

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

September 3, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Mail Stop 0020
2707 Martin Luther King Ave, SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Debra Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Charles F. Sams, III
Director, National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Mayorkas, Secretary Haaland, and Director Sams:

The House Committee on Natural Resources (Committee) seeks to understand whether the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the National Park Service (NPS) intend to comply with the Committee's July 11, 2024, letter¹ urging DOI and NPS to direct the City of New York (NYC) to enact a permanent demobilization plan for the migrant camp at Floyd Bennett Field (FBF) and terminate the FBF lease between NPS and NYC without renewal or extension.² Given that the FBF lease expires on September 14, 2024, the Committee seeks information regarding steps DOI and NPS have taken to terminate the current lease and demobilize the migrant camp.

To be clear, the grave consequences of the FBF lease predicted by the Committee,³ government officials, local stakeholders, and members of the public have come to pass. The

¹ See Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources et al., to Debra Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, and Charles Sams, Director, National Park Service (July 11, 2024), https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2024.07.11_hnr_fbf_lease_renewal_opposition_letter.pdf.

² The terms of the FBF lease require that the City of New York provide NPS a demobilization plan. See National Park Service, *Lease Between U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service and the City of New York for the Premises known as Portions of Floyd Bennett Field, in the Jamaica Bay Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area*, DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (Sept. 15, 2023), <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/foia/upload/FINAL-Lease-Floyd-Bennet-Field-09-15-2023-2.pdf>.

³ See *Destroying America's Best Idea: Examining the Biden Administration's Use of National Park Service Lands for Migrant Camps*, Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Natural Resources, 118th Congress (Sep. 27, 2023) (Hearing Memorandum from Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations Republican staff),

community, the Gateway National Recreation Area, and the migrants encamped there have all suffered due to increased crime, inadequate infrastructure, and inappropriate use of NPS lands, impacting public safety and the community's well-being.⁴ The Biden-Harris administration chose to throw caution to the wind by ignoring countless voices opposed to leasing FBF to NYC for the unprecedented action of turning National Park land into a migrant camp. As the FBF lease rapidly approaches its expiration date, the Biden-Harris administration's failed experiment must end. The agencies responsible for the lease's execution must clarify their steps to ensure the expedient termination of the lease.

As you are aware, Section 8 of the FBF lease outlines a series of required improvements, some of which were to begin immediately.⁵ The FBF lease requires the tenant to return the areas of the park currently occupied by the migrants to their original condition upon expiration. As part of the demobilization of the migrant camp, the Committee also expects the restoration of all impacted areas, including the wetlands adjacent to the migrant tents, and improvements required by the lease to be completed immediately, so that all may once again enjoy full access to FBF.

Accordingly, the Committee requests that you produce the following items in your possession, custody, or control in complete, unredacted, and electronic format as soon as possible, but no later than September 17, 2024:

1. All documents and communications among or between DOI, NPS, NYC, New York State (NYS), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the White House (WH), or the Executive Office of the President (EOP) related to the expiration, termination, extension, or renewal of the FBF lease.

https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hearing_memo--fc_ov_hrg_on_migrant_camps_09.27.23.pdf; *Destroying America's Best Idea: Biden's Border Crisis, Desecrating National Park Lands and Damaging Communities, Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Natural Resources, 118th Congress (June 13, 2023)* (Hearing Memorandum from Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations Republican staff), https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hearing_memo--sub_on_o_i_ov_hrg_on_biden_border_crisis_06.13.24.pdf.

⁴ See, e.g., Georgett Roberts and Emily Crane, *Migrants at NYC's Floyd Bennett Field are begging for money, food at furious locals' doorsteps: 'Invasion,'* NEW YORK POST (Dec. 22, 2023), <https://nypost.com/2023/12/22/metro/migrants-at-nycs-floyd-bennett-field-are-begging-nearby-residents-for-money-food/>; Carl Campanile et al., *Migrants' pricey cars towed outside controversial NYC shelter in same area where they begged door to door,* NEW YORK POST (Jan. 6, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/01/06/metro/at-least-five-unregistered-vehicles-used-by-migrants-parked-outside-floyd-bennet-field-shelter-towed/>; Georgia Worrell et al., *Fear and loathing at Brooklyn's Floyd Bennett Field: Neighbors fuming over migrants' 'lawlessness,'* NEW YORK POST (Jan. 13, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/01/13/metro/brooklyn-residents-fuming-over-migrants-lawlessness/>; Sarah Goodman et al., *City Hall vows to probe 'lawlessness' following Post report on spike in crime around Floyd Bennett Field migrant shelter,* NEW YORK POST (Jan. 14, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/01/14/metro/city-will-probe-any-lawlessness-by-migrants-at-bennett-floyd-field/>; Steven Vago et al., *NYC students forced to go remote as city houses nearly 2K migrants at their school, and one mom goes off: 'Does it feel good?,'* NEW YORK POST (Jan. 9, 2024) <https://nypost.com/2024/01/09/metro/migrants-evacuated-from-floyd-bennett-field-due-to-high-winds/>.

⁵ Lease Between the United States of America, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service and The City of New York for the Premises Known as Portions of Floyd Bennett Field, in the Jamaica Bay Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area, NPS Lease #L-GATE912-2023, <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/foia/upload/FINAL-Lease-Floyd-Bennet-Field-09-15-2023-2.pdf>

2. All documents and communications among or between DOI, NPS, NYC, NYS, DHS, WH, or EOP related to planned or ongoing implementation of any FBF demobilization plan.

The Committee is deeply concerned with the precedent the FBF lease sets for federal public lands across our nation, particularly for units of the National Park System. By transforming NPS land into a migrant camp, the FBF lease desecrates and threatens to destroy the essence of the National Park System—what has been referred to by some as America’s best idea. Thus, the Committee reaffirms that DOI and NPS ought not renew or extend the FBF lease and must immediately invoke the permanent demobilization plan for FBF’s migrant camp. Because the American public deserves transparency, the Committee will use every tool at its disposal—including the compulsory process—to administer effective oversight should DOI and NPS fail to timely respond to our requests.

An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to the requests from the Committee on Natural Resources. Please contact the Majority staff for the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee at (202) 225-2761 or HNRR.Oversight@mail.house.gov with any questions. Under House Rule X, the Committee on Natural Resources has “general oversight” over any matter relating to its jurisdiction, including the management of National Park Service lands.

Sincerely,



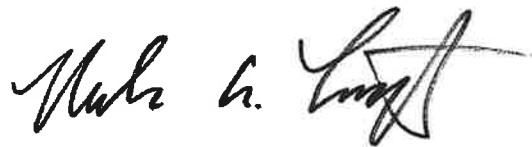
Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



Anthony D'Esposito
Member of Congress



Nick Langworthy
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