

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 30, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Haaland:

We write to you with serious concerns regarding the Department of the Interior's (DOI) alarmingly low number of acres being leased for oil and gas activities on United States' federal lands and waters. It has recently come to our attention that leasing is down 97% from the first 19 months of the previous Administration.¹ Prior to taking office, President Biden made clear his goal to eliminate leasing opportunities on federal lands and waters. Within his first days in office, he acted swiftly by issuing a moratorium on new leases.² The indefinite moratorium could have drastic impacts on many states, and negatively impact the livelihoods of many individuals.

Our nation is currently experiencing one of the worst energy crises in our history. The Mineral Leasing Act (MLA) requires the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to conduct oil and gas lease sales quarterly.³ However, throughout the first six quarters this Administration has been in office, they have issued a historically low number of leases and disregarded the MLA's mandate to hold auctions quarterly, if suitable lands are available. In the future, this policy alone will create a significant void in necessary energy resources on which the United States heavily relies. From the time of issuance of a lease, it can take up to several years before a well reaches production.⁴ Further, oil and gas leasing on federal lands and waters contributes nearly 24% of total domestic crude oil and close to 11% of total domestic natural gas production.⁵ By failing to abide by the MLA's quarterly leasing standard and halting the leasing process, our nation may encounter a major decline in overall production of oil and gas coming from these lands and waters.

It has also been said that leases have been cancelled or denied due to a "lack of industry interest". This past year a lease sale was cancelled in Alaska's Cook Inlet using this justification. Emails obtained by the Americans for Prosperity Foundation via a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) show that no demonstrating evidence was ever documented relating to a "lack of industry interest".⁶ It is astounding to us that such misleading information is being spread to Americans. Not only does this place mistrust in government, but it also spreads misinformation about the oil and gas industry - a vital industry that contributes hundreds of millions of dollars to the American economy, job security for hard working Americans, and national security through energy independence.

With the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act during the 116th Congress, funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was permanently appropriated at a level of \$900 million annually. As stated by the DOI, "The fund invests earnings from offshore oil and gas leasing to help strengthen communities,

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/federal-oil-leases-slow-to-a-trickle-under-biden-11662230816?page=1>

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-protecting-public-health-and-environment-and-restoring-science-to-tackle-climate-crisis/>

³ <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/30/226>

⁴ <https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/061115/how-long-does-it-take-oil-and-gas-producer-go-drilling-production.asp>

⁵ <https://www.api.org/-/media/Files/Policy/Exploration/2022/API-Factsheet-Federal-Leasing-SPINvsFACT-Final.pdf>

⁶ <https://americansforprosperity.org/cook-inlet-emails-foia-discovery/>

preserve history and protect the national endowment of lands and waters...the LWCF is based on a simple concept: take revenues from the depletion of resources – offshore oil and gas – and use them to conserve other resources: parks, wildlife refuges, forests, open spaces, trails and wildlife habitat.”⁷

These actions by the Administration directly conflict with its goals to preserve America’s lands. By halting lease sales and minimizing opportunities, DOI is jeopardizing much needed future funds from going towards the LWCF. National parks, forests, recreation areas, wildlife refuges and Bureau of Land Management public lands rely on these funds. The LWCF also provides financial assistance to states, and through states to local governments, to expand and renovate areas for public outdoor recreation. Additionally, Native American tribes across the nation utilize grants funded by LWCF for vital recreation and conservation projects.

As Secretary of the DOI, it is your obligation to uphold these standards. We call on you to get the country back on track, address these concerns, and increase oil and gas leasing -- not only to address our future energy needs, but to follow through on provisions authorized by Congress and required by federal law.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Bice
Member of Congress



Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress



August Pfluger
Member of Congress



Tom Cole
Member of Congress



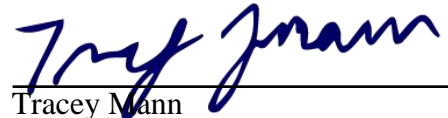
Drew Ferguson
Member of Congress



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



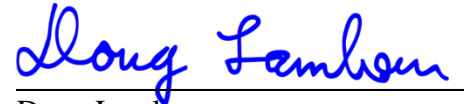
Mike Rogers
Member of Congress



Tracey Mann
Member of Congress



Ben Cline
Member of Congress



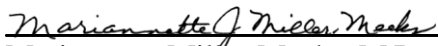
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Guy Reschenthaler
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⁷ <https://www.doi.gov/lwcf>