

**Montana Wildlife Federation φ Idaho Wildlife Federation φ Wyoming Wildlife Federation φ
New Mexico Wildlife Federation φ Nevada Wildlife Federation φ Colorado Wildlife Federation
φ South Dakota Wildlife Federation φ Arizona Wildlife Federation φ Conservation Northwest
(WA) φ Southeast Alaska Conservation Council φ North Dakota Wildlife Federation φ Planning
and Conservation League (CA) φ National Wildlife Federation**

July 9, 2020

Dear Senators,

We represent hundreds of thousands of Western hunters, anglers and other conservationists who hold a deep reverence for our nation's public lands—lands owned by all Americans and managed for us by the federal government.

As the western affiliates of the National Wildlife Federation, we write with grave concern about the president's nomination of William Perry Pendley to lead the Bureau of Land Management.

Our concerns rest in both his short record at the agency and his long career advocating against public lands.

For the past year, Mr. Pendley has been the de facto leader of the agency that manages 248 million acres of public land that is owned by all Americans. The following has happened under his watch:

- The bureau has offered up more acres of public land for oil and gas leasing in one year than any other administration. Much of the land has been [sold at rock-bottom prices](#) to speculators -- sometimes as low as \$1.50 an acre.
- Often those leases have been in or near areas that are cherished by Americans: the [Ruby Mountains in Nevada](#), the [Sand Flats in Utah](#) and [North Park in Colorado](#). Only after huge protests from local communities were these leases deferred, but deferred leases are often simply re-offered in future lease sales.
- Last month, the agency proposed [opening more than two-thirds of the nation's largest piece of public land](#) to oil and gas drilling, removing wildlife protections for the Alaskan tract that have been in place for more than four decades.
- In Utah, , the BLM announced it will offer up for oil and gas development [more than 100,000 acres of land near Arches, Canyonlands, and the Capitol Reef National Parks](#) , threatening the region's rich outdoor economy
- In Montana, Mr. Pendley released a regional management plan that allows for oil and gas drilling on 91% of the lands covered by the plan.
- In New Mexico, Mr. Pendley charged ahead on plans to drill near the Chaco Canyon, a cultural and sacred site to the Navajo and Pueblo nations, holding sparsely attending online public hearings as the nations battled a pandemic.

- Mr. Pendley also oversaw an ill-fated move of the BLM headquarters to Grand Junction, Colorado, designed to weaken the agency. Numerous top positions remain vacant because experienced officials did not want to move. Overall, some [100 positions remain empty](#).
- Mr. Pendley allowed the [transfer of 600 acres of public land to the Defense Department](#) to be used for border wall construction.
- For many of the day-to-day decisions that have to be made at the agency, Mr. Pendley has had to recuse himself. The list of his potential [conflicts-of-interest is a whopping 17 pages long](#), including 60 different companies and organizations. Either Pendley is violating his recusal list or else he is left without much to do. If the latter is the case, who is calling the shots at the bureau?

Missing from this list are any long term, meaningful steps for conservation, because Mr. Pendley has not proposed any. His agenda is lopsided, leaning into development at the expense of conservation. That is unsurprising, given his career long disdain for our nation's public lands. Prior to his tenure at the Bureau of Land Management, Mr. Pendley spent his entire career advocating for the sale and transfer of our federal public lands. Put simply, he believes public lands should not be in public hands.

As the president of the Mountain States Legal Foundation — an activist group that for years has brought lawsuits against the agency in an effort to curtail its management and authority over our public lands — Mr. Pendley was on the wrong side of every public lands and stream access issue. He even tolerated armed insurrection against the government. Under Mr. Pendley's watch, Mountain States Legal Foundation supported public land trespassers who held an armed standoff and threatened the lives of BLM employees. This antipathy for public lands and outward hostility towards public servants who manage them must not be a belief held by someone in charge of the agency. Further, the goal of selling off our federal lands is fundamentally in opposition to the bureau's statutory responsibilities, its reason for being, its values, and its mission.

This is unacceptable.

As senators, you have the Constitutional duty to carefully and thoroughly review the fitness of the nominee to responsibly lead the Bureau of Land Management. During this past year at the agency, Mr. Pendley has done nothing to show that he has renounced his anti-public lands zealotry.

Just a few weeks ago, an overwhelmingly bipartisan majority of senators came together to affirm the importance of public lands by passing the Great American Outdoors Act. Now it's time to come together again to demonstrate your unwavering commitment to these lands. Please urge Senate leadership to begin the confirmation process for Mr. Pendley as quickly as possible. We are quite sure that when all the evidence is weighed, the vast majority of senators will agree with us that Mr. Pendley is the wrong man for this very important job.

Our public lands put food on our tables, support wildlife habitat, give us a place to recreate and find solace, and provide natural resources that support jobs in our communities. These lands that are owned by all of us are one of America's finest ideas and deserve protection and wise stewardship, not wholesale attack through mismanagement and selloff.

Mr. Pendley must go.

Sincerely,

Frank Szollosi - Executive Director, Montana Wildlife Federation
Jesse Deubel - Executive Director, New Mexico Wildlife Federation
Dwayne Meadows - Executive Director, Wyoming Wildlife Federation
Mitch Friedman - Executive Director, Conservation Northwest (WA)
Russell Kuhlman - Executive Director, Nevada Wildlife Federation
Meredith Trainor - Executive Director, Southeast Alaska Conservation Council
Brian Brooks - Executive Director, Idaho Wildlife Federation
Chris Hesla - Executive Director, South Dakota Wildlife Federation
John Bradley - Executive Director, North Dakota Wildlife Federation
Howard Penn - Executive Director, Planning and Conservation League (CA)
Scott Garlid - Executive Director, Arizona Wildlife Federation
Suzanne O'Neill - Executive Director, Colorado Wildlife Federation
Collin O'Mara - President & Chief Executive Officer, National Wildlife Federation