



Governor Bill Ritter's

CONSERVATION REPORT CARD

2007-2010




We are pleased to present the Conservation Report Card for Governor Bill Ritter Jr. This report card is a reflection on and analysis of Gov. Ritter's work on the key environmental issues of the day.

We evaluate his work on the New Energy Economy, Global Warming, Open Spaces and Wild Places, Water, Mining, Growth and Transportation, and Oil and Gas Development. No one would dispute that the governor has led the way on the New Energy Economy in Colorado. He easily warrants the A+ that we proudly give him in that category. The Governor's work merits, on balance, very strong marks. If he was using this report card as part of his college applications, we are confident he would be accepted to many fine institutions of higher learning.

As Coloradans, we share a passion for our beautiful state. Colorado is a compilation of scenic vistas, abundant resources, roaring rivers, and spectacular wildlife that enrich our lives while helping drive our economy. With everyone not always agreeing on how best to protect our air, land, water, and wildlife, Gov. Ritter has worked tirelessly to bridge these divides. It is for this reason we have so valued the energy, enthusiasm, and strong leadership that Gov. Ritter has brought to many of these issues. For all of his efforts, we extend our sincere thanks to him.

Colorado Conservation Voters created this report card in partnership with organizations throughout the conservation community. Visit us at www.coloradoconservationvoters.org to view this report card online. Our 2010 legislative Conservation Scorecard is also available. It provides information about how each member of the Colorado State Legislature voted on a range of conservation issues.

Pete Maysmith, Executive Director

Colorado Conservation  Voters

Governor Bill Ritter's Conservation Report Card

GRADING PERIOD	2007-2010
NEW ENERGY ECONOMY	A+
GLOBAL WARMING	A-
SMART GROWTH AND TRANSPORTATION	C+
WATER	A-
MINING	B+
RESPONSIBLE OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT	A
OPEN SPACES AND WILD PLACES	B

NEW ENERGY ECONOMY

A+

During the past four years, 2007-2010, Gov. Ritter has shown that bold leadership in building the New Energy Economy Colorado can meet our environmental and economic challenges with solid results.

LEGISLATION

Gov. Ritter finished his term in the same way he began, boosting Colorado's renewable energy standard another 10%. Colorado now boasts a 30% requirement for clean, renewable resources by 2020, an improvement of three times from when he took office. The renewable energy standard includes a commitment to solar electricity by creating a 3% requirement for distributed generation on homes and businesses. After four successive years advancing a legislative agenda of New Energy Economy priorities, Gov. Ritter put his signature on the 57th clean energy bill this past June, creating a lasting public policy framework for a smarter, cleaner energy future for Colorado and firmly cementing an important legacy.

EXECUTIVE ACTION

Gov. Ritter's administration has led by example. By the end of 2009, the Greening State Government initiative had reduced fuel consumption by state vehicles by close to 12%, installed eight renewable energy projects, and almost three quarters of state agencies were engaged in energy performance contracting. Yet building the New Energy Economy was not just left to public policy decisions. Gov. Ritter and his team rolled up their sleeves and made it their mission to bring clean technology companies and investment dollars to Colorado, thereby creating new jobs. By aggressively marketing the state, Gov. Ritter, the Energy Office and the Office of Economic Development have been directly involved in expanding or relocating 32 companies to Colorado.

LEADERSHIP

At a time when our state needed strong leadership on energy, Gov. Ritter was a champion.
 Gov. Ritter's efforts here in Colorado have proven that the benefits of building the New Energy Economy reach far beyond the environment and can boost our economy, create good jobs, and secure energy independence. He has helped shape the debate on energy at a defining time for our nation.
 Gov. Ritter has been thoughtful about the team he assembled. Appointing cabinet members, regulators and policy advisors who were thoughtful and strong advocates helped make his clean energy vision a lasting reality.

GLOBAL WARMING

A-

Global warming poses serious threats to Colorado. Decreased snowfall will lead to greater competition over diminished water supplies. Hotter average temperatures will set the stage for longer and more intense droughts. Rising temperatures will likewise affect the length and severity of the wildfire season.

