



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

May 20, 2009

Honorable Robert Bennett
United States Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Senator Bennett:

For some time now, we have been discussing and corresponding about my decision to withdraw 77 parcels from the December 19, 2008 lease sale for oil and gas leases encompassing lands covered by the Bureau of Land Management's Vernal, Moab, and Price Resource Management Plans. As you are aware, these are the same 77 parcels that were covered by the January 17, 2009 Federal District Court's Temporary Restraining Order. I appreciate your attention to this issue and your and Senator Lisa Murkowski's assistance in resolving issues that have been delaying David Hayes's confirmation to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

In my order withdrawing the 77 parcels, I cited questions that had been raised regarding the degree of coordination between the BLM and the National Park Service and the adequacy of the environmental review and analysis for these parcels as well as the underlying resource plans. You and I have been discussing these issues and the timing of a full review of the circumstances of the sale and how the federal law violations found by the Federal District Court can best be resolved.

When I made the decision to withdraw the 77 parcels, I committed to taking "a fresh look" at the parcels in question. As a result of our discussions and the presentations that you have personally made to me, I have already begun my own personal review of the situation concerning the 77 parcels. Based on that preliminary review, I have determined the need for a formal review of the circumstances relating to the 77 parcels. In particular, I have determined that, among other issues, the formal review needs to examine all aspects regarding the nature of the consultation between the Bureau of Land Management [BLM] and the National Park Service [NPS] and the proximity of the parcels to the national parks and monument.

For example, as David Hayes indicated in his March 18 letter to you, "In preparing a response to your question #83.a., representatives of the National Park Service informed my office, through the office of Congressional Affairs, that the BLM did not provide the Park Service with prior notice or coordination regarding the sale of leases near NPS properties. That was the basis for the answer provided to the Committee." Based on my preliminary review, I have since determined that, in fact, there was consultation between the BLM and the NPS, and as

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a result of that consultation, some parcels close to the national parks and monument were removed from the list of parcels for the December 19 oil and gas lease sale.

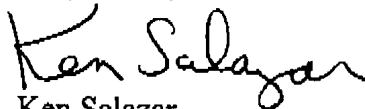
It is my expectation that the review will make recommendations as to which, if any, of the 77 parcels can be legally made available for lease and which, if any, will require further study. The review will be led by David Hayes, if confirmed. Mr. Hayes, in his capacity as Deputy Secretary, will not only bring his more than 30 years of experience to direct this review, but his stature as Deputy Secretary provides the necessary level of authority to ensure cooperation of all relevant Interior Department agencies and employees.

I commit to do the following:

1. I will direct the members of the Hayes Review Team to make a site visit to the state of Utah within 10 days.
2. I will direct the Hayes Review Team to meet with the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, and other government entities in Utah concerning the 77 lease parcels.
3. I will direct the Hayes Review Team to meet with all interested stakeholders in a community forum in Utah.
4. I will direct the Hayes Review Team to review the administrative record concerning the 77 lease parcels and to provide a report with recommendations on the 77 lease parcels by June 5th.
5. I will make the report available to you, and I and David Hayes will meet personally with you to review the report in detail.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you on matters of importance to Utah and the Nation.

Respectfully,


Ken Salazar