

"Mike Roberts" 02/23/2011 09:00 AM

To
<Jennifer_Spencer@blm.gov>
cc

Subject
oil & gas lease sale

Dear Ms. Spencer:

I have recently received a letter and materials from your office re: March 17, 2011 oil and gas lease sale of properties, including mine, on the headwaters of Cross Lake, LA—properties in which the Federal Government owns the minerals. I am very disappointed in the decision to go ahead with this sale, especially from an administration that claims to be sensitive to environmental issues. We are confused as to why the Federal Government robbed the landowners of their mineral rights years ago—we naively assumed it was to protect the wetlands here, but apparently there was an ulterior motive. To support the greed of a few the government will endanger not only a sensitive wetland environment, but also the lives of area residents and the city water supply for hundreds of thousands of people. The area in question is the headwaters for the city of Shreveport's drinking water—Cross Lake. It is also our home and the home to numerous other families. It is a nature park-like environment.

The decision to lease this land to oil and gas interests for development is doubly disturbing in light of the recent oil spill in our Gulf waters—I guess northern Louisiana waters are deemed by the government as OK for potential spills—no matter that the lives of hundreds of thousands could be affected. In case you think that I am some wild-eyed green fanatic, I am a professional geologist with a Ph.D. who has over 35 years of oil industry experience and training in environmental science as well. I am very familiar with the local gas play for which this sale is targeted. There have already been accidents that have killed and injured people and animals and threatened many more. I have seen with my own eyes the destruction wrought by the oil & gas companies to the landscape of NW Louisiana in this play. The ultimate plan is to have 8 gas wells per square mile across all of numerous large parishes—practically the entire NW corner of the state. Each of these wells requires a huge pad [much larger than normal], that is, large loss of trees and other plants and animal habitats. Such development here will affect the drainage into the city water supply even if no spills occur. Uncontrolled timbering has already added to a siltation problem in the lake.

The area put up for lease is a nice quiet residential area around the western shoreline of Cross Lake and includes the main feeder streams for the lake—that is, any spills will potentially flow directly into the city water supply. The tremendous damages done to the landscape by “normal” operations will affect all of us in the area, including the heavy traffic, noise and real dangers of the drilling, frac'ing and completion practices. The areas already under development attest to what I say here. Not only are our lives endangered and our drinking water threatened, but our property values will certainly drop. Apparently the BLM has not sent anyone here to see what is going on. The omission of this area from the play will not materially affect the gas supply here.

Most Americans look to the Federal Government for protection, yet here the government is endangering its citizens. It is ironic that arctic drilling is banned in case some caribou might be put off its feed, oil development is halted if some rare toad is present or if an arrowhead is found, but the lives of humans are of no account. I expected better from the Obama Administration. Is it business as usual in Washington, D.C.?

You are my only contact point on this issue. In case your office cannot make any decisions to reverse the go-ahead for this sale, will you do me the courtesy of forwarding this letter to the proper person? It is a whisper in a windstorm, but please let me get through to someone who cares. Cross Lake is a stabilized natural lake that appears on very old colonial maps. This area of the sale includes the prettiest and most natural part, with extensive cypress groves and abundant and diverse animal and plant life—it is a natural wonder that should be protected. My heart is sad.

Sincerely, Michael T. Roberts

"Mike Roberts" 02/23/2011 10:30 AM

To
<Jennifer_Spencer@blm.gov>
cc

Subject
addendum to earlier email

P.S., I forgot to mention that the area is also the nesting area for American Bald Eagles. In fact this part of the lake is a nationally known bird-watching destination and hosts numerous species of song birds, birds of prey and water birds, including ducks, Pelicans, Great Blue Herons, egrets, and species too numerous to mention. It is a shame to despoil it—if I were in charge, even after a career in the oil business, I would deny the leasing of this acreage.