

**LIVING RIVERS • COLORADO RIVERKEEPER  
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BLM - UT - 950  
RMP DEC 17 AM 10:37

Ms. Becky Hammond  
Bureau of Land Management  
440 West 200 South, Suite 500  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84101.

Via fax: 801-539-4237  
Via certified mail

Re: BLM's Canyon Country District February 2013 Oil and Gas Lease Sale

Moab Field Office, NEPA number DOI-BLM-UT-Y010-2012-0190-EA  
Monticello Field Office, NEPA number DOI-BLM-UT-Y020-2012-0038-EA

Dear Ms. Hammond,

Under 43 CFR 3120.1-3 the above coalition protests the Proposed Action as explained below. The coalition provided timely comments during scoping and for the review of the Environmental Assessment.

**PARCELS NEAR DOLORES RIVER & ARCHES NATIONAL PARK**

UT0213-015	UT0213-171	UT0213-174
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Parcels UT0213-015, UT0213-171, and UT0213-174 should be deferred because of its close proximity to the Dolores River, which has suitable characteristics for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 90-542).

Development of these parcels is not consistent with the values of Two Rivers Special Recreation Management Area (Moab BLM RMP, 2008).

Development of these parcels is not consistent with the values of the Three Rivers Withdrawal (Public Land Order 7127), which is to protect the outstanding recreation, scenic, wildlife and cultural values of the river corridors in eastern Utah.

Wildlife values include foraging and/or breeding habitat that is crucial for deer, elk, pronghorn, prairie dog, borrowing owl, and hawk.

The University of Utah has a field station in the vicinity for appreciating the scientific and cultural values therein.

Fugitive gases from oil and gas operations in this area will have cumulative impacts on air quality at Arches National Park. National Parks established before 1977 have a Class I air quality standard that must be protected (Public Law 88-206). Arches NP does not have a station to monitor air quality and the station in Canyonlands has recorded pollution levels near exceedance. Until air quality is better understood at Arches NP, these parcels should be deferred so that increasing levels of harm can be eliminated.

Due to budget cuts, air quality monitoring devices were removed from Colorado National Monument, thus the impacts of oil and gas operations in eastern Utah are unknown and values can be assumed to be approaching, or exceeding, harmful levels.

The trucking of waste water on Interstate 70, and Highways 128, 50 and 46 poses serious traffic hazards to communities and visitors.

The regional capacity of handling waste water within standards of compliance have not been resolved by state and federal regulatory agencies. Utah currently accepts waste water from the state of Colorado, which is an unfair vector of pollution for residents of eastern Utah to bear. Regardless, fugitive gas emissions migrate into western Colorado communities and Colorado National Monument.

#### **PARCEL NEAR BLACK RIDGE**

UT0213-042

Parcel UT0213-042 should be deferred in consideration of the threat to residents of Kane Creek, Bridger Jack Mesa, and Brown's Hole. These homeowners have investments in infrastructure that provides clean drinking water. Other investments at risk include depreciation of property values. Risks to welfare and health include air pollution from fugitive gases, with other nuisances such as dust, noise, and impairment of night skies.

Federal reserve water rights are also at risk near this parcel.

Black Ridge is crucial winter forage for deer and elk. It is consistent for BLM to defer this parcel so that vegetation management plans will successfully improve this habitat for wildlife. Other wildlife values include foraging and/or breeding habitat that is crucial for SW willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, prairie dog, borrowing owl, and eagle.

Parcel 042 is in the South Moab Special Recreation Management Area (Moab BLM RMP, 2008) and oil and gas leasing is inconsistent with these management goals.

The trucking of waste water on Highway 191 and Interstate 70 poses serious traffic hazards to communities and visitors. The regional capacity of handling waste water

within standards of compliance have not been resolved by state and regulatory agencies. Fugitive gas emissions migrate into Arches NP and Colorado NM.

### **PARCELS NEAR TOWN OF LA SAL & LOWER LISBON VALLEY**

UT0213-124	UT0213-199	UT0213-201	UT0213-240
UT0213-246	UT0213-247	UT0213-248	UT0213-249
UT0213-250	UT0213-251	UT0213-252	UT0213-253
UT0213-254	UT0213-255	UT0213-258	UT0213-259
UT0213-260			

Parcels UT0213-124, UT0213-199, UT0213-201, UT0213-240, UT0213-246, UT0213-247, UT0213-248, UT0213-249, UT0213-250, UT0213-251, UT0213-252, UT0213-253, UT0213-254, UT0213-255, UT0213-258, UT0213-259, UT0213-260 must be deferred.

