

January 24, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Speaker Ryan:

The United States Department of the Interior's Bureau of Management (BLM) manages more than 245 million acres of land, mostly located in 11 contiguous western states and Alaska. Land management decisions and permitted uses under the agency's regulatory philosophy are vitally important to western economies. Western states and rural communities depend on their ability to use public lands for grazing, timber harvest, mining, energy development and recreation.

The BLM, during the final days of the Obama Administration, finalized a new rule specific to land use planning on BLM managed public lands. The rule, dubbed Planning 2.0, has incorporated numerous Obama-era presidential and secretarial orders along with internal agency guidance and policy documents. The rule demonstrated a clear overreach by the BLM, in spite of the agency's claim that the "primary goal of the proposed rulemaking process is to improve the agency's ability to respond to environmental, economic and social changes in a timely manner."

Under the guise of "climate change" and "landscape-scale" management, the agency's final rule will allow implementation of unilateral management schemes, mitigation, adaptive management and other internal agency pronouncements. As a group, we the undersigned are concerned that the Planning 2.0 rule will diminish the statutory requirements of multiple use and dismantle the cooperative ideals of Federalism.

Congress, through the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, recognizes the importance of the public domain to the future of the western states. Through defined multiple use principles, Congress has mandated that these lands be used to meet "the nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, energy, food, timber and fiber from public lands." BLM Planning 2.0 runs counter to these national interests.

FLPMA recognizes state and local government as cooperating agencies. Their participation in planning is required when the agency is developing Resource Management Plans (RMPs). It is disconcerting that Planning 2.0 in Section 1610.3-1 states BLM will collaborate with cooperating agencies "as feasible and appropriate given their interests, scope of expertise and the constraints of their resources." This language clearly devalues local input. In addition, it subjects local recommendations to bureaucratic scrutiny and bias, not congressional intent.

FLPMA requires “meaningful coordination” with state and local governments and local land use plans. Historically, public land management decisions have critically weighed their impacts on the history, culture, and the economy of the West. It’s unclear whether the “social” values identified in Planning 2.0 will be reflective of local interests and the western way of life.

The BLM standard for an Economic and Threshold Analysis is not defensible. Federal law requires federal agencies engaged in rulemaking to assess the economic impacts and cost increases to consumers, individual industries, and governments. The Planning 2.0 analysis concluded implementation of these “regulatory changes would cost less than \$100 million annually” and would not materially affect the economy, a single business sector, productivity, competition, and jobs. That analysis alone should discredit the Planning 2.0 rulemaking process.

BLM Planning 2.0 lacked appropriate input coupled with open and honest evaluation of the costs and impacts of the rulemaking. BLM did not fully evaluate the impacts on consumers, public lands-dependent ranching families, energy, mining, recreation, and rural communities across the American West. Additionally, new definitions and requirements created by the rule exceed statutory authorities and multiple use mandates established by FLMPA and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Planning 2.0 represents a significant departure from the historical way local governments have been involved in BLM decision making. The final rule provides less opportunity for local governments to have meaningful and significant input, in violation of FLPMA. Specifically, Planning 2.0 strictly limits the types of local government plans the BLM will consider as part of its consistency review. The BLM under FLPMA is obligated to take all practical measures to resolve conflicts between federal and local government land use plans.

Because of the numerous departures from historical protocols and legal obligations for managing the western public lands, we the undersigned Farm Bureaus respectfully request that BLM Planning 2.0 be rescinded as part of current efforts related to regulatory reform and making government more responsive to the American people.

Respectfully yours,

American Farm Bureau Federation
Alaska Farm Bureau, Inc.
Arizona Farm Bureau Federation
Colorado Farm Bureau
California Farm Bureau Federation
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation
Montana Farm Bureau Federation

Nevada Farm Bureau Federation
New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau
Oregon Farm Bureau
Washington Farm Bureau
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Utah Farm Bureau Federation

CC Members of the Congressional Western Caucus
Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Members of the House Natural Resources Committee