

## WBR ARTICLE

### Protests filed on oil shale development

By MJ Clark

**January 8, 2009 --**

WASHINGTON D.C. — The Interior Department will publish a rule this week that would lift a 79-year old executive order prohibiting oil shale development in Wyoming and Utah. The order was lifted from Colorado in 2001.

According to estimates by the Bureau of Land Management, the three western states contain the equivalent of 800 billion barrels of oil, enough to fuel the U.S. for more than a century.

The rule, opening 6 million acres in Wyoming and 1.7 million acres in Utah to oil shale development, was approved late last year, giving a coalition of twelve environmental groups time to send letters of protest to the Interior Department and the Bureau of Land Management.

Yesterday the coalition formally notified the Bush administration of their intent to file federal lawsuits under the Endangered Species Act over the rush to create a commercial oil shale industry in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming.

According to a press release from coalition member The Center for Biological Diversity, oil shale production will require huge amounts of electricity and water at a time when global warming and water shortages are already threatening millions of people and wildlife.

"In Wyoming, the oil-shale leasing decision threatens Adobe Town, the state's most spectacular wilderness. In fact, the state of Wyoming designated this area as 'Very Rare or Uncommon' to shield it from oil-shale extraction and other types of mining," said Erik Molvar, wildlife biologist with Biodiversity Conservation Alliance. "Pair this with the potential destruction of key sage grouse strongholds and it becomes clear that oil-shale development would be a disaster for Wyoming."

Despite these environmental harms, the Bush administration hastily moved forward in issuing the final regulations and land use amendments. With these final decisions, leases could be issued before the Bush administration leaves office.

President-elect Obama's nominee for Interior Secretary, Ken Salazar (D-Colo) is on record as opposing the lifting of the ban, calling it "hasty."