



June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Chairman Alan Lowenthal  
House Natural Resources, Subcommittee  
on Energy and Mineral Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Paul Gosar  
House Natural Resources, Subcommittee  
on Energy and Mineral Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Lowenthal, Ranking Member Gosar and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of The Wilderness Society's (TWS) over one million members and supporters, I write to offer support for H.R. 3225, the Restoring Community Input and Public Protections in Oil and Gas Leasing Act scheduled for a hearing on June 19<sup>th</sup>. This legislation would help to fix a broken oil and gas leasing system to better provide transparency, protect American taxpayers, and safeguard our public lands, waters, and wildlife for future generations.

Oil and gas development is the dominant use of our public lands and has been for decades. Other uses of public lands such as conservation, recreation and even renewable energy development are being shortchanged as a result. From stockpiled leases to drilling permits that sit in limbo for decades, the oil and gas industry's ability to disregard land uses outside of extraction development is well known, and this bill is a first step at ensuring the American people benefit from multiple public use. H.R. 3225 requires the Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service to continue to manage lands under lease for multiple-uses, including conservation and recreation until a company begins operations on the lease. This ensures that the agencies acknowledge that even when lands are under oil and gas lease, they must still manage for, and promote, other uses such as outdoor recreation and wildlife conservation.

Not only have Americans been shortchanged on multiple use land management, but also on fiscal contributions of public lands. Americans are promised, and deserve, to receive "fair market value" whenever oil and gas is produced from public lands. This means that the federal government must routinely evaluate and strengthen its fiscal policies – including updating royalty rates, rental rates, and minimum bids – to ensure that taxpayers, and not private interests, are the primary beneficiaries of public lands development. However, the Department of the Interior has not updated fiscal policies in decades. H.R. 3225 would modernize these policies and better protect American taxpayers by ensuring they receive "fair market value" for oil and gas production on public lands.

Unfortunately, the oil and gas leasing system lacks transparency and stifles public participation. The current administration has suppressed the public's opportunity to weigh in on oil and gas leasing decisions, shortening comment periods and foregoing adequate public notice before leasing occurs. Additionally, an anonymous bidding system is used, which makes it easier for oil and gas companies to shield their identities when nominating public



lands for leasing from the public. As a result, the public is left in the dark regarding who is trying to lease and whether or not they have a history of polluting our air, water, or public lands. The Restoring Community Input and Public Protections in Oil and Gas Leasing Act would require individuals or companies to disclose their identity when nominating or bidding on parcels to lease and guarantee that the public has input opportunities regarding how public lands are managed, creating a more transparent oil and gas leasing system.

H.R. 3225 would help put the American public first by ensuring a fair market value for use of public lands, improving transparency, protecting natural and cultural resources, protecting land owners, and slowing down the rush to lease in the name of “energy dominance.” For these reasons, The Wilderness Society supports the Restoring Community Input and Public Protections in Oil and Gas Leasing Act.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Drew McConville  
Senior Managing Director of Government Relations