LEGISLATION

In 2006, Colorado had no plan to address the state's contribution to global warming. Today we can applaud multiple legislative achievements championed by Gov. Ritter. His legislative program, centering on renewable energy, energy efficiency, alternative fuels, and coal-plant conversion brought Colorado into national prominence for innovative climate action. Among his many achievements in the new energy arena, his signal accomplishments were twice raising the renewable energy standard for large utilities and a bold effort to retire a significant portion of Colorado's coal-fired power generation. Taken collectively, Gov. Ritter's legislative efforts have slowed the growth of the state's greenhouse gas emissions and set the stage for more substantial cuts in future years.

EXECUTIVE ACTION

Gov. Ritter created a Climate Action Plan in 2007 for achieving a 20% reduction in global warming pollution by 2020. A critical piece of this plan included not only state government but also major utilities. Colorado's major utilities are now on track to greatly reduce pollution. The plan was a bold departure from years of inaction and even refusal on the part of previous government leaders to recognize the global warming problem. Through his leadership in clean energy initiatives, as well as his role in shrinking the carbon footprint of state government, Gov. Ritter has set a bold course in climate action. Yet with only four years in office, some of the policy mechanisms for achieving the sharp reductions in emissions required to meet the 2020 goals remain untried by his administration.

LEADERSHIP

To develop and implement his Climate Action Plan, Gov. Ritter appointed the state's first Climate Change advisor and brought together cabinet heads to give serious thought to an issue that had previously languished. He also provided strong leadership nationally at critical times, testifying in Congress in support of landmark legislation. With more time, Gov. Ritter could have gone further, particularly working to cut emissions from the transportation sector. Colorado needs a champion for lower-carbon fuels and smarter land use decisions to help improve mobility and cut down driving time. There can be no doubt that Gov. Ritter's leadership put Colorado ahead of the pack in addressing Global Warming.

SMART GROWTH AND TRANSPORTATION

C+

Colorado has added 1.8 million residents since 1990, and the population continues to climb rapidly with 1.6 million more residents expected to arrive by 2025.

LEGISLATION	EXECUTIVE ACTION	LEADERSHIP
<p>Tax Increment Financing (TIF) had been used in Colorado to fund sprawl on farmlands, instead of the original intention: urban re-development. In 2010, Gov. Ritter signed a law to ensure TIF is only used in blighted urban areas. Also in 2010, Gov. Ritter signed a measure that ensures transportation agencies consider cyclists and other non-motorized users in addition to automobiles in planning.</p> <p>In 2009, Gov. Ritter used his leadership position to champion legislation creating a dedicated revenue stream of \$250 million per year to repair and maintain Colorado’s road and bridge infrastructure (FASTER). FASTER was also the first time in state history a funding source was dedicated to transit and multimodal safety. Finally, a piece of legislation created a new Division of Transit and Rail to create a statewide transit plan.</p>	<p>Gov. Ritter created the Colorado Sustainable Main Streets Initiative via Executive Order in 2010 to help communities enhance the sustainability of their downtowns. The Governor’s administration also helped pursue the federal Sustainable Communities grant submitted by the metro Denver region for \$5 million.</p> <p>In January 2010, the Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC) began its efforts to develop a plan to get Colorado back in compliance with federal ozone standards. Gov. Ritter directed the RAQC to focus its work on reducing transportation-related ozone emissions and to consider a wide range of measures to reduce vehicle miles traveled, including land use measures.</p>	<p>The Governor’s appointment of Russell George as director of Colorado’s Department of Transportation in 2007 was an important step towards a more multimodally-minded CDOT.</p> <p>While the Governor has championed transportation with an emphasis on transit, he has done little else to plan for growth and development in terms of transportation. He did not fight for any major smart growth measures that would maintain the quality of life that Coloradans value.</p>

WATER

A-

Protecting our rivers and streams is one of the biggest policy challenges in Colorado. Ensuring adequate water supplies for growing communities is an issue that affects the daily lives of all Coloradans.

