

Title:

Some Perspectives on Various Methods of Oil Shale Extraction, Piceance Basin Colorado

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Prudent utilization of this very large fossil hydrocarbon deposit, which is critically important to our nation's future generations, will require a large, wide-ranging, R&D effort. R&D needs for prudent recovery of this 1.5 " trillion barrel resource," which is about equivalent to 100 "Prudhoe Bays," include extraction techniques that achieve or approach 100% resource recovery, recovery of associated resources, minimization of effects on the basin-wide hydrologic system, and methods to leave post-extraction soil, landscape, biota, and water resources in a long-term productive condition.

Low resource recovery, which is common for many extraction methods, will probably result in great efforts and expense by future generations pursuing "secondary" recovery of shale oil. Most of the basin ground water (25 MAF) is usable for many purposes. Ground water is potentially subject to significant degradation by leaching of retorted shale, under proposals by most methods. Widespread land-subsidence (10s of feet or more) is likely to follow most methods of extraction.

This paper presents a general, somewhat qualitative overview of several potential extraction methods, as they relate to the above noted problems. Past and proposed extraction methods are generally deficient in dealing with these problems. In terms of minimizing these problems, room and pillar (and other variations on underground mining), and various current and past in situ and modified in situ proposals, appear to be significantly inferior to surface mining.

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