

## ENVIRONMENT

Initial oil shale development activities within the United States will most likely occur in Colorado, Utah or Wyoming, because these states contain the thickest and richest oil shale deposits in the nation. Each of these states have large, uninhabited areas where oil shale projects could be constructed, such as the center of the Piceance Creek Basin in Colorado shown below.



While this would appear ideal for this new industry, these same areas may be attractive for recreation and sporting activities or they may be environmentally sensitive for any number of reasons. In order to address all of these concerns, proposed oil shale development projects will need to comply with a large number of permitting requirements, and meet public expectations, before any construction is authorized by federal, state and local government agencies.

An oil shale project cannot be built without receiving the required environmental, construction and operating permits. This is true even if the project is built on private land, although the process and the number and type of permits will be somewhat different on public and private land. Existing Federal and state environmental laws assure that projects comply with strict regulations. Federal environmental laws include: the Clean Air Act; the Clean Water Act; the Safe Drinking Water Act; the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); National Historic Preservation Act; and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, among others. Each state has its own rules, regulations and permits. These include the following: ground water discharge permit; dam safety permit; stream alteration

permit; water rights permit; drinking water permit; and the permit to mine. On a local level, counties require that projects secure construction permits, which assure the project complies with local ordinances and building codes. The county may require a project to mitigate environmental or socioeconomic impacts as conditions for issuing permits. Many of the federal, state and local permits require public hearings and allow for a public comment period. This allows the public to voice concerns, which must then be considered by the agencies. The public input may require that the permits contain special stipulations that address issues raised.

So, while an oil shale project will necessarily have environmental impacts on a region, the multiple levels of rules and regulations assure that every project must comply with the environmental laws and employ best practices and technologies to minimize or mitigate those impacts.