

July 20, 2017

Vernal Field Office  
Bureau of Land Management  
170 S 500 E  
Vernal Utah, 84078  
[blm\\_UT-Vernal\\_comments@blm.gov](mailto:blm_UT-Vernal_comments@blm.gov)

**Re: Preliminary EA for the Green River District, Vernal Field Office December 2017  
Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale**

Dear BLM Planners,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Preliminary EA for the Green River District, Vernal Field Office December 2017 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale. As business people who operate in Uintah County, we are proud of our public lands and benefit directly when they are managed with care and thoughtful consideration because land use decisions affect the long term economic prospects of the region.

We are concerned that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is not taking into account the long-term impacts of oil and gas leasing near Dinosaur National Monument. While Uintah County has many important recreation assets, in recent years, oil and gas leasing has dominated the economy of our region at the expense of both the recreation economy and potential recruitment of other businesses and employers. The current downturn in oil and gas prices and the resulting job losses remind us that diversification would be wise.

The potential for diversification is enormous. With access to a wide variety of recreation assets, Uintah County is poised to increase not just visitation, but business investment in the region as well. Companies of all types are seeking communities where employees can afford homes and have easy access to the out-of-doors. Uintah County has the right profile to take advantage of this long-term trend.

Yet oil and gas leasing, which is completely insensitive to its effects on other land uses, will inhibit investment in both visitor services and other new businesses. If there is a chance that areas around Dinosaur will soon be industrialized with roads and infrastructure of all types the quality of the outdoor experience will suffer, and so will the County's chances of true diversification.

In particular, we are concerned about the following proposed leases that fall adjacent to and around the Monument boundary:

- Five parcels (063, 064, 069, 070, 071) are near the Monument Visitor Center (the Quarry Visitor Center) as well as the Quarry Exhibit Hall and Fossil Discovery Trail.
- Eight parcels (058, 059, 060, 063, 064, 069, 070, 071) fall within 10 miles of the Monument's boundary.

- Parcels 065, 067 and 072 that are located approximately 18-28 miles southwest of the Monument and also visible from the Visitor Center.

\* \* \*

We are troubled by how close the proposed leases are to Dinosaur National Monument and the lack of protections to address potential negative impacts on the Monument. The above leases are also located within the Monument's scenic viewshed. We urge you to revisit this proposal and analyze the potential impacts to future economic development. We cannot expect the recreation economy of this incredible part of Utah to preform if we don't work to enhance key recreation assets like Dinosaur National Monument, not degrade them.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the Preliminary EA.

Sincerely,

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