Federal officials consider new rules on fracking

Colorado has the most beautiful parks and forests in the country, from Mesa Verde National Park to White River National Forest. Yet instead of protecting these lands, federal officials are close to allowing a dirty drilling practice known as fracking near these beautiful places.

If drilling companies are allowed to frack near our national parks and in national forests, Colorado’s wildlife and waters would be put at grave risk.

Fracking has already wreaked havoc across Colorado. In recent years, fracking projects have sprouted up across our state—putting our land, drinking water and air at risk of pollution. This dirty method of drilling for oil and natural gas laces millions of gallons of water with poisonous chemicals and known carcinogens, and then shoots this toxic tide into the earth to get at oil and natural gas locked beneath the surface.

Already there have been more than 400 documented cases of water contamination from fracking operations in Colorado. Even so, federal officials are poised to allow fracking in or near Mesa Verde National Park, the Roan Plateau, White River National Forest and Dinosaur National Monument.

Coloradans say “no” to fracking

Given the risks, more and more Coloradans have started speaking out against fracking. Just last year, two communities, Fort Collins and Longmont, both passed measures to ban fracking operations within their city limits. And now, with national parks and forests at risk, there is a new call to action for concerned Coloradans.

This summer, Environment Colorado’s citizen outreach team went door-to-door to talk to neighbors about the risks of fracking and ask for each person to take action to stop it. Our staff spoke to more than 14,000 Coloradans from Colorado Springs to Fort Collins, in just eight weeks. And 6,772 joined our call to protect our parks and forests from fracking.

In 2010, the Obama administration’s advisory panel recommended that “unique and/or sensitive areas” be kept “off limits to drilling.” We’re calling on the president to tell his federal officials to do just that.

White River National Forest (above) is on the list of possible frack sites in Colorado.
Colorado is known for its beautiful parks and forests. And one of my favorite times of the year is when the aspen trees dot the mountainsides with yellow. There’s really nothing more peaceful to me than hiking in their shade and listening to leaves rustle in the wind.

This year, Congress shortchanged our parks, making them more vulnerable to pollution and overdevelopment. And now the oil and gas industry wants to use a dirty drilling process known as fracking in or near our national parks and forests.

Protecting these places is something we owe future generations, and I know the only way we’ll be able to do it is if we join together and call on our elected officials to act. Thank you for being with us. I’ll send you an update soon on what you can do to help protect the beautiful places in our state.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Bassett
Senior Associate

Recent action

Rural outreach wins new energy bill for Colorado

In June, Gov. John Hickenlooper signed SB 252 into law. The new law boosts renewable energy development by doubling the renewable energy standard from 10 to 20 percent by 2020 for rural electric cooperatives. This will bring them closer to the current 30 percent renewable energy standard for the state’s investor-owned utilities such as XCEL.

Tristate spent millions to defeat the bill, claiming it would raise rates— even though the law caps retail rate increases associated with meeting the mandate.

The new law will decrease greenhouse gas emissions, clean up our air, and continue the state’s investment in clean energy. The bill passed and was signed by the governor, thanks to the broad range of support that was shown from small businesses and citizens serviced by rural electric cooperatives.

Park funding stalls in Congressional committee

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a federal conservation program that has helped create and protect thousands of parks nationwide, including Great Sand Dunes National Park and Rio Grande National Forest in Colorado. The fund should be fully dedicated to protecting our parks, yet Congress has diverted funds elsewhere for years.

Last year, Environment Colorado launched a campaign in conjunction with our state affiliates nationwide, to call for full funding of the LWCF. After tens of thousands of comments flooded the inboxes of elected officials in D.C., the president called for increased funding in his budget, and a bill was introduced in the Senate.

A congressional subcommittee gutted park funding in an appropriations bill toward the end of the summer. Among other things, the bill zeroed out the LWCF. But we will continue to build up the support the LWCF will need to win full funding in the next legislative session.

Great Sand Dunes National Park
Historic plan to cut carbon, tackle global warming

President Obama announced a climate plan that will set the first-ever limits on carbon pollution from power plants, advance energy efficiency, and increase the nation’s commitment to renewable energy.

