

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of Interior
US Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

September 17, 2021

Dear Secretary Haaland,

Earlier this year, we applauded President Biden's pause on new federal oil and gas leasing in order to assess needed changes to our oil and gas leasing system. As part of the pause, the Department of Interior committed to providing a report that would outline a roadmap for needed modernizations to this system. We appreciate your commitment to developing the report and implementing its recommendations, and anxiously await its publication.

The recent decision in *Louisiana v. Biden*, requiring the administration to end the pause, creates a renewed urgency to reform our nation's oil and gas leasing program. The system is broken, as reported in myriad GAO reports in recent years. It is past time to fix it.

We were dismayed to see the scale of the acres nominated for potential lease. We understand that the Department of Interior will consider the leasing system's known deficiencies and aim to address them prior to offering new parcels for lease. However, accounting for these deficiencies on a lease-by-lease basis does not provide needed consistency or certainty that a programmatic update provides. We ask that you release your report and initiate a rule making process to address some of the most pressing problems with the system as soon as possible.

We also recognize that while it is imperative that DOI address needed reforms administratively, Congress can provide the long-term certainty and durability that Americans and our public lands deserve. We see an opportunity for Congress to provide this certainty through wise fiscal reform of our nation's oil and gas program in the reconciliation bill under current consideration. We urge you to ask Congress to adopt important updates to the oil and gas leasing system that include: (1) raising bonding rates for new wells to ensure companies, not taxpayers, pay to plug and reclaim old wells; (2) raising royalty rates to more closely reflect the rates on private and state lands, and ensure taxpayers receive a fair return on their minerals; and (3) end speculative and non-competitive leasing so the government does not waste funds prioritizing a single use over all others on lands that would likely never be developed.

According to reports issued by U.S. Government Accountability Office and Taxpayers for Common Sense, these updates to the leasing system would contribute billions of dollars of additional revenue to the treasury over the next decade. This money could help pay for the administration's visionary agenda to cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 and reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. It would also ensure that future generations can enjoy our public lands as much as we do.

The outdated oil and gas leasing system creates uncertainty for the landscape and the tens of millions of people that depend on public lands for food, water, fiber, and recreation. It also deprives taxpayers of important revenue that could be used to address many of our most pressing issues.

Fall is approaching, and millions of people are making plans for trips to America's public lands. Whether hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, or enjoying other outdoor activities, these people have much in common. They value wide open spaces, clean air and water, and abundant wildlife. They also want certainty that their children and grandchildren will have the same opportunities. We urge you to act.

Sincerely,

Arizona Wildlife Federation
Coalition to Protect American National Parks
Conservation Colorado
Conservation Northwest
Conservation Voter of New Mexico
Continental Divide Trail Coalition
Earthjustice
Earthkeepers 360
Georgia Interfaith Power and Light
Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO)
League of Conservation Voters
Montana Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Federation
Nevada Conservation League
Nevada Wildlife Federation
New Mexico Wild
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
North Carolina Wildlife Federation
Nuestra Tierra
Partnership for Responsible Business
Penn Future
Rocky Mountain Wild
Vet Voice Foundation
West Virginia Rivers Coalition
Western Organization of Resource Councils
The Wilderness Society
Wild Montana

Cc: Ms. Gina McCarthy, White House National Climate Advisor
The Honorable Charles Schumer, Majority Leader, US Senate
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House, US House of Representatives
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, US Senate
The Honorable Mitch McCarthy, Minority Leader, US House of Representatives