



Riccardo Savi

UPHILL BATTLE: INFLUENCING THE 'HOW' OF GAS DRILLING

The gas-drilling proposals are starting to come thick and fast.

No sooner had we taken a breath after rallying opposition against natural-gas leases in the Thompson Creek area (see the May newsletter), than the Forest Service issued a report favoring gas drilling in the East Mamm Creek watershed – part of a roadless area south of Rifle that we've proposed for wilderness designation. And separately, it was disclosed that a gas company has applied to start exploratory drilling in Wolf Creek, southwest of Carbondale.

So far, the worst impacts of natural-gas extraction in our area have been confined to private and BLM lands in the I-70 corridor around Rifle, but the gas industry has had its sights set on the White River National Forest south of the Interstate for a long time.

In fact, gas companies have been accumulating subsurface rights on the Forest for decades; it's estimated that 95 percent of all the land on the Forest with gas potential is already under lease. Thompson Creek was actually one of the last parcels to be snapped up.

What that means is that we'd better brace ourselves for many more East Mamm Creeks – drilling proposals where the gas company already owns the lease, and Forest Service decision-makers, under pressure from Washington, feel a strong compulsion to say yes.

In other words, uphill battles.

EnCana Oil & Gas's East Mamm Creek lease dates back

to 1987 – well before the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, so the fact that the area is roadless and part of a citizens' wilderness proposal cuts no ice with the Forest Service.

What's more, the FS seems to have put this drilling request on a fast track. It was put out for scoping comments – initial feedback on the scope of the project – only in March. The Environmental Assessment was

issued in late May, and comments on the EA were due 30 days later (a Sunday, with no extension granted till the following Monday).

And the EA cursorily dismissed many of the points WW executive director Sloan Shoemaker specifically raised in his scoping comments.

How about considering the

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ↗

A Fine Old Wingding



Photos by Jim Pausa

About 100 WW members and friends turned out for our first annual Wilderness Wingding on Sunday, June 27. It was a fun, family-style event in a gorgeous setting – the day-use area at East Maroon trailhead – and although it rained a fair bit, we hardy wilderness types were undaunted! Big thanks to all the folks who helped make the Wingding a success – see page 4.

JOIN THE PARADE – SEE PAGE 3!!!

UPHILL BATTLE

↳ FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

possibility of directional drilling, which would enable EnCana to recover the gas from outside the roadless area? Nope, won't work, too far, says the Forest Service – directly contradicting information that Sloan had included with his scoping comments.

What about cumulative impacts? Federal regulations require agencies to analyze proposals not in isolation, but in connection with other past, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable developments in the area. Yet you have to read the fine print back in Appendix B to learn that EnCana is proposing to develop a total of 225 natural-gas wells in the Mamm Creek area – the rest of the report narrowly focuses on the impacts of the two wells in this particular lease.

Impacts on wildlife? No worries, says the FS, despite the fact that the agency has failed to do

the basic inventories of species that it's required to do so as to be able to gauge impacts on them.

In cases like East Mamm Creek, where a lease has already been granted, it's not a question of whether drilling will be allowed, but rather how and when it will be done. Still, those are important questions.

By pointing out the glaring inadequacies of the Forest Service's review of the East Mamm Creek proposal, we're urging the agency to go back to the drawing board and come back with enough data to make informed decisions about how and when.

Vice President Dick Cheney's energy plan – the one proposed by his infamous secret task force – makes frequent references to new technologies that will make it possible to extract resources with minimal harm to the environment. The Forest Service should put those fine words into practice and give meaningful



SAY IT LOUD – I'M WILD AND PROUD!

Proclaim your wildness! We've got free "Wild for Good" bumperstickers to give away, and we're selling t-shirts with the Wild for Good logo crisscrossed by lynx tracks. Inquire at the WW office (544-0733).

consideration to directional drilling of the East Mamm Creek area, accessing the gas deposits from outside the roadless area.

Of course the principal at stake here isn't just the unnecessary sacrifice of East Mamm Creek, or Thompson Creek, or any of the other local areas threatened by energy development.

It's about U.S. energy policy.

The Wilderness Society recently estimated that all the economically recoverable natural gas lying under roadless areas of the White River National Forest together would meet the energy

needs of the United States for just 56 hours.

It will be a merely local tragedy if we allow these potential wildernesses to be permanently scarred for such a brief, one-time guzzle of non-renewable energy. It will be much worse – and on a much larger scale – if we as a nation keep feeding our fossil-fuel habit, rather than weaning ourselves onto alternative energy sources.