LEGISLATION	EXECUTIVE ACTION	LEADERSHIP
<p>Through legislation, Gov. Ritter re-energized the Colorado Stream and Lake Protection Program. Changes ensured water right holders were not penalized for helping the state preserve our rivers and streams. Tax credits were created to incentivize permanent donations of water rights for instream flows. These measures have renewed interest in the state’s program and greatly improved our state’s efforts to protect Colorado’s streams and rivers.</p> <p>In addition, Gov. Ritter signed water conservation and efficiency legislation. These efforts support water conservation planning and implementation of programs. Incorporating water efficiency into the state’s plumbing codes, collecting better data on how our cities use water, and ensuring that new home owners have the opportunity to buy Water-Smart homes.</p>	<p>The governor made several appointments to state agencies, boards and commissions with individuals who make decisions with the health of our rivers and streams in mind. These appointments added much needed balance to boards and commissions that historically lacked environmental champions.</p>	<p>While Gov. Ritter has been a champion for protection and restoration of streams (as evidenced in his efforts to revitalize the Stream and Lake Protection Program), his vision of assuring waterways are protected from increasing water demands of the Front Range is less clear. Under the Ritter Administration, several state-based efforts have quantified Colorado’s future water needs. The results are enlightening – and alarming. Moving forward, the state’s future water needs, without developing large new water pipelines and reservoirs that damage important ecological resources in Colorado, still need to be met.</p>

MINING

B+

Hardrock mining for uranium, gold, and other metals have left a toxic legacy of polluted waters, scarred landscapes, and ruined wildlife habitat in Colorado. A series of reforms address many of these issues.

LEGISLATION

In recent years, a number of controversial uranium mining and processing operations have been proposed. The legislature passed several bills to overhaul uranium regulations to get ahead of this potential uranium mining boom. Gov. Ritter helped set the strongest groundwater protection standards in the country for in-situ leach uranium mines. Uranium companies tried to exploit and avoid these environmental protections through a loophole in state law; which is now closed. Another law requires uranium companies to clean-up existing toxic pollution at processing and milling facilities before they are able to expand their operations. Colorado joined other western states in making sure mining prospecting decisions and information related to the potential toxic impacts of these projects are publicly accessible.

EXECUTIVE ACTION

The Governor made appointments to the Mined Land Reclamation Board with experience in environmental law and science, mineral development, and Colorado’s agricultural industry. The board voted unanimously to implement the legislation that gave local governments and the public the right to participate in mine prospecting decisions. Gov. Ritter’s Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety ran an exemplary, open, and fair rulemaking process offering accountability. Unfortunately, the Administration’s Radiation Management Unit (RMU) continues to lack transparency in decision-making. The RMU should encourage public input in decision-making and have easily accessible documentation. Gov. Ritter opposed the right of local governments to ban the use of cyanide in mining, a stance that influenced a disappointing Colorado Supreme court ruling.

LEADERSHIP

Gov. Ritter and his staff were critical to passing the 2008 and 2010 reforms. His office guided discussions between stakeholders to help craft narrowly focused legislation that addressed important issues affecting Colorado communities. This leadership led to strong bipartisan support for the legislation. Gov. Ritter traveled to Cañon City, a local community which has been fighting for toxic-clean-up at the long-contaminated local uranium mill, signing these reforms into law. However, Gov. Ritter expressed support for the construction of a new uranium processing facility, despite the unresolved impacts related to health, safety, and the environment. The mill is located in an area on Colorado’s West Slope with potentially severe impacts to local agricultural, tourism and recreation industries.

RESPONSIBLE OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT

A

As the oil and gas industry boomed in Colorado there was a spread of drilling rigs into once-undeveloped areas, causing fragmented wildlife habitats and heightened concerns about air and water quality.

LEGISLATION

Homeowners, sportsmen, and recreation business operators recognized that existing legal protections were not sufficient to safeguard the character of outdoor Colorado from excessive development. In 2007, Gov. Ritter responded with a trio of legislative initiatives to put oil and gas development on a more responsible course. One new law reformed the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, the body for overseeing drilling operations. The Commission now includes, among others, experts on public health, wildlife and the environment. A second initiative enhanced the rights of surface landowners and required oil and gas operations to minimize surface intrusion and impacts. A third act directed the Commission to minimize impacts on wildlife by implementing best management practices and consulting with the Colorado Wildlife Commission and the Division of Wildlife.

