

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 12, 2016

The Honorable Neil Kornze
Director, Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street NW, Room 5665
Washington DC 20240

Dear Director Kornze:

We have grown increasingly concerned about the lack of local involvement in critical land management decisions made by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Compared to other districts across the country, we possess expansive federal land reserves. Whether for cattle grazing, outdoor recreational access or energy and mineral resource development, these lands are a fundamental aspect to our very way of life. The decisions made in Washington have serious and lasting impacts on our local schools, economies, and development. Unfortunately, the power of informing such decisions continues to be left up to the federal government rather than being pushed down to the local level, to those on the ground will be most impacted. Our constituents are growing more and more concerned; we firmly believe something needs to change.

BLM's lack of consultation with local stakeholders does not fall upon the agency alone. We recognize Congress has produced legislation over the past 80 years that allows the federal government to have primary jurisdiction over this kind of decision making, thereby removing control and consideration from local communities. That said, in order for the BLM to be effective, it must manage its assets in conjunction with the needs of local entities. The input of our county commissioners, local government officials, ranchers, miners, farmers, and residents should not be restricted. Unfortunately, this is simply not the case. From Montana to Utah to Washington, Washington, DC has decided its 'one-size-fits-all' approach will accommodate the intricacies of diverse Western needs.

In addition to providing further consideration for local interests, we truly believe the decision making process behind major BLM decisions requires far more transparency. Therefore, we strongly urge both local and DC BLM staff to work in conjunction with residents and county officials to ensure every detail requiring public input is clearly communicated and circulated. This includes ensuring that the comment period is adequate for stakeholder input, offering well-defined language about participation, and offering ample notification about the process. All too often our constituents have been blindsided by significant changes, only to be referred by BLM to small, hidden "Public Notices" buried within the folds of the local paper. Any significant change, whether for grazing permits, change in uses, or land use withdrawals, must not move forward without the input of those affected most. It is vital that the public involvement process is not obstructed.

Thank you for your consideration to this important matter. We look forward to working with you to address this issue.

Sincerely,



RYAN ZINKE
Member of Congress



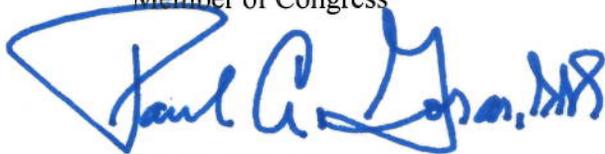
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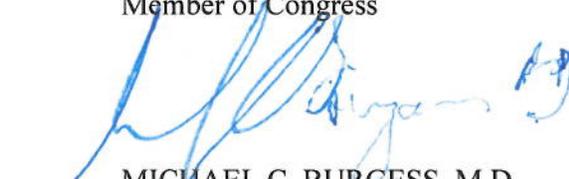
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