



*“While I respect the authors of this report, their findings are insulting. I fail to see how a nine-day on-the-ground review by a team of outsiders is better than the seven-year process of public hearings and real input that produced the comprehensive plan by professional BLM and state employees in Utah.”*

**Congressman Rob Bishop**

- On October 7, 2009, the Department of the Interior (DOI) released a report from an eleven-person team of Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Forest Service and National Park Service employees on 77 lease parcels from the December 2008 Utah sale. None of the team members was directly involved in the resource management planning process which was the basis for the lease sale. Based on the team’s recommendations, Secretary Salazar announced that:
  - Not a single lease will be reinstated
  - Only 17 parcels will be leased in their current form at some future lease sale
  - 8 parcels will be completely withdrawn from leasing
  - 52 parcels will be deferred indefinitely.
- DOI under Secretary Ken Salazar has made decisions that create extreme uncertainty and threaten the continued development of natural gas and oil in Utah, where 58% of natural gas and 42% of oil production is from federal lands.
- The report further calls into question established oil and natural gas leasing procedures and the Utah Resource Management Plans (RMP). The RMPs represent a balance of multiple uses, yet Utah’s voice and interests are being circumvented by Washington.
- The report indicates that DOI intends to negate the \$35 million public and open land use planning process that included thousands of hours of state employees’ time, over 100 cooperating agency meetings, and 185,000 comments from the public. The decisions based on the report reflect a complete disregard for the State of Utah and the seven-year effort by federal, state, tribal, and local governments, citizens groups, industry, and the general public.
- In the extensive, seven-year RMP planning process, BLM ensured critical environmental protections for air, water, wildlife, cultural, and other resources were put in place. No new acreage was opened to leasing that was not available before under the Clinton Administration, and no lands have fewer environmental protections than before.
- The report signals DOI’s intent to totally reform the oil and natural gas leasing program and to take the lead in developing a “comprehensive interagency strategy” to address energy leasing, development, and related air quality concerns for Utah and other western states.
- DOI needs to feel pressure from Utah officials until they stop listening exclusively to outside conservation interests, and to ensure any reforms to leasing and RMP changes include state input.