Crisscrossing the land with roads and well pads will only buy us time measured in days, and when we've sucked the last well dry, the transition will be that much harder.

THOMPSON CREEK: PLEASE WRITE A LETTER

The Thompson Creek gas lease remains on hold while the BLM continues to evaluate our and Pitkin County's protests.

While we're optimistic that our protests will stand on their own merits to defeat these gas well developments, we can't take that for granted. Experience shows that the Forest Service and BLM are responsive to a combination of sound legal, ecological, and policy arguments, in combination with public/political pressure.

In other words, flooding the BLM and Forest Service with letters from concerned local citizens ought to get their

attention, raising the political consequences if they deny our protests.

Please send letters to:

- Ron Wenker, State Director
Bureau of Land Management
2850 Youngfield St.
Lakewood, CO 80215-7076
- Rick Cables, Regional Forester
U.S. Forest Service
740 Simms St.
Golden, CO 80401

For a list of points to make in a letter, please email WW executive director Sloan Shoemaker, sloan@wilderness-workshop.org.

We could make the job easier by providing a form letter, but the agencies basically ignore form letters. Personal letters stating your connection to the particular area and how you will be impacted are usually the most compelling.

Your letter should cite the Colorado BLM May 13, 2004 Lease Sale and state that you're particularly concerned about parcels COC67538, COC67540, and COC67541.

Lastly, please copy us on any correspondence so that we know what sort of public input the feds are getting on this issue. Thanks!

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS

Can you give some of your time to the Wilderness Workshop? We need help with:

- "Wild for Good" event preparations
- putting together a fundraising mailing in mid July
- helping staff our traveling display at fairs and concerts
- helping with wilderness monitoring
- distributing leaflets at trailheads one Saturday or Sunday
- website maintenance

Please call Dave at the WW office (544-0733).



The Wilderness Workshop celebrates 40 years of wilderness in 2004

Hopefully you've noticed the publicity we've been putting out to promote our "Wild for Good" event series, celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. We've really been pushing hard to use the anniversary as a vehicle for building public awareness of wilderness and the Wilderness Workshop.

We've created an event lineup that we think offers something for everybody – a mix of education and fun in a variety of venues throughout the Roaring Fork Valley. If you can, please come along – and bring a friend or two!

Here's the schedule for July, August, and September:

July 4 – March for Wilderness in the Aspen parade (see box).

Aug. 6 – Deadline for submissions for the "Images of Wilderness" show (see below). For submission guidelines, go to www.wildernessworkshop.org.

July 15 – Wings over Wilderness. Half-hour flights over proposed wilderness areas surrounding the Roaring Fork Valley. Aspen Airport, 8 a.m. \$30 donation. Seats are limited

and must be reserved in advance by calling the WW office (544-0733).

Aug. 13 – Stars & Shots. Timed to coincide with the annual Perseid meteor shower, this will be a star- and meteor-gazing slumber part at the Windstar Land Conservancy in Old Snowmass. Bring sleeping bag, warm clothes, overnight things, flashlight. Dusk to whenever.

Sept. 1 – Dave Foreman: "Rewilding North America." A dispatch from the front lines by one of the environmental movement's most outspoken figures. Presented in association with the Aspen Writers' Foundation. 6 p.m., Paepcke Auditorium. \$10.

Sept. 3 – "Images of Wilderness" opening reception. A juried photo exhibition of professional and amateur images. 6 p.m., Woody Creek Gallery.

Sept. 10 – John Fielder: "Mountain Ranges of Colorado." The acclaimed photographer brings a slide show based on his latest book. 6:30 p.m., Wheeler Opera House. \$10.

Once again this summer and fall, we're offering monthly naturalist-guided hikes to local proposed wilderness areas and other ecologically significant sites:

July 24 – Janis Huggins – author of a forthcoming field guide to the Brush Creek Valley – will take us on a tour of wildflower hotspots above Snowmass Village.

Aug. 7 – David Cramer will lead a more strenuous hike up Deep Creek, a proposed wilderness area northwest of Dotsero.

Sept. 18 – Red Table Mountain hike, with Dr. John Emerick. Red Table is the largest of the areas in our White River Wilderness Campaign.

Oct. 16 – Aquatic habitats, with Dee Malone. Location to be announced.

Hikes are free, but are limited to 15 people, so please sign up early. WW members and their friends have first priority. Meet at 9 a.m. at the WW office to carpool to the trailhead, or join the group elsewhere en route by arrangement.

These are all-day hikes. Be sure to bring rain gear, sunscreen, good hiking boots, water, and lunch.

