

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

May 17, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Haaland:

We write to you regarding the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposed rule, “Conservation and Landscape Health,” published in the Federal Register on April 3, 2023.¹ The administration’s proposal will have considerable implications, fundamentally changing the way the BLM carries out its multiple use and sustained yield mandate under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLMPA).² Given the potentially significant impacts of the proposed rule, stakeholders and the public should be afforded additional time to consider and provide feedback on the proposed changes. Therefore, we request an extension of the comment period by an additional 75 days, to 150 days.

As evidenced by the House Committee on Natural Resources hearing you testified at on April 19, 2023, there is bipartisan concern about the implementation of this rule.³ We continue to hear from a wide range of stakeholders, including those who engage in grazing, recreation, energy development, mining, and timber, among others, on BLM lands. The proposed rule creates additional uncertainty among America’s businesses and rural economies. Each of these stakeholders, who have long standing relationships with the Department of the Interior and the BLM, deserve proper time to read the rule, consider its implications, and develop and submit thoughtful comments. An extension of the comment period would provide all stakeholders the opportunity to fully participate in this process.

On May 3, 2023, exactly one month after the proposed rule was published, BLM announced only three in-person public meetings in Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico.⁴ We are disappointed to see the lack of in-person stakeholder listening sessions, particularly in the West.

¹ Federal Register, Conservation and Landscape Health, Proposed Rule, RIN 1004-AE92, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, April 3, 2023.

² Federal Land Policy and Management Act, 43 U.S.C. §§1701-1785.

³ Examining the President’s FY 2024 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior, House Natural Resources Committee, April 19, 2023, <https://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=413024>. Specifically see comments from Representatives Fulcher, Lee, and Rosendale.

⁴ Bureau of Land Management Releases Meeting Dates for Proposed Public Lands Rule, Department of the Interior, May 3, 2023, <https://www.blm.gov/press-release/bureau-land-management-releases-meeting-dates-proposed-public-lands-rule>.

The 12 Western states have 99 percent of the BLM land.⁵ The impact of this rule would fundamentally change the management of federal lands in each of these states. Those impacted deserve a chance to participate in a public meeting in-person, including those in rural communities who don't have the ability to drive hundreds of miles across state lines to the closest listening session. We request additional in-person, public meetings to be held in each Western state with BLM lands. An extension of the comment period would provide the Department time to conduct more in-person listening sessions.

Thank you for your consideration of this important and timely request. Please contact Taylor Wiseman at (202) 226-7736 or Taylor.Wiseman@mail.house.gov with questions about this request.

Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources



Cliff Bentz
Member of Congress



Lauren Boebert
Member of Congress



John Curtis
Member of Congress

⁵ The Federal Land Management Agencies, Congressional Research Service, February 16, 2023, <https://www.crs.gov/Reports/IF10585>.



John Duarte
Member of Congress



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Harriet M. Hageman
Member of Congress



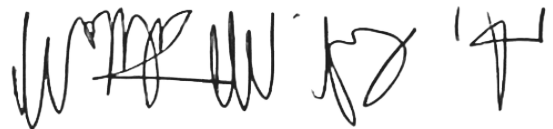
Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



Tom M. McClintok
Member of Congress



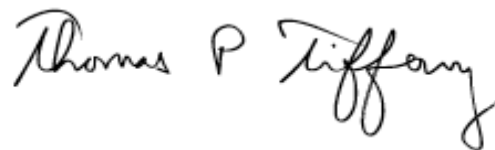
Amata C. Radewagen
Member of Congress



Matthew M. Rosendale, Sr.
Member of Congress



Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



Tom Tiffany
Member of Congress