

April 6th, 2018

Acting Colorado State Director Gregory Shoop
Bureau of Land Management - Royal Gorge Field Office
3028 E. Main St., Canon City, CO 81212

Attn. September 2018 Lease Sale

Dear Director Shoop,

My Senate Democratic colleagues and I write today regarding the Bureau of Land Management's proposed lease sale of oil & gas mineral rights on 18,000 acres of land east of Great Sand Dunes National Park. We believe that this federal push to auction off pristine public lands is a threat to communities in Southern Colorado.

As you may know, the struggle to protect the dunes began nearly 100 years ago in response to the same kind of threat we face today. In the 1920s, the specter of losing the dunes to gold mining or concretemaking led residents of Alamosa and Monte Vista to band together and call for the U.S. Congress to grant national monument status.

The idea was wildly popular with the local community and was signed into law by President Herbert Hoover in 1932. A similar movement in the late 1990s helped further expand the dunes into a national park.

The people of Southern Colorado were right then and we're right now: extraction and pollution must be kept far, far away from our public lands.

Drilling near the dunes would be a disaster for local economies that rely on tourism driven by Southern Colorado's natural beauty. Hundreds of thousands visit the dunes every year, bringing vital business to local shops, hotels and other nearby attractions like the Colorado Gators Reptile Park and area hot springs.

BLM's proposed drilling activity would be visible from the highest portions of the park. Noise and fumes would foul the experience -- not just for visitors to the dunes, but for thousands of others who come to the area for outdoor recreation in the surrounding valleys and mountains. Light pollution would poison our dark night skies, disrupting the solitude that separates the quiet wilderness of Southern Colorado from the sprawl of the Front Range.

We also have a moral responsibility to preserve our public lands for future generations. President Theodore Roosevelt was known to describe conservation as a national duty.

"Any right-thinking father earnestly strives to leave his son both an untarnished name and a reasonable equipment for the struggles of life," President Roosevelt

told a Conference of Governors in the early days of the American Conservation Movement. "This nation as a whole should earnestly strive to leave to the next generation the national honor unstained and the national resources unexhausted."

This line of thinking was at the heart of a conservation movement that successfully preserved some of our most cherished natural resources -- including the dunes themselves in 1932. It is the reason we still are able to enjoy the park's splendor to this day, and why communities like Alamosa, Walsenburg and Blanca enjoy the business of a steady stream of visitors traveling to see the majesty of the dunes for themselves.

One hundred years from now, what will the people of Southern Colorado see? Will they witness the dunes and surrounding natural wonder conservationists fought so hard to protect? Will they have access to the same public lands that we still enjoy today? Or will they be left with only images of a bygone age, surveying a scarred and pockmarked landscape as they wonder why their grandparents didn't do more?

We, too, believe that conservation is a national duty and suspect the vast majority of Coloradans feel the same. We urge you to reverse course and rescind this proposal in order to protect these treasured public lands and the communities they benefit.

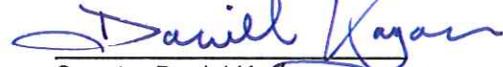
Sincerely,


Minority Leader Leroy Garcia

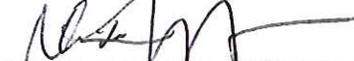

Senator Kerry Donovan

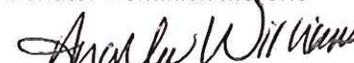

Senator Rhonda Fields


Senator Lois Court

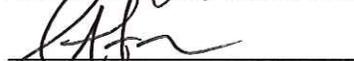

Senator Daniel Kagan


Senator Andy Kerr


Senator Dominick Moreno

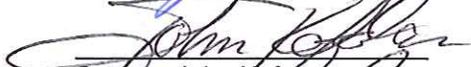

Senator Angela Williams

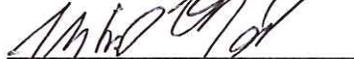

Assistant Minority Leader Lucia Guzman


Senator Stephen Fenberg


Senator Irene Aguilar, MD


Senator Matt Jones


Senator John Kafalos


Senator Michael Merrifield


Senator Nancy Todd


Senator Rachel Zerzinger