

Wilderness oil, gas checked

United Press International
 WASHINGTON — There may be 365 million barrels of recoverable oil in wilderness areas and in areas which have the potential for being designated wilderness areas in Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming. But that's just 1.1 percent of the West's total potential, the Wilderness Society reports.

The Wilderness Society says in a report that the three states may have an estimated 4,099 billion cubic feet of natural gas in protected and potential wilderness areas. That accounts for 2.24 percent of the potential recoverable gas in 11 Western states.

"More than 97 percent of the undiscovered recoverable oil and nearly 95 percent of the undiscovered recoverable gas in the Western states is estimated to occur on non-wilderness lands," the report said.

The report by Richard Rice of the Society's Economic Policy Department centered on 74 million acres of wilderness and potential wilderness administered by federal agencies in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Wilderness designation does not allow mineral and other development, a factor that has led to heavy opposition from energy companies and others.

The Wilderness Society said critics often claim wilderness has locked up vast quantities of the nation's energy reserves. But the report, which is based on government studies, indicates otherwise. Rice said his report is the first to break out the potential energy reserves in potential wilderness areas.

The report listed 22 million acres of designated wilderness and another 52 million acres the government considers suitable for protection. However, the Society said some of the totals may be slightly off because Congress pushed through final designations in some states in the last hours of its session.

The government says its most recent figures show 15.2 million barrels of petroleum products are produced every day in America, along with 17 billion cubic feet of natural gas.

Wyoming, which has about 40 percent of the total, leads the other states in potential oil and gas reserves in wilderness and potential

wilderness areas. The report says Wyoming has an estimated 380 million barrels of potential oil and 3,848 billion cubic feet of natural gas.

Colorado's wilderness and potential wilderness areas have an estimated 9.16 million barrels of undiscovered recoverable oil and 12 billion cubic feet of natural gas in the same category. New Mexico is estimated to have about 7.59 million barrels and 122 billion cubic feet of those areas.

The report showed Wyoming, Idaho, Utah and Nevada account for over 90 percent of the total oil potential on wilderness lands while Wyoming joins Idaho and Montana in accounting for almost 90 percent of the total gas potential.

The report also showed: — Only three states have any designated wilderness with high petroleum potential — Wyoming (57,000 acres), New Mexico (38,000) and Montana (648,500).

— Overall, only 4 percent of the 74 million acres has high petroleum potential, 4 percent has medium and 88 percent has low potential.

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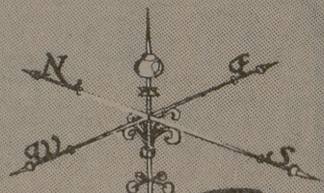
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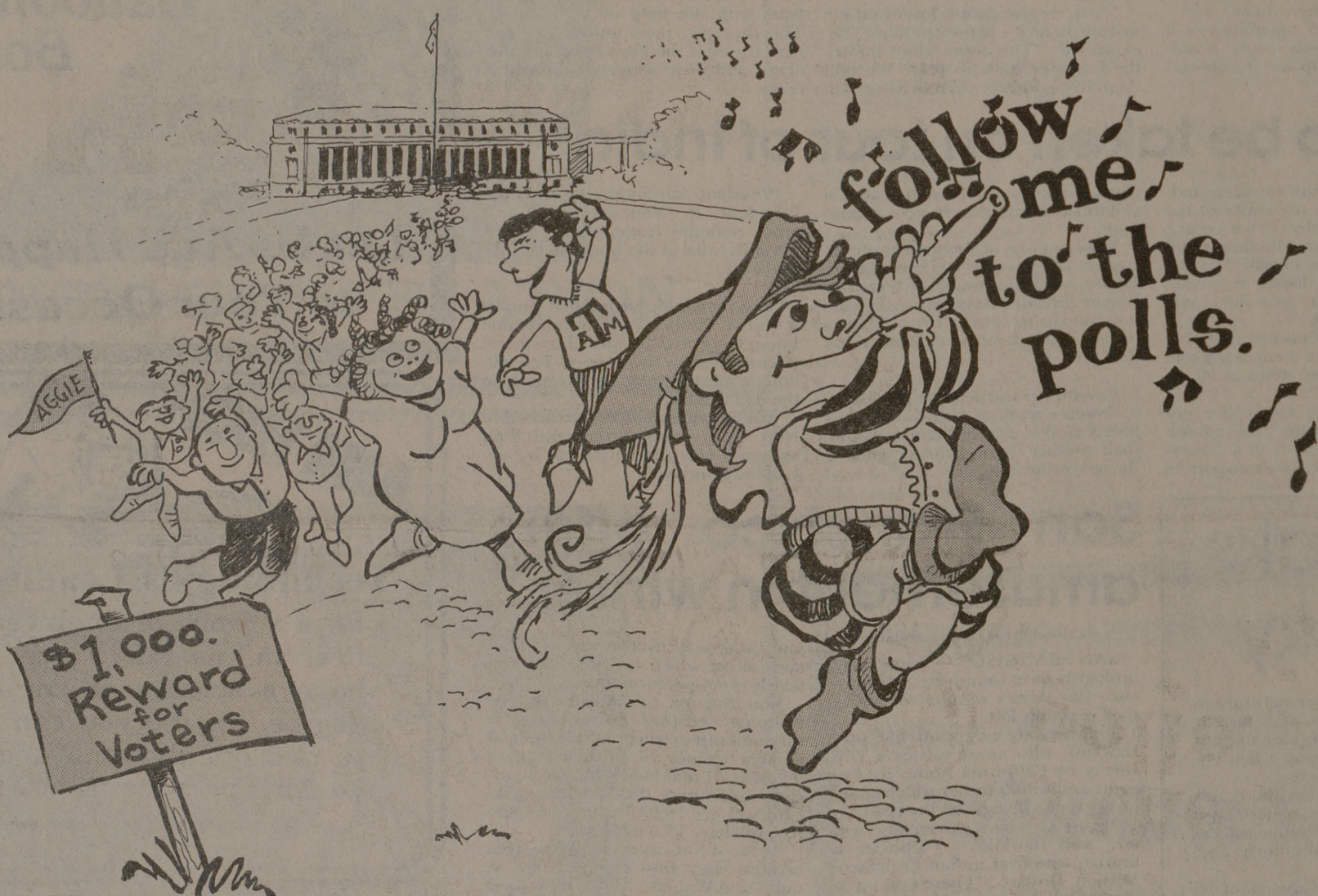
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