

Utah Rivers Council * SPOLRE * Holiday Expeditions * Desolation Outfitters *
Colorado Plateau River Guides * Colorado Riverkeeper * Moki Mac River Expeditions *
River Runners for Wilderness * Tag-a-Long * Red River Adventures * OARS *
Tag-a-Long Expedition * Living Rivers * World Wide River Expeditions *
Colorado River and Trail Expedition

Selma Sierra – State Director
Bureau of Land Management
Utah State Office
PO Box 45155
Salt Lake City, Utah 84145-0155

VIA Hand Delivery

December 4, 2008

Re: **Protest of BLM's Notice of Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale Parcels #
UT 1208-086, UT 1208-87, UT 1208-335, UT 1208-337, UT 1208-338, UT 1208-339,
UT 1208-340, UT 1208-341, UT 1208-342, UT 1208-343, UT 1208-349, UT 1208-335,
and UT 1208-355.**

Dear Ms. Sierra,

Pursuant to 43 C.F.R. 3120.1-3, this is a **letter of protest** regarding the proposed lease sale of the above noted parcels. We respectfully request that these parcels be withdrawn from the December 19, 2008 sale, for reasons discussed below.

First and foremost, we are concerned about the impacts that the Utah BLM's December 2008 oil and gas lease sale will have on Desolation Canyon's unique river recreational values and wild, undeveloped character. This remote area is being put at risk from the irreversible impacts of oil and gas development. Our members and clients recreate and enjoy the peace and quiet afforded in the Desolation Canyon area and are gravely concerned that the special qualities of this place will be jeopardized by oil and gas developments.

The Green River in Desolation Canyon is one of the most spectacular and accessible river rafting experiences on the Colorado Plateau. The unspoiled nature of the river and canyon are essential to our outdoor recreation businesses, as many of our businesses and livelihoods depend on Desolation Canyon – including not only the river, but the canyon's abundance of wildlife, the natural quiet, its dark skies and its threatened wilderness qualities. Of particular concern is Horse Bench, one of the most wild, unprotected areas in the Desolation Canyon area.

The BLM has described the greater Desolation Canyon wilderness area as having "magnificent wilderness qualities" and an area that "represent[s] one of the largest blocks of roadless BLM lands within the continental United States." In addition to the

wilderness study area, BLM has identified much of the lands as having wilderness character. Authorizing oil and gas leasing and development are incompatible with preserving the outstanding naturalness of this area.

The Vernal and Price Field Offices have approved numerous oil and gas development projects that have incrementally encroached into the Desolation Canyon wilderness quality area. Intense oil and gas development is taking already place where the BLM has leased lands surrounding the Green River north and west of Sand Wash, the main put-in for Desolation Canyon river trips. This systematic encroachment must be stopped, before the wild nature of Desolation Canyon is irretrievably lost.

If oil and gas leasing and development is permitted in Desolation Canyon's side canyons and mesas, boaters will experience noise, dust, lights, air pollution, water pollution and unsightly views of industrial oil and gas development, instead the wild and quiet character that currently exists. Whether hiking up one of the numerous side canyons, or within the canyon itself, visitors' experiences will certainly be impacted by energy development. Leasing and developing Desolation Canyon for oil and gas production will certainly harm our businesses and our members businesses, as clients will choose other places less developed to spend their time and money.

Based on these concerns, we are protesting the above listed lease parcels, and request that the Utah BLM withdraw these leases from the December 2008 sale due to their potentially tremendous negative impact on Desolation Canyon's wilderness-quality land, unique and rare river recreational experience and our livelihood and businesses.

We encourage you and your agency to protect the outstanding wild and recreational values of Desolation Canyon in its natural conditions. We thank you for your time and consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Dee Holiday
Owner
Holiday Expeditions

John Weisheit
Conservation Director
Colorado Plateau River Guides

Jeff Stag
Proprietor
Desolation Outfitters

Tim Stempel
Program Director
SPLORE

Ted Wilson
Executive Director
Utah Rivers Council

Lannie Yeager
Utah Regional Manager
OARS

Carl Dec
Owner/Guide
Red River Adventures

John Weisheit
Conservation Director
Colorado Riverkeeper

Steve Hazlett and Nicki Hazlett
Owners
Wide World River Expeditions

Bob Jones
President
Tag-a-Long Expeditions

Bob Quist, Richard Quist, and Clair Quist
Owners
Moki Mac River Expeditions

David Mackay
Owner
Colorado River and Trail Expedition

John Weisheit
Conservation Director
Living Rivers

Cc: Honorable Jon M. Huntsman