

April 22, 2016

Secretary Sally Jewell  
U.S. Department of Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20240

Director Neil Kornze  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewel and Director Kornze:

We, the undersigned Colorado elected officials, are writing to express our support for a strong rule to protect taxpayers and our public resources from undue waste by ensuring that the flaring, venting and leakage of methane during oil and gas production is governed by commonsense rules on federal public lands. Colorado has already shown leadership in this matter by issuing the strongest state-based oil and gas air quality rules in the nation. These sensible rules were lauded by industry and environmentalists alike and can be an example that the BLM draws from nationally. For Colorado, however, pollution from our neighboring states does not stop at the Colorado border, and the BLM must do more to protect taxpayers by addressing the lost royalties that would otherwise benefit Coloradans locally and nationally.

As elected officials, we take our responsibility seriously as stewards of the environment and of taxpayer dollars. The unchecked venting, flaring and leakage of this public resource into the atmosphere with no return to taxpayers fails on both counts and demands action at the federal level.

By conservative estimates, this waste of a public resource has cost Colorado taxpayers at least [\\$36 million](#) in royalty revenue since 2009. This wasteful practice has also contributed to not only a large [methane plume](#) the size of Delaware recently discovered by NASA over the Four Corners region, gaining national attention, but also the consistent air quality problems experienced by Coloradans. This is not a partisan issue. A [recent poll](#) of Democrats, Independents and Republicans in western energy producing states showed that 80 percent support a strong rule on venting, flaring and natural gas leakage on public lands.

The BLM is charged with managing the public's resources in a responsible way and ensuring that those public resources are not squandered. While degradation of our air quality and lost royalty revenues directly impact our day-to-day work as elected officials, it is this mission of curtailing government waste that strikes a chord with us and our constituents alike. For this reason, a strong BLM rule must not only address the royalty issue, but ensure that our public resources, for which you are entrusted in overseeing, are not wasted to the detriment of future needs and generations.

To give this level of waste another perspective, consider this: based on the conservative estimates of gas lost by the Government Accountability Office, the natural gas lost on public lands nationally could have met the home heating needs of a city the size of Chicago for an entire year. Instead, it was burned off merely because the price of gas was low and, according to the Government Accountability Office, companies are not likely to change behavior on their own, even if it is profitable, business as usual or "industry inertia" proves a stronger motivation.

The BLM needs to actively address the waste that is occurring on federal public lands from the flaring, venting and leakage of natural gas. As elected officials, we can't overstate the need to protect taxpayer resources, local and regional air quality and practice good government strategies that ensure our valued resources are protected for future needs. What's more, we call for the strongest possible BLM rule – one that balances energy development with protecting the air, water and public lands resources that make Colorado so wonderful and unique.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter,

Julie Westendorff  
La Plata County Board of Commissioners

Jonathan Houck  
Gunnison County Board of Commissioners

Timothy Corrigan  
Routt County Board of Commissioners

Joan May, Chair  
San Miguel Board of Commissioners

Kathy Chandler-Henry, Chair  
Eagle County Board of Commissioners

Michael Whiting  
Archuleta County Board of Commissioners

Gwen Lachelt  
La Plata County Board of Commissioners

Jill Ryan  
Eagle County Board of Commissioners

Art Goodtimes  
San Miguel Board of Commissioners

Steve Childs  
Pitkin County Board of Commissioners

Karn Stiegelmeier  
Summit Board of Commissioners

Rachel E. Richards  
Pitkin County Board of Commissioners

George Newman  
Pitkin County Board of Commissioners

Steve Skadron, Mayor  
City of Aspen

Leo McKinney  
Glenwood Springs City Council

Adam Frisch, Councilmember  
City of Aspen

Stephen Bershenyi  
Glenwood Springs City Council

Jacque Whitsitt, Mayor  
City of Basalt

Bennett Boeschstein  
Grand Junction City Council

Erika Vohman  
Crested Butte Town Council

Amber Kleinmann  
Paonia Town Trustee

Dick White, Mayor pro-tem  
Durango

Auden Schendler  
Basalt Town Council

Bruce Leland, Mayor  
Newcastle Town Council

Katie Schwoerer  
Basalt Town Council