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## **Oil & Natural Gas Industry United: 65 Leases in the White River National Forest Have Far-Reaching Implications** <sup>[1]</sup>

*Retroactive changes, cancelations to existing leases pit elite activists against middle-class Colorado workers and U.S. taxpaye*

(DENVER) - [Western Energy Alliance](#) <sup>[2]</sup> and the [West Slope Colorado Oil & Gas Association](#) <sup>[3]</sup> (WSCOGA) together with 10 Colorado, regional, and national trade associations [submitted comments](#) <sup>[4]</sup> to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) regarding 65 valid existing leases in the White River National Forest in Colorado. These leases were purchased in good faith after the completion of forest planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, but BLM failed to perform one technical step. Rather than simply correcting that technicality, BLM is going back to the drawing board and potentially changing the rules several years after the leases were sold and issued. BLM's actions, prompted by political pressure from anti-oil and natural gas groups, undermine the confidence and regulatory certainty necessary for the entire federal onshore oil and natural gas system.

Environmental groups such as the Thompson Divide Coalition, which is funded by the Aspen Skiing Company, owned by the multi-millionaire Crown family of Chicago, have opposed the leases. Their zero tolerance for energy development, even many miles away from Aspen in lands properly designated as available for environmentally responsible oil and natural gas development, puts middle-class jobs and economic development on the West Slope at risk.

"Oil and natural gas development is conducted in an environmentally sensitive manner that protects the air, water, and land while coexisting with agriculture, outdoor recreation, and other land uses," said Kathleen Sgamma, the Alliance's vice president of government and public affairs. "By providing the American people with the energy from federal lands that they own, companies create high-paying jobs while boosting local businesses such as hunting outfitters, vintners, and small retailers.

"However, certain elite interests are trying to prevent jobs and economic growth from an industry they don't like. We see around Colorado how groups financed by wealthy interests are trying to agitate local communities against an industry made up of hundreds of small businesses and thousands of working men and women. The oil and natural gas industry respects all jobs and businesses, but certain elite interests aren't as tolerant."

"Trade associations from all across the nation recognize that this isn't just about a handful of leases in western Colorado," said David Ludlam, executive director of the WSCOGA. "This is a barometer on whether a leaseholder can reasonably expect the regulatory certainty necessary to invest on federal lands in the future. By retroactively changing the rules years after these leases were sold, BLM is directly threatening investment on the West Slope of Colorado, but also shaking what little faith is left in the federal government and its commitment to honor valid property rights."

The coalition's comment letter to BLM is available [online](#) <sup>[4]</sup>.

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### **About Western Energy Alliance**

*Western Energy Alliance, founded in 1974 as the Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States, is a non-profit trade association representing more than 480 companies engaged in all aspects of environmentally responsible exploration and production of oil and natural gas in the West. More information about Western Energy Alliance is available at [www.westernenergyalliance.org](http://www.westernenergyalliance.org)* <sup>[2]</sup>.

### **About WSCOGA**

*The membership of West Slope Colorado Oil & Gas Association is committed to enhancing oil and natural gas production in Western Colorado while also enhancing the communities where their members work, live and raise their families. The West Slope Colorado Oil & Gas Association's mission is to foster and promote the beneficial, efficient, responsible and environmentally sound development, production and use of Western Colorado oil and natural gas.*

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