

Title:

Impacts of an Oil Shale Boom on Local School Districts

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Garfield School District No. Re-2 is a growing school district that serves about 4,500 students on the western slope of Colorado. Re-2 is located southeast of the Shell Mahogany Project, and is currently experiencing the economic and demographic shifts associated with energy exploration/development from an oil and gas boom.

Large scale oil shale development brings potential challenges for locally impacted school districts. These include:

1. A local economic boom that causes labor costs and housing costs to soar. School districts are not compensated for the resulting increased cost of living. As a result, districts cannot staff positions and employees cannot find affordable housing.
2. Building additional schools to house the increase in students.
3. A resulting financial crunch because there is very little to no money flowing to school districts to offset the impacts stated above.

The potential impacts of oil shale development can be significantly reduced or mitigated with some planning and teamwork between local school districts, legislators, and oil shale development companies. To offset or reduce impacts, local school districts need:

- Shared information with regards to long range development plans so that school districts have time to build and finance additional buildings. (It takes a minimum of 3 – 5 years to plan, finance, and construct new schools);
- Funding to pay for the additional schools to mitigate the local taxpayer's burden;
- An increase in funding to offset the higher cost of living to retain quality educators.

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