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## BLM schedules drilling auction for Utah

*Associated Press*

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The federal Bureau of Land Management says some of the 360,000 acres of public land it's opening to oil and gas drilling is within view of national parks and monuments.

BLM officials say they will impose noise, light and other restrictions on the drilling. For example, drillers wouldn't be able to occupy certain parcels near Dinosaur National Monument. Instead, they'll have to reach the parcels from another pad, using directional drilling.

The bureau announced late on Election Day that it would hold the lease auction Dec. 19, but it didn't immediately identify the 241 oil and gas parcels nominated by industry representatives. Opponents say they will file objections.

"There's absolutely no need to sell leases in special places like Desolation Canyon, like areas next to Arches or Canyonlands national parks," Steve Bloch, a staff attorney for the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, told The Salt Lake Tribune.

Also at issue is Nine Mile Canyon, home to more than 10,000 ancient rock carvings and drawings.

Terry Catlin, energy team leader for the Utah BLM office, told The Associated Press that the lease will include lands on plateaus topping Nine Mile Canyon, but not inside it.

BLM officials reacted angrily to criticism the agency was trying to pull a fast one in the waning months of the Bush administration by opening more wilderness-quality land in Utah to drilling.

"It's being blatantly stated in some places that this sale will allow for oil and gas sales in wilderness — and that is not true, even in wilderness study areas," said Megan Crandall, a spokeswoman for BLM's energy operations in Utah.

She said the timing of the Election Day announcement was a coincidence.

Catlin said she had been working hard to compile the lease list, and just happened to finish the job Tuesday.

"We were scrambling to make sure we had things ready," she said.

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