“President Obama has responded to the millions that have spoken out on behalf of their communities and their families, urging him to lead on climate,” said Jeanne Bassett, senior associate with Environment Colorado. “All of us who have felt the effects of global warming, or simply worried about what’s in store for our kids, can take comfort in knowing that President Obama has put the nation on a path toward a cleaner, healthier and safer future.”

Left unchecked, global warming is projected to bring more intense storms, wildfires and unhealthy air days. Scientists have warned that the window is rapidly closing for making the necessary cuts in carbon pollution to protect future generations from the worst consequences of global warming.

To respond to this threat, the president’s plan contains several key components, including:

• A limit on carbon pollution from new and existing power plants: Power plants currently lack any such federal limits, despite being the largest single-source of the carbon pollution that’s fueling global warming.

• Investing in energy efficiency: New efficiency measures for buildings and new appliances will cut carbon pollution by reducing our overall energy demand.

• A plan to build more renewable energy: The plan focuses on expanding production of clean, renewable energy sources, like wind and solar, especially on public lands.

• More support for affected communities: The president’s plan will help ensure that communities are better equipped to prepare for and recover from the impacts of global warming.

• An effort to rebuild U.S. leadership internationally: The president’s plan calls for the U.S. to actively engage in international efforts to address global warming.

Environment Colorado offered special praise for the president’s pledge to cut carbon pollution from existing power plants, given that they are the single largest source of carbon pollution in the country.

More than 3.2 million Americans submitted public comments last year in support of the president setting limits on carbon pollution from power plants. Hundreds of organizations and local leaders from across the country have also spoken out in support of limiting global warming pollution from power plants.

Meeting the goal of 1 million solar roofs would cut as much carbon as taking 900,000 vehicles off the road and would produce approximately 10 percent of the state’s power.

A campaign for solar

More than 240 government leaders, businesses and nonprofits joined together to endorse Environment Colorado’s Million Solar Roofs campaign that outlines our plan to bring Colorado enough solar to power 1 million roofs by 2030.

Today, Colorado gets less than 1 percent of its energy from the sun. Environment Colorado Research & Policy Center’s new report, “A Million Solar Roofs for Colorado,” outlines the vast solar potential in our state and the environmental benefits of tapping into even a fraction of that potential.

According to the new report, Colorado could be doing much more to harness the sun’s power and make solar a central player in the state’s energy strategy. We already have the technology to harness Colorado’s 300 days of sunshine a year and make solar a mainstream energy source.

Analyses have shown that by 2030, solar power can help Colorado avoid 3.6 million metric tons of global warming pollution and would help protect public health by reducing harmful air pollution from the state’s fossil-fueled plants.

Meeting the goal of 1 million solar roofs would cut as much carbon as taking 900,000 vehicles off the road and would produce approximately 10 percent of the state’s power.

Kids take action

Some Colorado youngsters signed a card on global warming that was delivered to President Obama. White House Council on Environmental Quality Deputy Director Gary Guzy and Chief of Staff Michael Boots received the cards for the President. See more on our website: www.EnvironmentColorado.org

(Above, left to right) Mayor of Rifle Jay Miller, Environment Colorado Federal Field Organizer Lindsey Wilson and Ken Olson of SOL Energy.
Polluter-driven Supreme Court decisions have left nearly 75,000 miles of Colorado’s streams and hundreds of acres of wetlands vulnerable to pollution and development. And these streams are the same ones that feed the Arkansas, the South Platte and all of our rivers and help keep them clean.

After more than 20,000 Coloradans and thousands more nationwide called on the Environmental Protection Agency to close these loopholes for polluters, the EPA issued a draft guideline. Since the announcement, special interests from the oil and gas industry and big agribusinesses have put major pressure on the EPA, and the guideline has stalled.

Environment Colorado will double-down on our effort to protect each and every stream and river from Denver to each corner of Colorado. Our rivers and streams are a big part of what makes living in Colorado so great, so their protection is one of our top priorities.

Our mission
We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That’s the idea behind Environment Colorado. We focus exclusively on protecting Colorado’s air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

75,000 miles of Colorado streams unprotected

Our rivers and streams are part of what makes Colorado such a great state for outdoor adventure, but polluters use loopholes in the Clean Water Act.

Help us close these loopholes by taking action online: www.EnvironmentColorado.org