

Weld County sprouts crude oil

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Nearly every piece of clothing we wear is either made from or processed with oil, CSU geosciences professor Sven Egenhoff said.

Last week's discovery of crude oil at the Niobrara Formation in Weld County probably won't put Colorado at the forefront of the oil industry, Egenhoff said. But, because of oil's prominence in society, the newfound source will likely cushion the state's economy and create jobs.

"This is one of the biggest discoveries in the U.S. in the last 10 years," Weld County Commissioner Doug Rademacher said.

The one well, located just south of the Wyoming border, surpassed normal new-well production by 1,000 barrels of oil in just one day, according to the Greeley Tribune.

EOG Resources, formerly Enron Oil and Gas, made the discovery early last week and Rademacher said during that first drill the site produced three times more oil than a typical well.

Horizontal drilling, a technique that allows drillers to tap more than a half-mile of land at a time, was used in this discovery of "sweet crude oil," Rademacher said. This type of oil is scarce and contains little other natural gas.

The area -- stretching from Fort Collins to Sterling -- is now open for leasing.

"It's fast and furious with leases up there," Rademacher said.

Oil, Egenhoff said, forms from the breakdown of organic matter and tiny organisms after the earth has naturally heated it to between 143 to 212 degrees Fahrenheit, which he calls the "oil window."

Drillers then harvest the oil by "fracking," or stimulating the rock until it breaks. This, Egenhoff said, is to increase the flow of fluid.

“Oil is not sitting in huge lakes down there,” Egenhoff said.