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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**GOV. RITTER & ENERGY FIRMS ANNOUNCE HISTORIC AGREEMENTS TO PROTECT 355,000 ACRES ON COLORADO'S WESTERN SLOPE**

[Click here to listen to remarks from Gov. Ritter](http://www.colorado.gov/governor/images/audio/WildlifeProtetionAgreements.mp3) (<http://www.colorado.gov/governor/images/audio/WildlifeProtetionAgreements.mp3>)

Gov. Bill Ritter and nine energy development companies today announced historic agreements that will protect 355,000 acres of key wildlife habitat on Colorado's Western Slope (see map ([http://www.colorado.gov/governor/cs/Satellite?c=Document\\_C&childpagename=GovRitter%2FDocument\\_C%2FGOVRAddLink&cid=1251579685265&pagename=GOVRWrapper](http://www.colorado.gov/governor/cs/Satellite?c=Document_C&childpagename=GovRitter%2FDocument_C%2FGOVRAddLink&cid=1251579685265&pagename=GOVRWrapper)) and below chart for specific locations).

The agreements, negotiated over the past 18 months pursuant to Colorado's new oil and gas rules, will protect more than 550 square miles of land designated as important habitat for elk, deer, raptors, sage grouse and cutthroat trout.

By consulting with the Colorado Division of Wildlife on how to prevent or mitigate damage to wildlife habitat before drilling starts, oil and gas operators will be able to secure approvals for thousands of natural gas wells more quickly. The agreements also provide the energy companies and their project planners with additional certainty.

"These wildlife protection plans are another example of how Colorado's New Energy Economy is creating jobs and leading America toward a new energy future," Gov. Ritter said. "By working together, we are protecting important wildlife habitat while also responsibly developing our energy resources. This balanced approach will drive our economy forward, allow us to maximize our vast energy resources and ensure sustainable communities for years to come."

Last week, the Division of Wildlife and Exxon Mobil Corp. signed the largest wildlife protection plan to date, covering 150,000 acres of mainly federal land in Rio Blanco County.

Encana Oil & Gas (USA) Inc., whose North Parachute Ranch plan was the first major agreement to be signed, and Williams Production RMT, which has signed two separate agreements for acreage bracketing the Colorado River, are also among the companies to enter into new agreements with the state.

Other companies are: Antero Resources Piceance Corp., Marathon Oil Co., Noble Energy Inc., Black Hills Exploration & Production, Delta Petroleum and Gunnison Energy Corp.

"These plans are a recipe for success," said David Neslin, director of the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission. "They will allow for development of needed energy supplies while protecting some of our most iconic wildlife species. They epitomize win-win solutions."

The participating companies were able to use three different tools available under the state's amended oil and gas rules to protect wildlife habitat. The rules were developed following the legislature's adoption of House bills 1298 and 1341 in 2007.

"It's important that we recognize the significance of these agreements, which will protect big chunks of important habitat so that future generations will be able to enjoy Colorado's extraordinary wildlife heritage," said state Sen. Dan Gibbs, a passionate sportsman and co-sponsor of HB 1298. "We've shown that it is possible to accommodate the needs of wildlife while strengthening Colorado's economy."

"I would like to congratulate the energy producers who have partnered with the Department of Wildlife to preserve more than 355,000 acres of land," said Sen. Lois Tochtrop, who also co-sponsored HB 1298. "These collaborative agreements between businesses, the state, and local communities prove that environmental stewardship supports economic growth and protects our precious wildlife habitats."

In addition to these operators, the Colorado Division of Wildlife is continuing to work with other companies on similar plans to protect significant acreage.

Below is a table summarizing the plans finalized to date:

OPERATOR	COUNTY	ACREAGE
Gunnison Energy Corp. Comprehensive Drilling Plan	Gunnison	2,400
EnCana's North Parachute Ranch Wildlife Mitigation Plan	Garfield	44,713
Antero's Rifle-Silt Wildlife Mitigation Plan	Garfield	25,599
Marathon's Wildlife Mitigation Plan	Garfield	20,265
Noble's Wildlife Mitigation Plan	Garfield & Mesa	19,200
Black Hills' Wildlife Mitigation Plan	Garfield & Mesa	23,420
Williams' South of the River Wildlife Mitigation Plan	Garfield	38,210
Exxon Mobil Wildlife Mitigation Plan	Rio Blanco	149,946
Delta's Order Limiting Well-Site Density	Mesa	3,640
Williams' North of the River Wildlife Mitigation Plan	Garfield	27,420
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>355,009</b>



([http://www.colorado.gov/governor/images/GOVR\\_Aug\\_10/WildlifeProtection\\_1.jpg](http://www.colorado.gov/governor/images/GOVR_Aug_10/WildlifeProtection_1.jpg)) ([http://www.colorado.gov/governor/images/GOVR\\_Aug\\_10/WildlifeProtection\\_1.jpg](http://www.colorado.gov/governor/images/GOVR_Aug_10/WildlifeProtection_1.jpg))  
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