

May 31st, 2021

President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C., DC 20500

Secretary Deb Haaland
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear President Biden and Secretary Haaland,

The undersigned businesses support your important work to update the federal onshore oil and gas leasing system on public lands, beginning with the leasing pause and programmatic review. Oil and gas leasing affects all of our businesses, both those directly involved in outdoor recreation and those who have located near public lands due to the high quality of life that access to public lands brings.

Current oil and gas leasing policies and laws undermine our prosperity in four primary ways:

Industrial Leasing Negatively Impacts Recreation Assets and Associated Outdoor Economies

Developed well pads on multi-use lands detract from natural experiences via leaking methane, constant low-level noise, intermittent truck traffic, and viewshed disruption. Generally, large producers develop oil and gas operations but as production declines on each well pad, sales to local operators often lead to less than best practices, making the operation even more disruptive to other public land users. Poorly funded operators degrade the overall region and often lead to orphaned wells making it extremely difficult or restore the land for other uses, such as outdoor recreation.

We urge the Interior Department to limit competitive sales and to declare lands unavailable for leasing where those lands that have valuable other multiple uses such as recreation that support the outdoor economy.

Speculative Leasing of Low Potential Lands Limits Planning and Management of Outdoor Recreation

Valid and existing leases on lands with low potential for profitable development are often acquired by oil and gas companies as a prospective investment. But these leases serve as a disincentive for investment in recreation assets, such as trails. Recreation assets bring both visitors and quality of life companies seeking to locate in communities with access to public land, but communities adjacent to public lands with extensive undeveloped leases are less likely to invest in trail systems limiting growth opportunities for both our companies and the communities themselves. Further, when planning for resource allocations and conservation designations on federal public lands, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) evaluates whether lands are leased for oil and gas development. If lands are leased, even if development is not occurring, the BLM will frequently decline to designate lands for conservation or recreation purposes. Given that the public land system is not infinite, and with nearly 50% of existing leases undeveloped, many of the parcels nominated today are on marginal lands which currently have extremely low potential for profitable oil and gas development, and high potential for recreational use. This affects our companies and many public land communities detrimentally as land managers are required to continually run oil and gas lease auctions when the growing public need is for more recreation assets and recreation management.

We urge the Interior Department to develop regulations that disincentivize the speculative oil and gas leasing of low potential lands and instead encourage growth of local communities by investing in and enhancing recreation assets.

Noncompetitive and Anonymous Leasing Leads to Environmental Damage and Leasing of Lands Better Suited for Other Multiple Uses

Noncompetitive and anonymous oil and gas auctions exacerbate the problems described above. Ending anonymous lease nominations leasing will expose bad actors that abuse the system (leaving orphan wells, causing environmental damage). Noncompetitive leasing rarely results in actual oil and gas production and often burdens other uses by limiting land use planning options and discouraging conservation designations and other productive uses such as recreation. A formal nomination process will allow BLM to better identify those lands that are suitable for nomination and those that are better suited for other multiple uses.

We urge the Interior Department to end the practice of noncompetitive leasing and establish a “formal” nomination process requiring anyone nominating public lands for leasing to disclose their identities.

Bonding and Abandoned/Orphan Wells Degrades Public Land and Burdens Taxpayers

Finally, bonding and reclamation requirements for oil and gas developments lack adequate fiscal protections and enforcement measures to ensure that areas are safely and swiftly cleaned-up after development and can be utilized for other purposes, specifically new recreation assets like trail systems that will bring economic development and support our companies and our customers. In addition, the cost of cleaning up abandoned wells falls to taxpayers when oil and gas companies go bankrupt.

We urge the Interior Department to require adequate bonding as a lease condition in order to prevent bankrupt companies from walking away from their developments leaving cleanup costs to taxpayers. Further, DOI should support measures to expedite the reclamation of the more than 8,000 orphaned or at-risk wells currently on federal lands.

While there was a time when resource extraction was one of the only mechanisms for rural communities to generate wealth, today communities with shared public land in its natural state are prospering. We urge you to review and address these issues during the leasing pause and programmatic review of the federal onshore oil and gas leasing system. All public land communities deserve the opportunity to diversify their economies and thus we must bring best practices to the oil and gas leasing and development system to restore and support our public lands, and businesses that depend upon them.

Sincerely,
The Undersigned Businesses

Patagonia

Meghan Wolf
Reno, Nevada

Aspen Skiing Company

Auden Schendler
Aspen, Colorado

Burton Snowboards

Elysa Walk
Burlington, Vermont

Western Spirit Cycling

Ashley Korenblat
Moab, Utah

Mountain Gear

Paul Fish
Spokane, Washington

La Sportiva N.A., Inc

Jonathan Lantz
Boulder, Colorado

Ibis Cycles, Inc.

Scot Nicol
Santa Cruz, California

Holiday River Expeditions

Tim Gaylord
Salt Lake City, Utah

Far Out Expeditions

Vaughn Hadenfeldt
Bluff, Utah

Moab Cyclery

Keith Phillips
Moab, Utah

Bikes For Every Body LLC

Shelley Patterson
Jupiter, Florida

pFriem Family Brewers

Josh Pfriem
Hood River, Oregon

Escape Adventures

Merrick Golz
Moab, Utah

ETP Group, LLC

Ned Post
Newport Beach, California

Rim Mountain Bike Tours

Kirstin Peterson
Moab, Utah

Apogee

Joseph Hood
Houston, Texas

Chile Pepper Bike Shop

Tracy Bentley
Moab, Utah

Whole Enchilada Shuttle Company

Kyle Mears
Moab, Utah

Poison Spider Bicycles

Scott Newton
Moab, Utah

Kokopelli Bike and Board

Pete Eschallier
Cortez, Colorado

Multitool Marketing

Nate Byerley
Tucson, Arizona

Campus Cycles

Mark Velat
Denver, Colorado

Zinn Cycles, Inc.

Lennard Zinn
Boulder, Colorado

Nuclear Sunrise Stitchworks LLC

David Wilson
El Paso, Texas

Huckwagons, LLC

Gary Holboy
Stanwood, Washington

Basso Capital

Howard Fischer
Armonk, New York

Jagged Edge Mountain Gear

Erik Dalton
Telluride, Colorado

Miguel's Baja Grill

David Bodner
Moab, Utah

DRP Sales Associates Inc

Dana Price
Morrison, Colorado

RockyMounts

Robert Noyes
Grand Junction, Colorado

Be Courteous Communications

Benny Cruickshank
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Cold Splinters

Jeff Thrope
Albuquerque, New Mexico