



RUNNING TIGERS

GRAND JUNCTION HIGH SCHOOL RELIES ON GROUND GAME IN HOME OPENER > 3B

BLM will rewrite rules that hasten drilling permits

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DENVER — The Bureau of Land Management plans to write new guidelines for using a provision that allows for speedier environmental reviews of oil and gas development on public land, after a judge's order to stop using its existing guidance.

This time, the public will have a chance to comment as the agency writes new rules for using so-called "categorical exclusions" of certain land from extra environmental reviews, BLM Deputy Director Mike Pool said Friday at a House subcommittee hearing led by Rep. Doug Lamborn, R-Colo.

Kathleen Sgammma of the Western Energy Alliance said her trade group was pleased the BLM was addressing the matter through rulemaking rather than appealing the judge's order.

The BLM has used categorical exclusions to approve almost 6,900 activities related to oil and gas projects from fiscal 2006 through fiscal 2008, and nearly 6,100 of those were for drilling permits, according to the Government Accountability Office.

Conservation-minded groups and the energy industry both have pushed for a consistent interpretation of how categorical exclusions should be used.

"What we're striving for

is a reasonable balance that meets the energy demands of the nation but also protects our Western heritage and the quality hunting and angling opportunities that public land provides," said Gaspar Pericone, co-founder of the Bull Moose Sportsmen's Alliance.

The Bureau of Land Management is "trying to bulletproof their decisions so they don't get sued."

KATHLEEN SGAMMA
Western Energy Alliance

The exclusions are allowed under the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which aimed to streamline approvals needed to drill on federal land.

In general, areas that have already undergone an environmental review or areas where relatively small oil and gas projects are planned can be categorically excluded from another review, which sometimes can take years.

Industry and conservation groups have been in and out of court over how and when the BLM should use categorical exclusions.

Last year, as part of a settlement with environmental groups, the BLM issued a memo requiring its field offices to screen whether a further environmental review was needed on any land being considered for exclusion.

That prompted a lawsuit by the Western Energy Alliance, and last month, a federal judge ordered the agency to stop us-

ing from another review, which sometimes can take years.

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Sharpening budget ax



CHRISTOPHER TOMLINSON/The Daily Sentinel

STATE SEN. KENT LAMBERT, R-Colorado Springs, a member of the Joint Budget Committee, looks at a bullet through a microscope during a Friday tour of the forensics laboratory at the Colorado Bureau of Investigation in Grand Junction.

Panel tours places that could have funding cut next year

By CHARLES ASHBY
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Prisons, crime labs, state parks, universities and human service programs are all potential programs that could see state budget cuts next year.

Perhaps not so coincidentally,

the Legislature's Joint Budget Committee spent Thursday and Friday touring an example of each one of those state-funded programs on the Western Slope.

Five lawmakers on the six-member panel that writes the state's annual spending plan took a two-day tour of the Rifle

Correctional Facility, Rifle area state parks, the Grand Junction Regional Center, Colorado Mesa University and the Colorado Bureau of Investigations forensics lab in Grand Junction.

At each, the lawmakers were told by representatives of the state departments that oversee

those places, including many of their executive directors, how important they are.

At each, the lawmakers were cautious not to say who might feel the budget ax, but made it

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Education ballot proponents say they can work together

By EMILY ANDERSON
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Proponents of two education-related measures on the Nov. 1 ballot are showing support for each other amid concerns the presence of both measures may cause voter confusion.

School District 51's mill levy override, Referred Measure 3B, would increase local property taxes for local schools. Statewide measure Proposition 103 would increase income and sales taxes to pay for Colorado preschool through 12th-grade and higher-education institutions.

District 51 School Board member Diann Rice said she and others in the school district met this summer with the author of the proposition, state Sen. Rollie Heath, D-Boulder, to discuss how the override and Proposition 103 may interact.

"There was concern there would be confusion," Rice said. "That with both on the ballot, people would say, 'Isn't this a little much?' Do they want to get us from every side?"

Personally, Rice said, she hopes voters approve both measures.

"(Proposition 103) might alleviate cuts next year. Instead of \$8 million in

cuts next year, we might get to stay flat as far as state funding. But being flat at state funding doesn't make up for any cuts before," Rice said.

Proposition 103 and the mill levy override are "as complementary as it can get," Heath said.

His proposal would give an additional \$532 per student to District 51 schools under current funding formulas, which would mean \$6,669 per student in 2012-13, he said. That figure is \$44 below funding per District 51 student in 2009-10, the year \$28.64 million in budget cuts began.

"I'm sure (District 51) is doing this

to make up for cuts that are existent today," Heath said. "What we're trying to do is prevent any more state cuts."

Heath said the two measures would work best together. He had nothing negative to say about the local override measure during a Friday editorial board meeting with The Daily Sentinel.

Rice agreed but said the proposition may have a better chance of passing than the override because it

"There was concern that there would be confusion. That with both on the ballot, people would say, 'Isn't this a little much?'"

DIANN RICE

District 51 school board member



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Signal source mystifies searchers on Grand Mesa

By PAUL SHOCKLEY
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What started Friday at a U.S. Air Force base in Florida consumed Greg Foley's day in Fraser.

It also kept at least 24 rescuers from Mesa, Delta and Gunnison counties stomping around Grand Mesa.

In the end, there was no definitive answer on what started it all.

Authorities abandoned efforts about 5 p.m. to find the source of a Global Positioning System distress beacon, which was first detected early Friday by a government-monitored satellite. Mesa County Sheriff's Department spokeswoman Heather Benjamin said the search likely will be suspended, barring new information. As of late Friday afternoon, no missing hunter

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THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A LAKE BUOY RESTS on dry land Thursday at one of the swimming areas at Pat Mays Lake near Paris, Texas. With little to no rain in the past few months, lake levels around northeast Texas continue to drop at an alarming rate.

Too wacky? Moving water from flood to drought area

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — As the soggy East tries to dry out from flooding and Texas prays for rain that doesn't come, you might ask: Isn't there some way to ship all that water from here to there?

It's an idea that has tempted some, but reality gets in the way.

A Texas oilman once envisioned long pipelines carrying water to drought-stricken Texas cities, one of several untested fantasies of moving water vast distances. Parched Las

Vegas still wants to indirectly siphon off excess water from the overflowing Mississippi River. French engineers have simulated hauling an iceberg from barren Africa. There are even megatons of trash bags to move heavy loads of water.

There's certainly plenty of rainwater available. Tropical Storm Lee dumped enough on the already saturated Mid-Atlantic, Northeast and Gulf Coast to bring 9.6 inches of rain

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