

EDITOR'S PAGE

OIL SHALE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES



In 2004 the Office of Naval Petroleum Reserves of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) established a committee comprised of technical personnel from government, industry, and academia to study the need for developing the oil shale resources of the United States, especially those of the Eocene Green River Formation in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. The committee prepared two reports: (A) Strategic Significance of America's Oil Shale Resource, vol. I, Assessment of Strategic Issues and vol. II, Oil Shale Resources, Technology, and Economics; and (B) America's Oil Shale, A Roadmap for Federal Decision Making. Volume I of report (A) is available on the Internet at www.evworld.com/library/Oil_Shale_Strategic_Significant.pdf and Volume II at www.resourcescommittee.house.gov/subcommittees/emr/reports/doeos2.pdf. Report (B) is available at www.shaleoilinfo.org/library/government/doe_road_map_final_2005.

In November 2004 the first step toward reopening Federal oil shale lands for research and development was taken by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) by publishing a notice in the Federal Register seeking public comment on terms for issuance of small tracts of oil shale lands for research, demonstration, and development (RD&D). In 2005, a total of 19 RD&D nominations for 160-acre (65 hectare) oil shale tracts were submitted by industry – ten in Colorado, eight in Utah, and one in Wyoming. Five of the ten Colorado nominations and two of the eight Utah nominations passed

the first screening and were submitted to DOI headquarters for further review. Prior to the issuance of the RD&D leases, the BLM is required to prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) covering all of the Federal oil shale and tar sand lands in the three states. A summary of comments by the public on the PEIS was prepared by Argonne National Laboratory in March 2006 and is available at www.ostseis.anl.gov/news/index.cfm.

The U.S. Bureau of Mines conducted assays (numbered in the thousands) of drill cores and cuttings from boreholes drilled into the Green River Formation in the three states prior to its closure in 1996; these analyses and company data including assays, geophysical, and lithologic logs of drill cores, were then acquired by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The USGS is now assembling these data, as well as many detailed geologic maps and stratigraphic sections for public release on the USGS Internet website. Much work still needs to be done, including imaging and digitizing paper copies of numerous geophysical and lithologic logs, X-ray diffraction traces, and rock-quality and geochemical analyses.

The Utah Geological Survey and the USGS are preparing an oil shale database on the Green River deposits in the Uinta Basin of northeastern Utah. The Fischer assays are digitized in ASCII format for easy transfer to software programs of choice. The laboratory assay sheets are also computer-imaged, so that the original data can be viewed for additional details.

Three oil shale conferences are scheduled for 2006. The first is a conference sponsored by the Utah Geological Association and the Society of Petroleum Engineers titled, Shale Oil Resources of the Green River Formation: Opportunities and Limitations, which is planned for May 19 in Salt Lake City, Utah. The contact for this meeting is john.mclennan@ascenergy.com. The second is the Colorado School of Mines, 26th Oil Shale Symposium to be held in Golden, Colorado October 16–18 with field trips October 19–20. Further information about the symposium and submittal of abstracts, can be obtained at www.mines.edu/research/cei. The third is an oil shale symposium planned for November 7–9 in Amman, Jordan, under the auspices of Al-Balqa Applied University and the National Resources Authority of Jordan. Further information about the symposium is available at http://oilshale.fet.edu.jo/Pages/C_home.htm.

For further information on USGS oil shale activities in the United States, contact Ronald Johnson (rcjohnson@usgs.gov) or John Dyni (jdyni@usgs.gov).

John R. DYNİ, Ph.D.
Scientist Emeritus
U.S. Geological Survey
Denver, Colorado, USA