



OPINION

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Join legislators and regulators to talk oil and gas in person

By Idaho Department of Lands Director Tom Schultz

Oil and natural gas activity has arrived in Idaho.

The activity certainly is not booming, but exploration in the past few years brought about promising results, enough that private industry committed to investing in our state and our communities. Seventeen drill permits in Payette County are considered active, and commercial production of oil and gas resources is waiting on a pipeline and other infrastructure.

For Idahoans in Payette, Washington, and Gem counties – the hub of recent oil and gas activity in Idaho – words such as “split estates” and “integration” are commonly heard now days. Some people have voiced frustration about the process of leasing and integration.

The Idaho Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, with me as its secretary and the Idaho Department of Lands as its administrative arm, are responsible for regulating the exploration, drilling and production of oil and gas resources in Idaho. As questions mount, I am coming to Payette on Aug. 10, to share information as the head of the main regulating agency for oil and gas in Idaho.

District nine legislators – Senator Abby Lee, Representative Ryan Kerby, and Representative Judy Boyle – invited me to present information at an oil and gas open house they are hosting on Aug. 10 at 6 p.m. at the McCain Middle School, located at 400 N. Iowa Street in Payette. After my presentation, I will answer written questions from attendees; note cards will be provided at the meeting.

If you can't make to the Aug. 10 open house, here is an overview of what I will cover.

- **Brief history of oil and gas regulation in Idaho** – We have been working for the past six years to bring Idaho's regulatory infrastructure up to 21st century standards. Compared to when we started, Idaho's laws and rules now better protect water and the environment as well as Idahoans' land and mineral rights.
- **Split estates** – In many places, mineral rights have been separated from surface ownership. Mineral rights are property rights. Throughout the United States, the law recognizes the mineral estate is dominant over the surface estate. I will talk about how you can find out if you own minerals, and what it means if you don't.

- **Integration** – This is the process of pooling adjoining mineral tracts for inclusion into drilling units, to protect Idahoans’ mineral rights and minimize waste of oil and gas resources. We will look at history, and how it has shown that spacing requirements and integration are needed to protect Idahoans.

If you are curious about how oil and gas development is coming along in Idaho and you want to know more about issues that keep popping up in news stories or in conversations with members of your community, then I hope you will join District nine legislators and me at the open house.

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Tom Schultz is the director of the Idaho Department of Lands and secretary to the Idaho Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, the five-member body with responsibility to regulate oil and gas development in Idaho.