



ASSOCIATED GOVERNMENTS
OF NORTHWEST COLORADO

September 9, 2019

Chairman Raúl Grijalva
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Republican Rob Bishop,
House Natural Resources Committee
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman, Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop:

Members of the Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC) write this letter in support of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) reorganization. AGNC represents eight (8) county governments and 17 municipal governments in Northwest Colorado. All these counties are home to large portions of federal lands; in many cases more than 70% of the land within a given county is managed by federal agencies with the majority of those lands being managed by BLM.

Since early in the history of the Department of the Interior (DOI), Congressional records indicate that senior leadership should have an increased presence in the western states where the majority of federal public lands exist. The BLM reorganization finally recognizes the importance and wisdom of such a strategy. Locating senior leadership more strategically in the Western United States will provide benefits related to efficiency, stakeholder coordination and more informed decision-making. AGNC members can point to instances of local planning efforts which resulted in agreed upon management outcomes only to have those plans overturned by senior leadership in Washington, D.C. who could not begin to understand the implications of their decisions on local stakeholders. The Greater Sage Grouse planning effort is one of the most recent instances that comes to mind.

AGNC members support the Congressional mandate of multiple use on public lands. Multiple use of lands, before the establishment of the DOI, was the basis for the creation and early development of Colorado as well as many of the western states. Congress was right in supporting the continued multiple use of lands held by the federal government. Managed appropriately, healthy landscapes, wildlife and revenue generation can all coexist on federal lands. BLM lands alone generate significant revenues for the benefit of local communities, the region, the state and the country. Without the revenues derived from federal lands for the national coffers, greater tax burdens would have to be levied on all U.S. citizens, businesses and residents.

Unfortunately, too many decisions regarding the development of resources, the management of the landscapes and access to public lands are centered in Washington, D.C. Those making decisions which impact the vitality of the communities nearest public lands, do not live or work in the communities nor do they experience the impacts of their decisions. They do not see the BLM wild horses starving. They do not see the incorrectly designated habitat for wildlife as inhabitable

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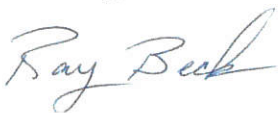
for that species. For example, the town of Kremmling was identified as critical habitat for the greater sage grouse. They do not see the unhealthy overgrown forests that need thinning and grazed to avoid catastrophic fires due to fuel loading. Had senior leadership been distributed across the western landscape, as was originally envisioned by BLM, the chances are better management decisions would have been made, our landscapes would be healthier, and we would not be facing the downward economic, social, and ecological spiral we currently face on these lands and in our communities.

The condition of public lands has declined due to the misunderstanding of land management principles by urban centers across the U.S. This situation is exacerbated by the location of senior land management leadership in Washington, D.C., who do not live and work DAILY with the decisions they make. Division around the appropriate management of public lands has served to further the urban/rural divide as well as foster environmental group law suites, among our states and our country. Had senior leadership of land management agencies been located near our public lands so they could see, firsthand, the result of detrimental policies, they could have provided appropriate oversight and influence to ensure policies that would result in healthier public lands, with a net reduction in law suits. We believe the BLM reorganization is a step in the right direction.

Another added benefit to the BLM reorganization, is that many of the senior leadership currently based in Washington, D.C. have functions and operations that are largely implemented in the west. The relocation of these positions will streamline BLM's daily operations and will, provide more timely response to local requests in the field. This relocation is expected to provide cost savings to BLM, time savings, better decisions based on actual on-the-ground experience, and improved stakeholder and partner coordination.

We urge you to support the BLM reorganization as proposed by Secretary Bernhardt and the DOI. It is further requested that you provide any support necessary to complete the move in an expeditious manner. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this important matter. If you have any questions, please contact our Executive Director, Bonnie Petersen at 970-665-1095 or via email at bonnie@agnc.org .

Sincerely,



Ray Beck
AGNC Chairman
Moffat County Commissioner



Andy Key
AGNC Vice-Chairman
Rangely Town Councilman

September 9, 2019

The Honorable Raul Grijalva, Chairman
House Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva

I write today in reference to your upcoming hearing you've titled "*BLM Disorganization: Examining the Proposed Reorganization and Relocation of the Bureau of Land Management Headquarters to Grand Junction, Colorado.*" After seeing the title of the hearing I felt compelled to send a letter to be included as part of the record.

Colorado Mesa University is a regional comprehensive university serving approximately 12,000 students each year. Because our region is home to counties made up predominantly of federal land, we have worked hard to develop academic programs that prepare interested students for careers working with federal agencies. From Physical and Environmental Sciences to Energy Management, Colorado Mesa University has a number of options for students who might want to pursue a career with a federal agency upon graduation. While our professors have had success placing their students in internships with local field offices, I have been a vocal proponent of moving the headquarters of the Bureau of Land Management to Grand Junction in order to build on this success and continue developing new opportunities for our students.

In addition to providing additional hands-on learning opportunities for our students, our University stands ready to continue partnering with the BLM on applied research projects in communities most directly impacted by management decisions. While faculty researchers at our institution have done a great deal of work across field offices in many western states to date, I believe bringing the BLM Headquarters to Grand Junction will provide an opportunity for continued collaboration and engagement with our professors and students going forward.

Finally, I know most members of your committee understand quite well the "rural-urban divide" that has been the topic of conversation for many years. In my opinion, moving the Headquarters of the BLM out of Washington, D.C. to a place like Grand Junction, Colorado will not only bring decision makers closer to stakeholders being impacted, it will also provide a much needed stimulus to our community.

In an era where it seems every single issue can become politicized and broken down in to partisan talking points, it is my hope that members of your Committee will resist the urge to politicize this effort and use it as a club to attack supporters of the relocation. Our community has worked long and hard on this effort and we genuinely believe it will be good for the agency, its stakeholders and citizens across the United States.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support.

Sincerely,



Tim Foster, President
Colorado Mesa University

CC: Congressman Scott Tipton
Senator Cory Gardner
Senator Michael Bennet
Robin Brown, Grand Junction Economic Partnership