

September 5, 2019

The Honorable David L. Bernhardt
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt,

We are writing this letter as former career senior executives of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). We recently reviewed a July 16, 2019 letter from former Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Balash to Senator Murkowski, Chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The letter concerned the functional dismantling of the BLM Headquarters (HQ) located in Washington, D.C. As former members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) we are opposed to this proposal and feel it is a very ill-advised move, not only for BLM, but for the sound management of America's public lands entrusted to the agency's care.

It appears the Department of the Interior (DOI) is planning to move the BLM career HQ leadership to Grand Junction, Colorado, and scatter their staffs to the other western states. The rationale for this action includes reasons such as: placing decision-making closer to the ground; making it easier for western constituents and stakeholders to meet with HQ officials; increasing the western culture of BLM HQ employees; making the agency more responsive to the needs of western constituents; and saving money. There are no data, cost-benefit analyses, or other accounting that suggest these are problems needing to be "fixed" by such a drastic and costly action. In fact, nearly all (97 percent) of the BLM employees are already located in approximately 120 towns throughout the West. They have been delegated authority to make land use decisions as they weigh public interest, resource conditions, cooperating agency concerns, and BLM policy.

As former SES leaders with many decades of public lands management experience, we strongly believe the BLM HQ should remain in the Washington, D. C. area to provide immediate and efficient support to the Department, Administration, Congress, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and other closely aligned Federal agencies. With just 3% of its total workforce located in the Washington, D.C. HQ, BLM provides this professional support to the Department along with internal interdisciplinary budget, policy, oversight, and expertise support to the BLM.

We would ask that you not implement this dismantling of the BLM HQ:

- Moving the employees out of Washington, D.C. will not aid the decision-making process. It will, however, eliminate the BLM's participation in the daily legislative, budget, and policy discussions and interaction with the Department, OMB, other agencies, and Congress in Washington, D.C.

- Dismantling the BLM HQ will not make it easier for western constituents to meet with leadership. Unless you live in Grand Junction, the travel time and cost for nearly all westerners will be greater.
- The western culture of BLM will not change with this proposal. Nor will the responsiveness to western clientele. Ninety-seven percent of BLM employees already live and work in the West and many in Washington, D.C. have lived in the West prior to moving to Washington, D.C. This is a massive disruption and expenditure of funds for no gain.
- There will be no cost savings by dismantling the BLM HQ. In fact, it will cost to move the employees and then you will have higher graded senior policy specialists travelling constantly to complete their work. If the idea was to get more boots on the ground helping with the day to day work, the most effective way to accomplish that and save money is to direct funds to the Field Offices to hire entry level employees.

The BLM has been well organized to serve both the Washington, D.C. clientele and the western constituents. BLM manages public lands for all Americans. The proposed dismantling of BLM HQ will result in programs and policies being fragmented and inconsistent among states, or virtually all decisions being made by the DOI in Washington, D.C. without the benefit of valuable input from career professionals. This proposal, if implemented, will adversely alter the multiple-use and sustained yield concept of managing public lands for the good of all Americans as outlined in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

The public lands are an asset to all Americans and the BLM is an agency with a long history of successfully managing these lands for a variety of uses. The proposed dismantling of the BLM Headquarters Office would adversely affect public service, sustainable management of public lands, and operational effectiveness with no discernable benefit to the agency's mission under law.

Sincerely,

Larry Benna
Former Deputy Director

D. Dean Bibles
Former Assistant Director
and Arizona and
Oregon/Washington State
Director

Carson P. Culp
Former Assistant Director
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Elena C. Daly
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Thomas H. Dyer
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Steven A. Ellis
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Michael A. Ferguson Former Assistant Director	Martha G. Hahn Former Idaho State Director	Helen M. Hankins Former Colorado State Director
Ed Hastey Former Associate Director, Assistant Director and California State Director	Nina Rose Hatfield Former Acting Director, Deputy Director, & Assistant Director	Marilyn H. Johnson Former Assistant Director
Jesse J. Juen Former New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas State Director	James G. Kenna Former Arizona and California State Director	William Lamb Former Utah State Director
Thomas P. Lonnie Former Assistant Director and Alaska State Director	Christopher J. McAlear Former Assistant Director	Denise Meridith Former Deputy Director and Arizona and Eastern States Director
Mathew Millenbach Former Deputy Director, and State Director for Montana/Dakotas and Utah	H. Robert Moore Former Colorado State Director and Denver Service Center Director	Ann J. Morgan Former Colorado and Nevada State Director
Michael J. Penfold Former Alaska and Montana/Dakotas State Director	Carole Carter-Pfisterer Former Assistant Director	Carl D. Rountree Former Assistant Director
Mary Jo Rugwell Former Wyoming State Director	Edward W. Shepard Former Assistant Director and Oregon/Washington State Director	Donald A. Simpson Former Wyoming State Director
Gene R. Terland Former Montana/Dakotas State Director	W. Hord Tipton Former Chief Information Officer, Assistant Director, & Eastern States Director	Elaine Y. Zielinski Former Arizona and Oregon/Washington State Director

cc:

Hon. Lisa Murkowski, Chairman, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Hon. Joe Manchin, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Hon. Mike Lee, Chairman, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining
Hon. Ron Wyden, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests and Mining

Hon. Richard Shelby, Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Hon. Patrick Leahy, Vice-Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Hon. Lisa Murkowski, Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies
Hon. Tom Udall, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies
Hon. Raul Grijalva, Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources
Hon. Rob Bishop, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources
Hon. Alan Lowenthal, Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Hon. Paul Gosar, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Hon. Nita Lowey, Chairwoman, Committee on Appropriations
Hon. Kay Granger, Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
Hon. Betty McCollum, Chair, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Hon. David Joyce, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, & Related Agencies