

April 12, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW.,
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

As residents from across the Western United States, we strongly agree with your statement during your recent confirmation hearing that you find the waste of taxpayer-owned natural gas resources extracted from federal and tribal lands “troubling.” We agree that the waste of an estimated \$1.5 billion worth of our natural gas resources since 2013 is something that should concern every American.

For this reason, as groups and individuals, we support the Bureau of Land Management’s Methane Waste Rule and have been vocal participants in the public process that led to its finalization in 2016. As you have pledged to review this rule, we urge you to make sure that any review is based on facts, reflects latest waste prevention technology and provides time for public input. In order to properly incorporate a robust public process as a part of this review, it is critical that there be a formal opportunity for public comment, as well as public forums. That process reflects how the Bureau of Land Management arrived at the current rule, and it is important that you hear from the people who are most affected by the waste of resources: the American people and western communities. To allow for proper consideration a review must take longer than 21 days and we ask for a significant extension, at least 60 days, to fully account for the intricate nature of this issue.

This rule was subject to more than three years of work, including hearings, stakeholder meetings, and a robust comment period that included an extension [at the request of industry](#) and other stakeholders, due to the complexity of the issues at hand. The rule has significant economic and air quality benefits to western communities and has received widespread public support across the West, with supporters outnumbering opposition at the rule’s public hearings by more than three to one and recent bipartisan public polling finding 80% public support for the rules across the region. Eight public forums and 300,000 public comments showed that the American people overwhelmingly support taking steps to reduce the waste of natural gas – saving taxpayers money, cutting pollution and contributing to energy independence. Three weeks is not sufficient to review a rule that was three years in the making, with hundreds of thousands of pages of comments, reports, studies and other documentation, and that has received such tremendous public input and support from across the region.

It is the prerogative of the Department of the Interior to review regulations and previous policies, but any review should be done deliberately and with full public participation, as Westerners who work and recreate on public lands should have a say in how they are

managed and developed.

We stand ready to work with you to address any specific concerns that you uncover with this rule provided the review is thorough, takes into account the full-range of interests and concerns, is supported by science and facts, and provides an opportunity for input from impacted communities. We encourage you to sit down with all stakeholders of the BLM's Methane Waste Rule before making any decision on how you will proceed or on the rule itself. With the U.S. District Court for the District of Wyoming recently rejecting efforts to block implementation of the rule, it is crucial that you as Secretary follow deliberative, public means for reviewing the rule that includes adequate opportunities for public input. Anything less would be a disservice to the American taxpayer.

Sincerely,

Rev. Doug Bland
Co-Director
Arizona Interfaith Power & Light

Glenn Schiffbauer
Executive Director
New Mexico Green Chamber

Adrian Miller
Executive Director
Colorado Council of Churches

Sister Joan Brown
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Vet Voice Foundation

Laurie Weahkee
Executive Director
Native American Voters Alliance

Chris Saeger
Executive Director
Western Values Project

Chesie Lee
Executive Director
Wyoming Association of Churches

cc: The Honorable Jeff Flake
The Honorable John McCain
The Honorable Cory Gardner
The Honorable Michael Bennet
The Honorable Jon Tester
The Honorable Steve Daines
The Honorable Tom Udall
The Honorable Martin Heinrich
The Honorable Dean Heller
The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto
The Honorable Heidi Heitkamp
The Honorable John Hoeven
The Honorable Mike Lee
The Honorable Orrin Hatch
The Honorable Mike Enzi
The Honorable John Barrasso