

# Oil Shale Activity in the Western United States

The phases of development of a commercial oil shale industry can be broken into three stages: exploration, field-testing, and commercial production. During the **exploration phase**, companies are focused on resource acquisition, geological assessments, and engineering and testing extraction and supporting technologies at the lab-bench scale. The **field-testing phase** involves building and testing pilot, and next, “semi-works”-scale plants in the field. Finally, in the **commercial phase**, a scaled-up demonstration plant typically would precede a commercial facility.

Prior to its collapse in 1982, the oil shale industry in western Colorado reached the cusp of the commercial phase with a single demonstration plant and another semi-works plant.

Oil Shale Deposits & Current Development Activities in Western U.S.



- Colorado**  
 Chevron\*  
 ExxonMobil  
 Shell Exploration and Production Co.\*  
 AMSO (American Shale Oil)\*  
 Natural Soda, Inc.  
 General Synfuels International

- Utah**  
 Ambre Energy  
 EcoShale/RedLeaf Resources  
 Enshale  
 OSEC (Oil Shale Exploration Corp.)\*  
 Independent Energy Producers

\*Recipient of 2007 BLM RD&D lease

In the early 1980s, the oil shale industry in Colorado reached the cusp of the commercial phase with a single demonstration plant and another semi-works plant before declining world oil prices halted development altogether.

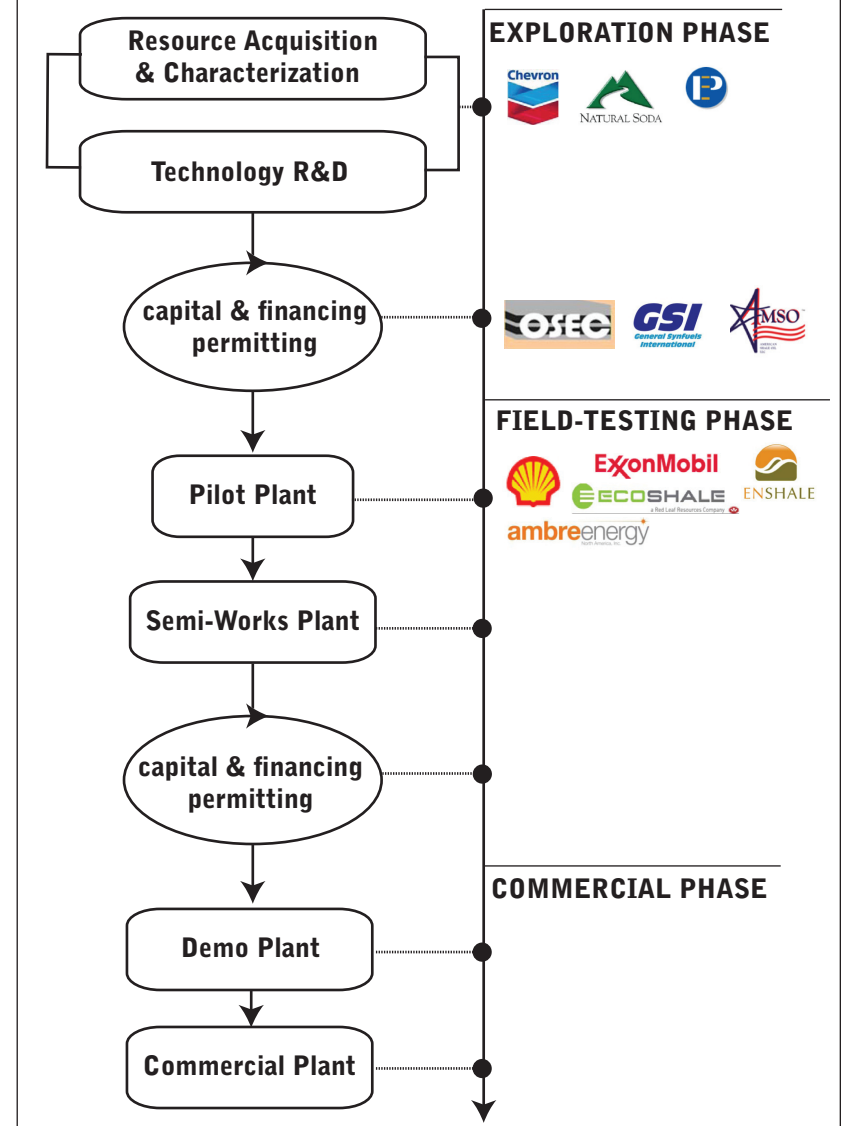
As of late 2009, oil shale development activities remain in the exploratory phases, with a handful of field-trial projects underway. EcoShale, a RedLeaf Resources Company, has plans to move their field-tested technology to the semi-works stage in 2010.

Exploration and field-testing has been concentrated in northeastern Utah and northwestern Colorado on both private and public land.

The scale of investment increases exponentially from one phase to the next, with billions of dollars required to achieve commercial production. Making the leap to commercial-scale production will be very difficult without a sizable public investment.

**sources:** U.S. Dept. of Energy, NPOSR, [Profiles of Companies Engaged in Oil Shale and Tar Sands Resources and Technology Development](#), BLM Oil Shale and Tar Sands Programmatic EIS, and [Colorado School of Mines 29th Annual Oil Shale Symposium](#). This figure omits approximately 25 companies active in developing oil shale technologies that do not have oil shale resource holdings in the western U. S.

Current Activities in the Western U.S. & Stages in the Development of Oil Shale Industry



For more information, please visit:  
<http://www.headwaterseconomics.org/oilshale.php>

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