

Administration tosses out oil shale research leases

Feb. 26 -- The Obama administration is tossing out leases approved during the final days of the Bush administration that would allow companies to conduct oil shale research on public lands in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming.

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar criticized the proposed leases approved by the Bush administration in January, saying they were flawed and that royalties to be paid by the oil industry were too low.

"If oil shale technology proves to be viable on a commercial scale, taxpayers should get a fair rate of return from their resource," Salazar said in announcing his decision.

Environmentalists, who have been strong supporters of the Obama presidency, opposed the granting of the leases and extraction of oil from shale in general because of concerns about energy and water usage and greenhouse gas emissions.

"Oil shale threatens to destroy wildlife and fish habitat, poison our air and water, and dry up rivers in the West," said Lawson LeGate, a Sierra Club spokesman. "This is one of the dirtiest and most wasteful forms of energy in the world."

Contact Waste & Recycling News senior reporter Bruce Geiselman at 330-865-6172 or bgeiselman@crain.com