The public lands in the mining complexes near La Sal and Lisbon Valley are under NEPA review (Public Law 91-190) for uranium and vanadium mining and the cumulative impacts are not yet fully understood. The combined impacts of oil and gas operations with hard rock mining are significant as it relates to land, water and air resources. The operation of a copper mine in Lisbon Valley is another cumulative impact in the area.

Previous impacts from unregulated mining activities prior to CERCLA (Public Law 96-510) have not been fully addressed and decisions pertaining to the reclamation of "zombie mines," for example, remain unresolved. Lisbon Valley resembles an energy and extraction colony of unbalanced and embarrassing exploitation, more than a landscape of thoughtful multiple use.

Air quality issues include the commingling of venting radon gas with volatile organic compounds, with increased levels of dust. This cumulative impact will impair the health and welfare of residents, livestock, and native wildlife.

The high density of oil and gas activities proposed for this area will increase existing nuisances such as persistent noise, heavy truck traffic and impairment to night skies.

The trucking of waste water on Highways 46, 191 and Interstate 70 poses serious traffic hazards to communities and visitors. The regional capacity of handling waste water within standards of compliance have not been resolved by state and regulatory agencies. Utah currently accepts waste water from the state of Colorado, which is an unfair vector of pollution for residents of eastern Utah to bear. Fugitive gas emissions may migrate into Arches NP, Canyonlands NP and Colorado National Monument.

The National Trails System Act (P.L. 90-543) provides resources for the protection and preservation of our national historic trail system and recent funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is provided funding for assessments for the Old Spanish Trail.

Remnants of the Old Spanish Trail yet remain in San Juan and Grand Counties and any further degradation to this trail system must be avoided by the surface impacts of oil and gas operations, and until which time the trail system can be properly protected from public and corporate abuses.

These areas in San Juan County are crucial winter forage for deer and elk. Other wildlife values include foraging and/or breeding habitat that is crucial for yellow-billed cuckoo, prairie dog, borrowing owl, Gunnison sage grouse, and eagle.

#### **PARCELS NEAR MONTICELLO**

UT0213-054	UT0213-055	UT0213-131
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All three parcels are entirely on private land, very near settled or agricultural areas around the town of Monticello. Any surface runoff from those parcels may pose an immediate and severe risk to human health as well as local riparian waters.

There are many private wells adjacent to parcels in the Monticello area. It is extremely likely that Monticello's underground drinking and irrigation water comes from places vulnerable to drilling or surface contamination from parcels 054, 055 and 131. Sinking mineral extraction wells into the ground near those wells, especially with the use of "fracking" or similar, has a severe likelihood of impacting household water sources.

Before permitting the leasing of those parcels, BLM must understand the local underground hydraulic conductivity and transmissivity in relation to well locations. Together with that information, BLM must consider the likelihood of irretrievably committing the groundwater resource to oil and gas development, taking into account the near impossibility of cleaning contaminated groundwater and the lack of any other viable municipal water use.

Parcels 131 and 054, in particular, are very near the Source Protection Zone for Loyds Lake (know more officially as Lloyd's Reservoir), which is a protected water source for the City of Monticello. Parcel 054 goes well into Zone 1, and 131 goes into Zone 4.

The State of Utah classifies the waters of Loyds Lake for the beneficial uses of culinary water, recreation, fish habitat, and irrigation. Those beneficial uses cannot be impaired

by any extraction activities. The BLM must take a hard look at the risks of bringing waters out of compliance with Clean Water Act standards.

BLM must ensure compliance with the City of Monticello's Water Source Protection Plan, which applies to Loyds Lake as well as several protected Public Water Sources within Monticello. The EA's discussion of surface waters does not mention the Clean Water Act's standards for the nonimpairment of designated beneficial uses of a water source; those must be taken into account when permitting any activity in a parcel.

Any overflow from waste ponds, pipelines or similar may contaminate surface water and impair its beneficial uses--drinking, irrigation, recreation and wildlife habitat. Surface-disturbing activities that cause increased erosion or riparian disturbance are also problematic. If offered for lease, parcels near human habitations, agriculture or riparian areas must bear effective stipulations to negate the risk to surface waters, such as disallowing pipelines or open liquid storage, and require regular inspections for proper maintenance and operation of these facilities. Parcels very near human habitations should not be offered for lease.

Sincerely yours,



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