



The West's [fast-paced oil and gas boom](#) has brought some important economic benefits to the region. Wyoming, New Mexico, and Colorado are all listed among the [top ten oil and gas producers](#) in the nation. But as production moves closer to Western communities and our prized public lands, oil and gas growth shouldn't outpace smart management and common sense standards to protect Western water, outdoor spaces, and communities.

There is little doubt that oil and gas development—as does any form of energy production—comes with impacts. The impacts of oil and gas drilling can include spills and water contamination, air pollution, habitat fragmentation, and replacing other uses of the landscape like outdoor recreation.

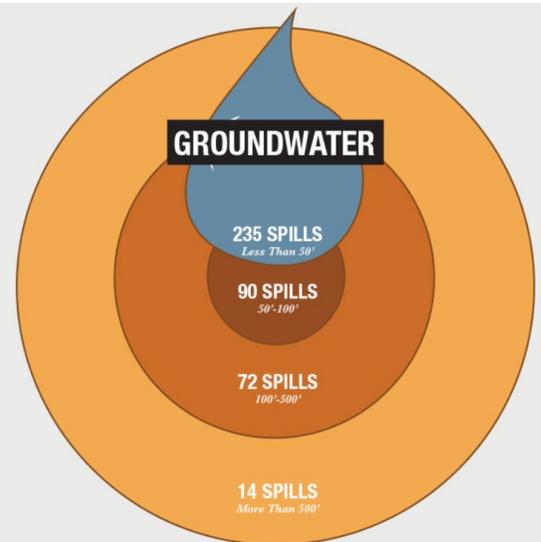
## Impacts of the Energy Boom

Oil and gas extraction brings significant impacts, including [spills](#) and water contamination, [air pollution](#), [habitat fragmentation](#), and [replacing](#) other uses of the landscape like outdoor recreation.

In 2014, the oil and gas industry was responsible for [712 spills in Colorado](#)—or two spills every day—releasing more than one million gallons of oil and other chemicals. Of these [spills](#), 11 percent resulted in water contamination and 203 occurred within 1,500 feet of a building such as a school or home.

## DISTANCE OF SPILLS FROM GROUNDWATER SOURCES

Colorado, 2014 Summary



Similarly, New Mexico saw [934 spills](#) in 2013, while Wyoming saw [625 spills](#) in 2014.

## Energy Development & Healthy Communities

Western voters [reject](#) the notion that energy development and safe, healthy communities are “either/or” options. Part of maintaining a balanced energy strategy is incorporating thoughtful measures that protect community health and the environment into decision-making about energy development.

In addition to protecting their communities, [Westerners value](#) tourism and outdoor recreation, which fundamentally rely on healthy public lands—it is imperative that oil and gas development doesn't come at the cost of recreation and tourism.

## Reducing Impacts on Public Lands through Smart-from-the-Start Approach



Public lands are the location for much of America's oil and natural gas production. Companies hold approximately **46,000 leases** to drill on public lands, covering about **35 million acres**.

In recent years, oil and gas leases were approved near sensitive areas like national parks, drinking water sources, and schools. This leads to local pushback and delays that create uncertainties for drillers. Recently, an oil company encountered **significant community pushback** after planning 19 wells within 900 feet of a Colorado elementary school.

Smart land management planning is pointing the way to a better approach. **Master leasing plans** are one "smart from the start" approach to oil and gas planning. Instead of allowing oil and gas companies to drive the leasing process, MLPs bring community stakeholders and land managers to the table. Multiple-use maps created by these local voices can then be used by oil and gas companies to avoid impacting communities negatively and to expedite the planning process.



In Moab, Utah, extractive industries like oil, natural gas, and potash have caused conflicts with outdoor activities like hiking, mountain biking, and visiting national parks. The Bureau of Land Management is proposing a Master Leasing Plan to help reduce these conflicts and ensure that everyone can experience the wonder of the area.

### Here are some of the impacts oil and gas drilling has on Western communities and lands.

- Between 2000 and 2013 there were **over 15,000 spills** in Colorado and New Mexico, averaging one spill a day in Colorado and two spills a day in New Mexico.
- A **study** conducted by Colorado State University concluded that oil and gas development can "cause large-scale and novel alterations to ecosystems, resulting in habitat loss and fragmentation that strongly impact terrestrial wildlife populations and their ecosystems."
- According to the Environmental Protection Agency, emissions from drilling and fracking amounted to **225 million metric tons** of carbon dioxide equivalents in 2011. This number is second only to power plants.
- Energy development is a blind spot in the nation's climate change strategy. **Nearly a quarter** of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions come from oil and gas and coal development on public lands.