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# Measure to speed work on oil shale

By [Dennis Webb](#)

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As the Bureau of Land Management pursues a go-slow approach toward oil shale, Republicans in Congress are pushing a far-reaching energy bill that includes a provision to expedite the fuel's development.

U.S. Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, and U.S. Sen. David Vitter, R-La., introduced the Domestic Jobs, Domestic Energy, and Deficit Reduction Act of 2011 — the 3-D Act — in late March. One of its provisions would require Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to identify each year whether there is interest in commercial leasing for oil shale and to begin leasing where interest is shown.

Among other provisions, the bill also would:

- Force the Interior Department to conduct certain off-shore oil and gas leasing.
- Open development in part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
- Streamline oil and gas development regulatory processes.
- Require Salazar to reissue oil and gas leases he withdrew in 2009 in Utah, including ones near national parks.

In announcing the bill, Bishop described it as “common-sense legislation that would lift redundant bureaucratic red tape to immediately allow for the development of our abundant domestic resources. “

In February, Salazar said the federal government would take a fresh look at Bush administration decisions establishing commercial oil shale rules and designating some 2 million acres for possible development in Colorado, Wyoming and Utah. He said with commercial development still years away, “We have time to update the development rules and get them right.”

The Interior Department agreed to reconsider the matter as part of a deal to settle litigation with conservation groups.

On Tuesday, the BLM will begin holding a series of meetings to invite public comment as it revisits the question of what public land is best suited for oil shale and tar sands development. The closest meeting will take place May 3 from 1 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. at the West Garfield Campus of Colorado Mountain College in Rifle.

At the time Bishop and Vitter's bill was announced, it had 28 Senate and 26 House sponsors, all Republican. Two House sponsors, Doug Lamborn and Mike Coffman, are from Colorado.

U.S. Rep. Scott Tipton, R-Colo., has criticized Salazar's reconsideration of past oil shale decisions. U.S. Sens. Michael Bennet and Mark Udall, both Colorado Democrats, have supported Salazar's move.

David Alberswerth, senior policy adviser for the Wilderness Society, said in a statement the Bishop/Vitter bill "puts the foxes in charge of the henhouse."

"Under this bill, the oil and gas industry would essentially run the Interior Department's offshore oil and gas program and the BLM's oil shale program," he said.

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