



August 21, 2019

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The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairwoman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski:

The National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) is a national nonprofit membership organization representing Forest Service retirees across the nation. It is dedicated to sustaining the heritage of caring for America's National Forests and Grasslands and helping the U.S Forest Service. Throughout our careers we have also worked closely with highly professional and dedicated Bureau of Land Management employees and leaders for the past 70 years with a shared goal of caring for, managing, and protecting America's public lands. We have the utmost respect for them and their increasingly complex and difficult mission.

We are writing to request your crucial and immediate oversight of the BLM. It faces a significant challenge to its future ability to accomplish its mission and possibly its future viability. The proposal to move BLM leadership and staff from Washington DC to various Western locations will hamstring the agency. That much is clear to almost any leader who has spent his or her career managing public lands. To move its Director and principle staff to a relatively small western community signals either a lack of understanding of the complexity of agency leadership or worse, it signals a deliberate attempt to weaken the agency. Your immediate oversight is desperately needed. A transparent hearing would show that the perceived benefits of such a move are simply not real. It is not necessary to provide that analysis here because the Public Lands Foundation has already done a thorough job of doing so. The importance of the BLM and the resources it manages demand a national headquarters located in Washington DC.

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We also firmly believe a historic agency altering decision such as this should not be made by an acting director but should wait until the BLM has a properly vetted and Senate confirmed permanent Director. As you know the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 requires Senate confirmation of the BLM Director. It is the law and has not yet occurred. At a minimum we urge you to assure this potential dismantling of the agency be put on hold until a Senate confirmed Director is in place and can be part of the process.

We stand ready to offer our assistance and experience in any manner that might be helpful. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

James L. Caswell

**James L. Caswell, Chair
National Association of Forest Service Retirees**