

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 25, 2008

Honorable Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We are writing to urge you to postpone the December 19 oil and gas lease sales in sensitive and pristine wilderness quality areas near several national parks in Utah, announced by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on November 4, until serious concerns raised by the National Park Service (NPS), the state of Utah, and the public can be fully resolved. The time remaining before the December 19 lease sale is not adequate for stakeholders to analyze the likely impacts to parks in the area, particularly Arches National Park, Dinosaur National Monument, and Canyonlands National Park.

We understand that longstanding Department of Interior policy is to provide NPS, as a sister agency to BLM, 90-days advanced notice of areas that might be made available for lease that have potential to affect NPS resources, followed by a comment period, before the maps are released publicly. We also understand that a similar policy is followed with the state of Utah. In this instance, however, both the NPS and the state of Utah were initially denied that opportunity.

We appreciate that, according to press reports, BLM recently reached out to NPS and is trying to reinstate historic interagency protocols and address Park Service concerns. It is our hope that this collaboration will ensure oil and gas activities do not occur adjacent to these magnificent public lands and harm the unique natural experience enjoyed by over 2 million visitors each year. We encourage you to continue this important work and postpone the entire sale until stakeholders can research likely impacts and reach consensus on a way forward.

Sincerely,













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Ben Cardin

Tom Harkin
