Jack Dyni and I have spent much of the past six months assembling previously published oil shale assessment reports, detailed geologic maps of oil shale areas in the Piceance Basin of western Colorado and the Uinta Basin of eastern Utah, and detailed cross sections of oil shale intervals and having them put into digital form. These publications will be put on the newly launched USGS oil shale web site. The permanent home for the web site will be http://energy.cr.usgs.gov/other/oil_shale/. The temporary home until April of May, where the public can view the web page and make comments is http://energy.cr.usgs.gov/news/other/oil_shale/. Thirty six maps included in three assessment reports on the oil shale resources of the Piceance Basin were digitized and put into a spatially referenced ARCMAP project in order to aid the on-going effort by the BLM to evaluate potential oil shale lease tracks. The maps include structure contour maps, isopach maps and resource maps showing gallons per ton and barrels per acre.

Virtually the entire oil shale area in the Uinta and Piceance Basins that has potential for development was mapped at a 1:24,000 scale in the 1970s and 1980s. Sixty four quadrangles were published in the Piceance Basin and sixteen in the Uinta Basin. Most of these maps were published in black and white, using author drafting in the USGS Miscellaneous Field Investigation Series in order to release them as quickly as possible. Only about 300 to 500 copies of each map were printed of which about one-third were sent to various libraries and depositories. The remaining copies were typically sold out rather quickly and were never reprinted, thus it is impossible to purchase these maps today. In addition, many of the copies that were sold to energy companies or placed in libraries were probably thrown out once interest in oil shale collapsed. I had copies of almost all of these maps but most had been marked up during various trips to the field. Jack and I were finally able to locate clean copies of almost all of these maps, and they were sent out to be scanned. The scanned versions will be available through the USGS oil shale web page.

The Utah Survey, under the direction of Dave Tabot, is producing an oil shale web page for information concerning only the Utah oil shales. Their site will include all published data on Utah oil shales as well as some data gleaned from now-defunct oil shale companies.

An article on the state of oil shale development in the world was prepared for the May addition of the Explorer Magazine. The article was written almost entirely by Jack Dyni who has been working on oil shale over the past 40 years and was far more familiar with the state of things than I was.

The following two paragraphs were condensed from a BLM press release on January 17, 2006:

On January 17, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today announced the names of eight applicants whose proposals for oil shale research development and demonstration (RD&D) leases have been judged eligible for continued consideration. The companies that filed the eight applications are Chevron Shale Oil Company; EGL Resources, Inc.; Exxon Mobil Corporation; Oil-Tech, Inc.; Oil Shale Exploration, LLC; and Shell Frontier Oil & Gas, whose three separate nominations were all judged eligible
for further consideration. The eight proposals were among 20 nominations the BLM received in response to a call for proposals published in the Federal Register in June 2005 for 160-acre RD&D leases on public lands in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. Those nominations were evaluated by an interdisciplinary team of representatives from the BLM, the Departments of Energy and Defense, and the governments of the three States.

The next step in the evaluation process will be to complete an environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of the eight proposals. The parcels nominated by Chevron, EGL, Exxon Mobil, and Shell are located on public lands in Colorado. The proposals submitted by Oil-Tech and Oil Shale Exploration, LLC involve parcels in Utah. Each nomination identifies the 160 acres allowed in the call for RD&D proposals, along with an additional contiguous area of 4,960 acres to be reserved for a preferential right to convert to a commercial lease at a future time after additional BLM review. Six of the proposals involve in-situ (in-place) retorting.