-regulated extraction, we urge the BLM to insist that research and development of oil shale technologies be completed and the impacts analyzed before moving forward with a commercial leasing program. Such analysis must include study of the economic, social and environmental impacts on affected communities.

At this time it makes sense to endorse Alternative 3, limiting commercial development to the existing lease areas. We could also support Alternative 2(b), since it requires research before commercial licenses are issued. The final plan should reflect a common sense approach that protects the prosperity of our region.