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U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Natural Resources

Washington, DC 20515

November 14, 2008

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Hon. Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Controversial oil and gas lease sales near several national parks in Utah, announced by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on Election Day, should be postponed until serious concerns raised by the National Park Service can be resolved.

The National Park Service, as a sister agency to the BLM, is routinely given advance notice of areas that might be made available for lease, followed by a comment period before the maps are released publically. In this instance, NPS was denied that opportunity, and the time remaining before the lease sale is not adequate for NPS to analyze the likely impacts to parks in the area, particularly Arches National Park, Dinosaur National Monument, and Canyonlands National Park

Industrial development immediately adjacent to some of our nation's most pristine and beautiful landscapes could harm them permanently. In addition to disturbing the public's immediate enjoyment of the views and natural quiet of these areas, oil and gas development on the borders of these parks is likely to cause long-term damage to the parks' air and water quality and the habitat of the many species of wildlife that call these lands home. Based on the maps released November 4, it appears that Arches National Park and the Utah portion of Dinosaur National Monument would be virtually surrounded by oil and gas rigs.

Apparently, NPS has raised these valid concerns with the BLM's state director, requesting that the leases be delayed pending further study. The state director has declined to do so.

Honorable Dirk Kempthorne
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It is my understanding that the superintendents of the affected parks are working with BLM district managers on a parcel-by-parcel review of the proposed lease areas. NPS plans to complete its analysis by November 24, and expects to request deferrals for a number of specific parcels.

As you know, I support oil and gas production on federal lands, and am anxious to see drilling begin on the 68 million acres of oil and gas leases that have already been sold but are not in production.

However, this ill-advised fire-sale of leases which could irreparably harm the air, water and wildlife of three beloved national parks should be halted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raul M. Grijalva". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raul M. Grijalva
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks,
Forests and Public Lands