



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
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## FOSSIL ENERGY

## Fossil Energy

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## Oil Shale Activities



It is generally agreed that worldwide petroleum supply will eventually reach its productive limit, peak, and begin a long term decline. What should the United States do to prepare for this event? An objective look at the alternatives points to the Nation's untapped oil shale as a strategically located, long-term source of reliable, affordable, and secure oil.

The vast extent of U.S. oil shale resources, amounting to more than 2 trillion barrels, has been known for a century. In 1912, the President, by Executive Order, established the Naval Petroleum and Oil Shale Reserves.

This office has overseen the U.S. strategic interests in oil shale since that time. The huge resource base has stimulated several prior commercial attempts to produce oil from oil shale, but these attempts have failed primarily because of the historically modest cost of petroleum with which it competed. With the expected future decline in petroleum production, historic market forces are poised to change and this change will improve the economic viability of oil shale.

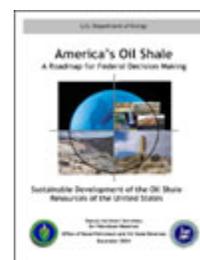
It has been nearly two decades since meaningful federal oil shale policy initiatives were undertaken. In that time technology has advanced, global economic, political, and market conditions have changed, and the regulatory landscape has matured. As America considers its homeland security posture, including its desired access to diverse, secure and abundant sources of liquid fuels, it is both necessary and prudent to reconsider the potential of oil shale in the nation's energy and natural resource portfolio.

Commercializing the vast oil shale resources would complement the mission of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, by measurably adding to the country's energy resource base. Addition of shale oil to the country's proved oil reserves could occur in a manner similar to the addition of 175 billion barrels of oil from Alberta tar sands to Canada's proved oil reserves. As a result of the commercial success, oil from tar sand production now exceeds one million barrels per day. Oil shale in the United States, which is as rich as tar sand, could similarly be developed and become a vital component in America's future energy security.

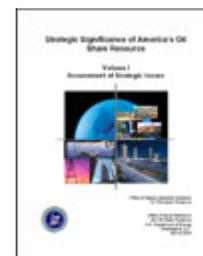
The Fossil Energy program in oil shale focuses on reviewing the potential of oil shale as a strategic resource for liquid fuels. Activities include reviewing: the strategic value of oil shale development; public benefits from its development; possible ramifications of failure to develop these resources; and, related public policy issues and options.

The program is also involved in characterizing the oil shale resource, assessing oil shale technology, summarizing environmental and

## KEY PUBLICATIONS



- > [America's Oil Shale: A Roadmap for Federal Decision Making - December 2004](#)  
[851KB PDF]



- > [Strategic Significance of America's Oil Shale Resource - Volume I](#)  
[1.04MB PDF]
- > [Strategic Significance of America's Oil Shale Resource - Volume II](#)  
[1.04MB PDF]

- > [More Publications](#)

## PROGRAM CONTACTS

regulatory issues, and reviewing tar sand commercialization in Canada as an analog for oil shale development in the United States.

- [Read Oil & Gas Journal article, "Is Oil Shale America's Answer to Peak-Oil Challenge?"](#)  
[copies available upon request; 163 KB PDF]

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