



The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Vicki Christiansen
Chief
U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service
201 14th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20227

October 30, 2020

Dear Secretary Perdue and Chief Christiansen:

We write to you to voice strong concerns and express an urgent need for an extended public comment period in regard to the recently published update to the Forest Service's Oil and Gas Resources regulations. As you are aware, the country remains in the midst of a national emergency due to COVID-19. As a result, numerous challenges continue to hinder public life as well as state, local, and tribal governments, all of whom are likely to have strong opinions about the change put forth in these regulations due to their potential to profoundly impact daily life for many across the country. For these reasons, we urge you to issue a 90-day extension to the already-announced comment period related to these regulations.

As the Governors of Colorado, New Mexico, and Nevada, we place immense value on a strong working relationship with federal land managers, whose work is critical to our economy and way of life. With this request, we are asking that the Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service instead prioritize work that is essential to the pandemic response, work that is subject to unalterable legal deadlines, and work that does not entail public and intergovernmental processes. This regulatory proposal does not fall into any of these categories.

In a society founded on democratic ideals, it is essential that every effort be made to ensure that all interested members of the public, as well as state, local, and tribal governments, have adequate time and capacity to engage in federal public processes. This is especially so for decisions affecting our national forests, which are widely used by tens of millions of people every year, with many of these users enjoying these areas on a daily basis.

Consistent with the Forest Service's mission to manage landscapes *and serve people*, and the National Environmental Policy Act's direction to evaluate environmental consequences and inform the public, we request that you extend the public comment period for these regulations.

Such action would be consistent with applicable law and lead to a more informed outcome for all stakeholders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jared Polis".

Governor Jared Polis
State of Colorado

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Sisolak".

Governor Steve Sisolak
State of Nevada

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Lujan Grisham".

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham
State of New Mexico

Cc: David Bernhardt, Secretary of the Interior