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Lawsuit Challenges BLM's Failure to Hold Oil & Natural Gas Leases Sales ⁽¹⁾

DENVER – Today, Western Energy Alliance [filed a lawsuit](#) ⁽²⁾ challenging the Secretary of the Interior and the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) failure to hold quarterly oil and natural gas lease sales on public lands. At a time when Keep-It-in-the-Ground protesters are [petitioning the Interior Department](#) ⁽³⁾ to violate the Mineral Leasing Act and stop federal oil and natural gas leasing by executive action, the trade association is reminding the agencies of their congressionally mandated responsibility to lease lands in states with oil and natural gas resources. The Alliance will be represented by Mark S. Barron and Alexander K. Obrecht of BakerHostetler, who successfully delivered a victory for industry on [BLM's hydraulic fracturing rule](#) ⁽⁴⁾.

BLM manages mineral rights across 700 million acres of public and split-estate lands in the United States. Under the Mineral Leasing Act, the agency is required to hold quarterly oil and natural gas [lease sales](#) ⁽⁵⁾ in each state where lands are available and industry interest exists. Over the past few years, BLM has cancelled sales and failed to offer parcels for lease on a quarterly basis.

"Through protests and petitions, the [Keep-It-in-the-Ground movement](#) ⁽⁶⁾ is trying to coerce BLM into violating the law by stopping all leasing on federal lands," said Kathleen Sgamma, vice president of government and public affairs at the Alliance. "Yet without doing anything, activists could achieve the same goal just by leaving BLM to its own devices. Western Energy Alliance is simply asking the courts to compel BLM to follow decades-old law and hold quarterly lease sales in every oil and natural gas state.

"For example, today's lease sale in Colorado was cancelled because BLM can't get through the bureaucratic process in time. Likewise, in New Mexico only two lease sales were held in 2015 and one planned in 2016, despite the requirement to hold four every year. Who needs loud protests when bureaucrats are doing the same thing by simply not doing their job?"

Environmental groups are pressuring the Interior Department to issue a moratorium on federal oil and natural gas leasing. Groups such as 350.org, Food & Water Watch, WildEarth Guardians, Center for Biological Diversity and many others petitioned the department in July to [end oil and natural gas leasing](#) ⁽³⁾ on public lands. The effort is a major step toward their long-term goal of completely ending oil and natural gas production in the United States.

A quick glance at the number of sales held in several key oil and gas states demonstrates BLM has regularly violated the requirement to hold four lease sales annually in each state.

The Law v. Reality									
Quarterly BLM Lease Sales Actually Held									
	2015				2016				Outcome
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Required By Law	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	8 of 8
Colorado	√	√		√		√		√	5 of 8
Montana		√				√		√	3 of 8
New Mexico			√	√			√		3 of 8
North Dakota	√		√		√	√	√		5 of 8
Oklahoma			√			√			2 of 8
Texas			√						1 of 8
Utah	√	√				√		√	4 of 8
Wyoming	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	7 of 8

BLM misses out on valuable revenue that benefits the federal government, states and taxpayers by not holding oil and natural gas lease sales quarterly. Since January 2015, BLM has received [\\$170 million](#) ⁽⁷⁾ from lease sales. That figure could be substantially higher if the agency had just followed the law.

More information about the suit and BLM's leasing process is available in the Alliance's filing with the court and on its [leasing website](#) ⁽⁵⁾.

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**[Audio Bites](#) ^[8] on SoundCloud

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[3] http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2016/keep-it-in-the-ground-07-12-2016.html

[4] <https://www.westernenergyalliance.org/press-room/alliance-wins-court-strikes-down-federal-fracking-rule>

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