

## **REACTION STATEMENTS ON PUBLIC LANDS ATTACKS IN HNR COMMITTEE BILL**

Washington, D.C. – On Thursday, the House Natural Resources Committee released a bill proposing massive changes to federal management and conservation of U.S. public lands and waters, part of the reconciliation bill from the Republican-controlled Congress. Across the board, this bill would benefit the oil and gas industry at the expense of American families. One particularly egregious proposal would let corporations buy their way out of environmental review and oversight.

Reaction statements from six public interest organizations are included below.

### **Earthjustice**

Mike Freeman, an Earthjustice attorney based in Denver, CO, released the following statement:

"The extreme proposals contained in this bill would reverse a century of federal law. It would require the government to lease public lands whenever an oil and gas company demands them. Such a step would effectively put the oil and gas industry in charge of resources that belong to all of the American people."

### **Center for American Progress**

CAP's Jenny Rowland-Shea Comments on House GOP Lease Sales Proposal:

"To pay for tax cuts for billionaires and corporations, House Republicans have proposed selling out treasured public lands to the highest bidder. This bill would upend the use of our public lands as we know it, putting President Trump's oil and mining industry donors in the driver's seat. While these corporations win big, Americans will pay the price with the quality of our air, water, and outdoor spaces."

### **The Wilderness Society**

Lydia Weiss, Senior Director of Government Relations at The Wilderness Society, made the following statement about the contents of the bills:

"The House Resources Committee budget bill released today is a staggering attack on our most iconic, beloved public lands across America. It includes language to recklessly drill and mine in places like the Boundary Waters watershed and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and log in protected roadless forests. It mandates oil and gas leases every three months all over the nation; forces roads through our wildest places where communities have already rejected them; guts the National Environmental Policy Act; and limits judicial review throughout. Even worse, it will fund tax cuts for the rich while doing nothing to help the average American taxpayer. We implore members of the committee to reject this bill."

## **Sierra Club**

Athan Manuel, director of Sierra Club's Lands Protection Program, released the following statement:

"This proposal is a corporate polluter's wishlist. The only way it could be friendlier to Big Oil CEOs would be if they wrote it themselves. Let's be clear, this proposal is a means to an end. The end is tax cuts for billionaires, and the means are selling off the public lands that belong to the American people. These provisions enable drilling and mining as quickly, lucratively, and free from public scrutiny as possible, even allowing the fossil fuel industry to buy their way out of judicial oversight. It's a giveaway to industry, and Americans should not stand for it."

## **Western Organization of Resource Councils**

WORC board chair Dr. Barbara Vasquez said:

"This bill will radically cut royalty rates for publicly owned oil, gas and coal. This giveaway to corporate interests will prevent American taxpayers from getting a fair return from our public lands and resources and [slash revenues to state and local governments](#). It's a slap in the face to Americans in the West, and ignores [decades of major waste, fraud and abuse scandals](#) that have plagued the federal coal, oil and gas programs from the beginning.

"But this bill doesn't only screw American taxpayers, it will rubber stamp oil, gas and coal leases and permits, and remove the chance for people like me who live close to drilling or mining to comment. We experience impacts like water contamination, dewatering of aquifers and air pollution that can be major threats to our families, homes and livelihoods. Under this bill, we would be cut out of the process, with no chance to reduce these risks."

## **Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF)**

MWF Executive Director Frank Szollosi released the following statement:

"This special interest-written blueprint essentially gives away more than 200 million acres of our public lands to domestic and international corporations for damaging mining, oil and gas extraction - damn the consequences for our wildlife, habitat and waters. We call on Montana's Congressional delegation not to take our state back a century when rivers and fisheries were fouled and robber barons decimated elk and wildlife."