MARCH FOR WILDERNESS IN ASPEN'S JULY 4 PARADE

The Wilderness Workshop is calling all hikers, climbers, horseback riders, anglers, bowhunters, birders, backcountry skiers – anyone who loves the outdoors – to show their support for wilderness in the Aspen July 4 parade.

Our parade entry will celebrate the past, present, and future of wilderness.

Leading the procession will be the "Maroon Belles" – WW founders and wilderness heroes Connie Harvey, Joy Caudill, and Dottie Fox. At the back, representing the next generation of wilderness defenders, will be a truck and trailer full of small children and their parents.

Between these will be a huge

contingent of present-day wilderness users, dressed in full backcountry regalia – backpacks, climbing harnesses and helmets, flyfishing gear, etc. We'd love to have some horseback riders, too. We'll be giving away free "Wild for

Good" t-shirts to the first 50 people who arrive suitably attired, ready to march.

We'll begin assembling at the corner of Main Street and Garmisch at 11 a.m. The parade starts at 12.

Organizer Tim McFlynn could also use help constructing the float – a wilderness scene mounted on a flatbed trailer – on Saturday, July 3.

For more info, call Tim at 923-2391.

food, live music, door prizes, etc. Ashcroft Ghost Town to the Pine Creek Cookhouse, 10 a.m.-noon. \$15.



TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE



Wilderness Workshop

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info@wildernessworkshop.org

The Wilderness Workshop's mission is to protect and conserve the wilderness and natural resources of the Roaring Fork Watershed, the White River National Forest, and adjacent lands.

The Workshop is a non-profit organization that engages in research, education, legal advocacy, and grassroots organizing to protect the ecological integrity of local landscapes and public lands with a focus on the monitoring and conservation of air and water quality, wildlife species and habitat, natural communities, and lands of wilderness quality.

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OUR GORGEOUS NEW BROCHURE

With this newsletter we're enclosing our brand-new, hot-off-the-press, incredibly gorgeous brochure.

It's designed by Kelly Alford of Words Pictures Colours Design in Basalt, with spectacular photos by Riccardo Savi and Burnham W. Arndt. If you see Kelly, Riccardo, or Bernie in the street, tell 'em they're terrific.

ABOUT RENEWALS...

We've started including remittance envelopes with every edition of our newsletter.

This *doesn't* mean you have to renew your membership every two months! It's just that it's cheaper and easier for us to do it this way, rather than sending out separate renewal reminders to people whose memberships are about to lapse. Your membership renewal date is printed on your address label.

GRACIE, WE LOVE YOU!

Three cheers for Gracie Oliphant, who recently signed over \$10,000 worth of IBM stock to the Wilderness Workshop on behalf of the Snowmass Nature Center.

Speaking of which, donating long-term appreciated assets (such as stock) to nonprofits (such as WW) can save on capital-gains taxes and make your philanthropic dollar go farther.

MUCHO THANKS

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the many folks who have helped us out lately with their volunteer labors.

Dan Sheridan, Casey Puckett, Kate McBride Puckett, Neal Beidleman, Asia Jenkins, and Pete Barnes produced our awesome radio spots, which you can

hear on KSNO and will also air on KAJX later in the summer.

Slide Master and Aspen Reprographics did superlative work creating the enlargements for the WW traveling display, which you'll be seeing at fairs, markets, and other events around the valley. Bernie Arndt and Riccardo Savi contributed the wonderful photos.

We had strong volunteer support for the Wilderness Wingding. Thanks to Judy Byrns, Steve Child, Susy Ellison, John Emerick, Chris Faison, Mark Fuller, Kay Hannah, Ginni Hedrick, Charles and Heather Hopton, Kerry Kurtz, Felicia Marcus, Pete McBride, Tim McFlynn, Michael McVoy, Jim Paussa, Mitzi Rapkin, Polly Ross, Jim Ward, and Pete Yang.

Special thanks to the Last-Minute String Band, who provided music that was so perfectly in keeping with the setting of the Wingding: Don and April Paine, Russell Hedman, Janet Nelson, Dustin Macheli, Jim Collins, and John Sommers.

Finally, thanks to our "Wild for Good" series sponsors: Ute Mountaineer, Reese Henry & Company, Nordic Gardens Landscaping, Lost Marbles Ranch (John McBride family), Fred & Elli Iselin Foundation, Basalt Printing, the *Aspen Daily News*, and KSNO. Thanks also to BJ Adams & Company for a special gift toward the Wingding.

DONOR HONOR ROLL

We're deeply grateful for the following donations received since May 1, 2004:

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