EXECUTIVE ACTION

Gov. Ritter’s most important executive action was shepherding the development of the amended oil and gas rules in 2007-2008. Marshalling insights from industry, conservation, and public health communities, the effort resulted in the most extensive rulemaking in the Commission’s history. Central to the rules’ development were the Governor’s key executive appointments. A diverse Commission that included appointees with environmental, public health and wildlife expertise ensured regulatory balance, while renewed administrative vigor at the Division of Wildlife led to a stronger stance on behalf of big game and sage grouse.

LEADERSHIP

Gov. Ritter’s leadership was fundamental to changing the politics of Colorado’s oil and gas development. With his inclusive and balanced approach, the longstanding efforts of landowners, sportsmen, conservation leaders, and local communities to bring common sense to drilling reached a new level of success. Not every goal was achieved, nor was every initiative welcomed. The Governor’s support for raising the severance tax paid by oil and gas operators did not prevent this ballot measure from being rejected by voters in 2008. The administration’s recent inaction on key protections deferred during the oil and gas rulemaking, including reclamation of drilling sites, setbacks from homes and streams, and best management practices for wildlife, stands in sharp contrast to the energy and resolve displayed in 2007-2008.

OPEN SPACES AND WILD PLACES

B

Coloradans treasure their outdoor experiences whether it's a ski vacation, a walk through a local park, or a hunting trip during elk season. Conservationists believe we must protect our most treasured landscapes so that future generations will also be able to share these experiences.

LEGISLATION	EXECUTIVE ACTION	LEADERSHIP
<p>When state budget shortfalls pushed legislators to look at cutting the conservation easement tax credit program, Gov. Ritter helped broker a compromise that ensured the program would be restored to traditional funding levels over time. The easement tax credit program is one of the most critical land conservation tools available. Without Gov. Ritter's leadership, the program could have been subject to deeper and potentially permanent cuts.</p>	<p>Gov. Ritter lobbied for and won additional time for the state to make recommendations on the proposed management of the Roan Plateau. Unfortunately, his administration's proposal would still have resulted in damaging oil and gas drilling on the top of the Plateau. Disappointingly, Gov. Ritter spoke out against a pro-conservation decision by the Forest Service to deny Crested Butte Mountain Resort's Snodgrass expansion proposal.</p> <p>Finally, Gov. Ritter moved forward in submitting a separate state rule governing the management of Colorado's roadless national forests, which provide important wildlife habitat, clean drinking water and recreational opportunities. Many conservation organizations oppose the state rule as submitted to USDA because they concluded that the state rule affords less protection than the national 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Some conservation organizations back the state's proposal because of several changes to the original draft which strengthen its protective measures. Conservation organizations of both perspectives continue to engage USDA with respect to the Rule and hope to ensure the strongest possible protections for Colorado's roadless national forests.</p>	<p>Gov. Ritter played an active role in public lands issues in Colorado. He championed protection of Colorado's pristine Vermillion Basin in northwest Colorado, which helped lead to a landmark Bureau of Land Management decision to withdraw the area from future oil and gas leasing. Overall, the Governor signaled a new direction by insisting on being a part of discussions regarding the management and protection of Colorado's vast wealth of federal public lands. During Gov. Ritter's tenure, the Department of Natural Resources has been very engaged in public lands issues. While the conservation community would have liked Gov. Ritter to champion even more public land protection efforts, such as proactively supporting initiatives like the Hidden Gems Wilderness Proposal for the White River National Forest, overall his administration was more engaged in lands protection than past administrations.</p>

Notes:

Thank you for all of your hard work over the past four years.

We wish you the best of luck in the future.

— Colorado Conservation Community

Parent Signature _____ **Date** _____

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**organizations are shown for identification purposes only.*