

OIL AND GAS RULES

Mixed reviews

State hails balance; environmental groups say rules weak

By CHRIS WOODKA

THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Proposed state rules for oil and gas drilling are getting mixed reviews.

While the staff of the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission hails them as pacesetting in balancing the needs of industry and affected communities, some environmental groups say the rules don't do enough to protect homes near drilling sites.

Public hearings will be Jan. 7-9, 9 a.m. each day, at the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel, 1550 Court Place, Denver.

Two sets of rules were developed with extensive input from local governments, farmers and ranchers, the environmental community, homeowners, the energy industry, homebuilders, mineral owners, environmental health specialists and business leaders, according to a news release from the commission.

The rules define procedures for setbacks, mitigation and notification of drilling activity.

"These proposed rules reinforce Colorado's role as a national pacesetter in the comprehensive and progressive regulation of oil and gas exploration and production," said Matt Lepore, director of the commission's staff. "These proposals contain mitigation standards unprecedented nationally and mark yet another step forward in fashioning a model regulatory framework that strikes a balance that's right for Colorado." Environmental groups say the rules are weak.

"After months of hearing from stakeholders and thousands of citizens across the state who want greater setbacks, the governor's proposal would still allow heavy industrial activity near our homes and families," said Chris Arend, spokesman for Conservation Colorado, a coalition of environmental groups.

The groups want larger buffer zones and stronger groundwater testing near drilling and fracking sites.

"As local governments act to address drilling impacts near communities, these proposed weak regulations raise concerns of the ability and political will of the administration to properly regulate drilling and fracking in our state." The greatest drilling activity in Southeastern Colorado is concentrated in Las Animas and Huerfano counties. Huerfano County residents have experienced impacts from drilling activity in recent years.

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2013 To Do List:

- Find a new route home to avoid casino traffic
- Buy blinds to block casino lights
- Save more for higher taxes
- Find somewhere else to live

(And they claim a casino will be good for Pueblo)

Learn more by visiting the web site below.

www.protectourneighborhoods.org

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