



Public Land Energy Development By The Numbers 2017

Despite what some politicians have been saying, the issue with energy development on public lands is about **EXCESS, not ACCESS**. Oil, gas and coal development has long been a “dominant” use of public lands, crowding out other values like recreation and conservation. The fossil fuel industry has more than enough land and permits to produce American energy.

But companies want even more land to take American energy resources and export them overseas—selling off some of our most treasured places to fuel foreign countries.

Oil and Gas

- A **staggering 90 percent** of our public lands and minerals managed by the Bureau of Land Management are open to oil and gas leasing
- In FY15, the most recent data available, **only 15% of acreage offered** in lease sales was actually purchased by industry.
- In FY16, **27 million acres were under lease and only 12.7 million acres were in production** – less than half.
- **14 million acres of publicly-owned** minerals are leased to companies and are not being developed and the land is sitting idle.
- Industry also has a glut of drilling permits, with more **than 7,950 approved, unused permits** on the books.
- In FY 2016, BLM issued 2,184 drilling permits, of which only 847 were used by the industry.

ONCE LEASED, FOREVER LOST

The Bureau of Land Management’s **poli-cies are outdated and out of step** with the agency’s “multiple use mandate.”

- The BLM is required to manage public lands for many uses such as wildlife management and recreation, **but the agency routinely defaults to keeping lands open to leasing**, which precludes all other uses.
- The oil and gas industry uses policy loopholes to avoid paying any royalties and squat on large tracts of land. As of FY15, **industry was hoarding 19.3 million acres without paying royalties**—an area the size of South Carolina.
- BLM’s oil and gas leasing regulations have not been **updated in more than twenty-five years**.

State by State Public Acreage for Oil and Gas (as of FY 2016)

State	Number of Acres Under Lease	Number of Acres Actually Producing Oil and Gas
Colorado	3,001,009	1,526,229
Montana	2,101,573	710,617
Nevada	1,124,320	27,001
New Mexico	4,478,959	3,761,154
Utah	2,918,912	1,139,973
Wyoming	8,794,158	4,020,073

Coal from Federal Lands

- **570 million acres** of public land is open for coal development
- Coal companies are sitting on **306 leases totaling 480,000 acres** of public land
- **80,000 acres worth of leases are pending**, the size of Arches National Park, according to a [recent report](#).
- Demand for coal from public lands **dropped 31%** from 2011-2016, per the Energy Information Administration
- Coal companies have enough coal under lease on public lands to continue **current production for 20 years**
- The Wilderness Society and Center for American Progress' [Blind Spot Report](#) showed that federal coal production is responsible for **10% of all greenhouse gas emissions** in the US.

(All data drawn from [BLM.gov](#), unless otherwise noted)

For further reading, check out these reports:

Oil and Gas:

[No Exit](#)

[Hoarders](#)

[Open For Business](#)

Coal:

[We Can't Wait](#)

[False Promises](#)

Renewable Energy:

[A Brighter Future](#)

Renewable Energy

The cost of renewable energy is dropping rapidly, and in many cases it is cheaper than fossil fuels; these energy sources are growing on public lands

By the Numbers

- Since 2009, **700,000 acres of low-conflict, priority wind, solar, and geothermal development zones** have been designated in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah through landscape planning efforts
- In 2015, three projects in the Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone outside Las Vegas were **permitted in less than half the average time for solar projects on public lands**; they will deliver solar energy at one of the **cheapest rates in the nation**.
- As of February 2017 BLM had approved a total of nearly **18,000 MW of renewable energy** on public lands including **over 10,000 MW of solar, over 5,000 MW of wind, and over 2,000 MW of geothermal**
- When built these wind, solar, and geothermal projects will power **7 million homes**
- BLM has **authorized 40 wind energy projects** totaling 5,608 MW
- BLM has **authorized 36 solar energy projects** totaling 10,150 MW
- BLM has **authorized 50 geothermal energy projects** totaling 2,205 MW

Front photo: Oil wells seen from the entrance to Canyonlands (Credit: Mason Cummings, TWS)



Our mission is to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places.