

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

Tracy Stone-Manning
Director
Bureau of Land Management
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

September 6, 2023

Dear Director Stone-Manning,

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held an oversight hearing on May 24, 2023, examining the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) proposed Public Lands Rule. The proposed rule has generated significant public interest with over 150,000 public comments submitted. By promoting resilience and landscape-level planning on federal lands and placing conservation as a land use on equal footing with other land uses, the proposed rule represents a significant step forward in the management of America's public lands.

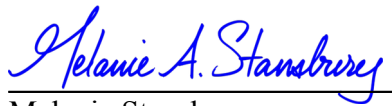
During the hearing, we heard from witnesses about opportunities to improve the rule before it is finalized. In particular, we are concerned about issues raised concerning the compatibility of the new conservation tools established in the rule -- including the proposed rule's conservation leases and the regulatory updates to Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) -- with renewable energy development. There is also concern about the applicability of ecosystem resiliency and rangeland health standards to arid ecosystems. Planning that incorporates conservation practices and encourages early consultation with stakeholders can accelerate development of key projects, such as energy transmission corridors. The BLM could benefit from clarity about the rule's compatibility with renewable development and the rule's potential to enhance America's transition to renewable energy. It would also be helpful to have clear information about how conservation leases for mitigation may provide additional flexibility for renewable energy production. Finally, we think it very important to preserve decision-making at the State Director level and above, not delegate decisions to local staff who may have different priorities.

The proposed rule also solicited feedback on whether state and local governments should be able to hold conservation leases; we heard in the hearing that they should. We encourage BLM to consult with states, tribes, and localities to explore how to best include them in BLM's conservation efforts.

We heard requests for more opportunities for communities to provide feedback, even with the longer than normal comment period of 90 days. Additional opportunities to hear feedback, such as continuing to meet with stakeholders and stakeholder organizations, may also present opportunities to clarify misconceptions about parts of the proposed rules.

I appreciate the Bureau of Land Management's ongoing commitment to responsible and balanced management of public lands. We look forward to continuing to work with you to finalize this important rule.

Sincerely,



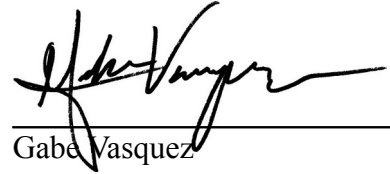
Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



Susie Lee
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Mike Levin
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Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernández
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Sean Casten
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