



Office of the Governor

State of Utah

GARY R. HERBERT
Governor

SPENCER J. COX
Lieutenant Governor

July 25, 2017

Ms. Ester McCollough
Field Office Manager
Vernal Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078

RE: December 2017 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale, Environmental Assessment DOI-
BLM-UT-GO10-2017-0028-EA

Dear Ms. McCollough,

The State of Utah has reviewed the Environmental Assessment for the December 2017 Oil and Gas Lease Sale for 64 oil and gas parcels located in Duchesne County and Uintah County, Utah. The State supports the lease of most of the parcels and encourages the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to hold the December 2017 lease sale as currently planned. The BLM is now conducting quarterly oil and gas lease sales in Utah much more frequently, a change the State greatly appreciates.

The responsible development of oil and gas resources on BLM land is critically important to the economy of eastern Utah. Both Duchesne and Uintah counties depend on oil and gas development for tax revenue and high paying jobs, and both counties have been greatly injured by the recent downturn in oil prices. The unemployment rate in Duchesne and Uintah counties is currently 5.9 percent and 6.6 percent respectively, some of the highest unemployment rates in the state. A successful lease sale of all 64 parcels would have a tremendous, positive impact on relieving the counties' high unemployment while creating stable, high-wage jobs.

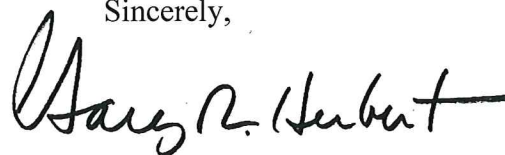
President Donald Trump's March 28, 2017 Executive Order, entitled "Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth," declares that "[i]t is in the national interest to promote

clean and safe development of our Nation's vast energy resources, while at the same time avoiding regulatory burdens that unnecessarily encumber energy production, constrain economic growth, and prevent job creation. Moreover, the prudent development of these natural resources is essential to ensuring the Nation's geopolitical security."¹ President Trump's Executive Order supports the proposed lease sale of these parcels in Duchesne and Uintah counties which will help develop and enhance America's energy independence while growing the local economy. Moreover, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke's July 6th Secretarial Order (Order No. 3354) directs the Department of the Interior to identify ways to promote the development of Federal oil and gas resources.² As such, the Secretarial Order supports the proposed lease sale.

Included in this lease sale are three parcels near Dinosaur National Monument. The State requests BLM re-evaluate parcels 069, 070, and 071 to determine whether there is a better choice of leasing category. As the parcels are near the boundary of Dinosaur National Monument, the State wishes to ensure leasing of these parcels does not impact visual resources or cause light or sound disturbances within in the National Monument. Even though the EA includes lease stipulations and notices for all three parcels that could sufficiently mitigate impacts from oil and gas drilling within the parcels, the State encourages BLM to provide a thoughtful review of these parcels to ensure energy developments can successfully coexist with outdoor recreation.

Thank you for your consideration of the State's comments. We look forward to working together towards balanced resource development and greater energy development in Utah. Please direct any comments to the Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office for the State of Utah.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary R. Herbert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Gary R. Herbert
Governor

¹ Executive Order 13783, Presidential Executive Order on Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth, march 28, 2017, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/28/presidential-executive-order-promoting-energy-independence-and-economi-1>.

² Secretarial Order Number 3354, Supporting and Improving the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Program and Federal Solid Mineral Leasing Program, *available at*: <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/doi-so-3354.pdf>