

Bureau of Land Management is criticized

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The U.S. Bureau of Land Management is being accused of focusing on oil drilling and ignoring the affect such drilling might have on wildlife.

Some of the bureau's biologists say the agency routinely restricts monitoring of damage to wildlife caused by energy drilling on federal land, The Washington Post reported Wednesday.

The Government Accountability Office -- the investigative arm of Congress -- issued a report last year, finding BLM managers order field staff to devote increasing amounts of time to processing drilling permits, allowing less time to investigate the environmental impact of oil and gas drilling.

"It has become almost a cultural practice in the BLM to spend money that is appropriated for one purpose, for whatever purpose somebody deems is a higher priority," a senior BLM official told the Post on condition of anonymity.

The BLM's pace of issuing drilling permits in the western United States has, in some areas, increased six-fold in recent years, the newspaper reported. In the past two years, the BLM issued a record 13,070 drilling permits on federal lands.

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