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## Sportsmen groups praise Roan Plateau settlement

*Call it ‘major step forward’ in effort to conserve backcountry hunting and fishing lands*

SILT, Colo. – Sportsmen’s groups today praised an announced settlement with the Bureau of Land Management and energy lease holders that includes several measures to help protect the Roan Plateau, a backcountry area prized as a fish and wildlife oasis and a cornerstone of the area’s economy.

The settlement resolves litigation in which Trout Unlimited, the National Wildlife Federation and others were represented by Earthjustice and Western Resource Advocates. Under terms of the settlement, BLM would cancel the majority of oil and gas leases on top of the Roan Plateau, including all of those in the Trapper and Northwater Creek watersheds, areas that encompass the best cutthroat trout habitat on the Roan. In addition, the BLM will consider a management plan alternative that would allow for some limited development on remaining leases, precludes new leasing on top of the plateau for the life of the plan, and conserves important big game habitat at the base of the Roan.

“This is a major step forward in years-long efforts to protect one of Colorado’s outdoor treasures,” said David Nickum, executive director of Colorado Trout Unlimited. “It shows that, working together, we can craft a win-win management solution that preserves the Roan’s most valuable fish and wildlife habitat undisturbed, while allowing careful, responsible development of its energy reserves.”

“The Roan, with its valuable fish and wildlife habitat at the top and base, is crucial to maintaining the area’s rich wildlife diversity,” said Suzanne O’Neill, executive director of the Colorado Wildlife Federation. “The Roan Plateau is also a key part of the area economy and helps sustain the hunting, fishing, wildlife watching and other recreation. We appreciate a balanced settlement that will help to protect this important habitat.”

The Roan is a last best place that holds in its small streams rare populations of genetically pure Colorado River cutthroat trout—a species found in less than 10 percent of its historic range. Public lands on the plateau’s top and at its base are popular for big game hunting and provide key summer and winter range and migration corridors for large herds of mule deer and elk.

The region is also rich in energy resources and dotted with oil and gas development sites, making the Roan Plateau one of the last patches of intact wildlife habitat in the Piceance Basin. More than 75 percent of the surrounding Piceance Basin is already available for oil and gas leasing, including roughly half of the federal minerals in the Roan Plateau Planning Area.

“With half of the Roan leased or available for leasing, there will continue to be oil and gas development in the area for decades to come. What this settlement does is give us the opportunity to protect the other half of the Roan Plateau,” said Nickum. “The half that provides crucial habitat for deer and elk, clean waters for Colorado River cutthroat trout, and backcountry hunting and angling opportunities for folks from around the country.”

A 2012 federal court ruled that the BLM’s proposed 2008 management plan for energy leasing failed to consider more protective development options and didn’t adequately consider the impacts of oil and gas drilling on air quality. The BLM’s plan projected up to 1,500 wells during 20 years, although industry representatives said more than 4,000 new wells could be drilled. Under either scenario, high-value fish and wildlife habitat would have been damaged or forever lost.

“Over the years, we have invested thousands of dollars and hundreds of volunteer hours into habitat and fisheries projects on the Roan,” said Tilda Evans of TU’s Grand Valley Anglers chapter. “This agreement helps protect those outdoor values for future generations of Coloradans to enjoy.”

Among the key provisions of the settlement:

- The BLM will cancel leases and compensate Bill Barrett Corporation for most of the leases atop the Roan, while maintaining leases on two sections of Anvil Ridge where timely and responsible natural gas development can proceed under BLM’s new plan.

- The BLM will move forward with its plan revision, considering a “settlement alternative” that would close the lands covered by the cancelled leases to new leasing during the life of the plan while allowing development on the other leases atop and at the base of the Roan to proceed with responsible drilling practices that minimize impacts on fish and wildlife.

Under the settlement, BLM will be required to “make its best effort” to complete the new planning decision and its Environmental Impact Statement within two years of the settlement.

“This is a significant victory, but the work isn’t finished,” said John Gale of the National Wildlife Federation. “Sportsmen groups will continue to work with BLM and other parties in coming months to ensure that the balanced future for the Roan Plateau that is envisioned in these settlement provisions are adopted by the BLM in the final Resource Management Plan.”

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**Additional resources for media:**

--High-res images of the Roan Plateau, available for download at Trout Unlimited Photoshelter [site](#).

(Credit copyright holder if photo downloaded for use. If prompted for password, use “Roan Plateau”)

--Roan Settlement [Fact Sheet](#).



[Trout Unlimited](#) is a non-profit organization with 147,000 members nationwide dedicated to conserving, protecting and restoring North America’s coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. TU has more than 10,000 members and 24 chapters in Colorado.

The [National Wildlife Federation](#) is America's largest conservation organization inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.

The [Colorado Wildlife Federation](#) has been conserving Colorado’s wildlife and its habitat through education and advocacy since 1953.