

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 9, 2019

Raúl M. Grijalva, Chairman
Rob Bishop, Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop,

We write today to offer our strong support for the decision by the United States Department of the Interior to move the headquarters of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to Grand Junction, Colorado. This decision will help BLM carry out its mission by locating top officials closer to the land they are tasked with managing.

The BLM is responsible for managing around 250 million acres of federal surface land in the United States, and 99 percent of this land is located west of the Mississippi River. We hear regularly from our constituents in Colorado that they enjoy working and solving problems with the BLM offices located in their area, but that there is a disconnect in policymaking when those final decisions are sent to Washington, D.C. We believe the relocation of the BLM headquarters and the broader reorganization of the Bureau that will see more positions in every Bureau state out west will help end this disconnect and lead to better policy making decisions.

We are thrilled that Secretary Bernhardt has made the decision to locate the new headquarters in Grand Junction, Colorado – a town that encapsulates the importance of public lands. Grand Junction is located in Mesa County, which is 73 percent federal land with 46 percent of that managed by the BLM. It should not require a four-hour plane ride to Washington, D.C. for the county to talk to the BLM leadership in charge of making decisions for nearly half their land. Locating the new headquarters in Grand Junction will save time and resources for not only Colorado, but also the entire Western United States.

Since the decision to relocate the BLM headquarters was announced, we have heard a tremendous amount of support from constituents and elected officials in many western states, counties, and cities. Members of both parties have expressed gratitude to the Department of the Interior for hearing their concerns and making a decision that will help make their voices a part of the decision making process.

We believe you will hear many similar themes during the Committee's hearing this week on the Department's headquarters relocation. Thank you for your attention to this issue and we stand ready to host any Member that would like to visit Grand Junction to learn more.

Sincerely,



Cory Gardner
United States Senator



Scott Tipton
Member of Congress



Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



Ken Buck
Member of Congress



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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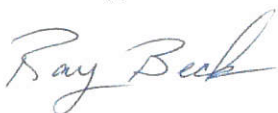
for that species. For example, the town of Kremmling was identified as critical habitat for the greater sage grouse. They do not see the unhealthy overgrown forests that need thinning and grazed to avoid catastrophic fires due to fuel loading. Had senior leadership been distributed across the western 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