

Asset Protection in a Politicized Environment: Drilling and Production in the 21st Century, James H. Viellenave and David Seneshen, Vista Geoscience, 130 Capital Dr., Suite C, Golden, CO 80401

The recent run-up in oil and gas prices has vastly expanded the footprint of oil and gas development in rural and suburban areas of the United States and Canada. That footprint, combined with price increases at the pump, visions of intangible damages to property values, and occasional severed estate problems, has increasingly politicized the process for orderly and economical development of petroleum resources. Industry has found enough difficult operating conditions securing qualified drillers, geophysical and geochemical contractors and other support even without considering the uncertain impacts of such a “non-scientific” range of external influences. Industry compliance with laws and regulations has not blunted the effects of citizen groups, working committees, legislative audits, and election year rhetoric.

The solution is an environmental risk management program, fully integrated with operations, which when implemented, identifies and reduces risks, saves money, and dramatically lessens the potential for litigation, which is the single most powerful source of inefficiency in the industry today. Case studies and lessons learned from several basins in the Rocky Mountain West are presented, including coal bed methane production in the San Juan, Raton, and Powder River Basins and tight gas in the Piceance and Green River Basins.