



December 22, 2014

Via email: blm_mt_north_dakotafo_lease_ea@blm.gov

Mr. Paul Kelley
Bureau of Land Management
North Dakota Field Office
Att: Oil and Gas EA
99 23rd Avenue West, Suite A
Dickinson, North Dakota 58601

RE: Western Energy Alliance Scoping Comments on the Expressions of Interest for the July 2015 Oil and Natural Gas Lease Sale – North Dakota Field Office

Dear Mr. Kelley:

Western Energy Alliance wishes to express its support for leasing all eight of the nominated parcels in the July 14, 2015, lease sale. Exploration and production in North Dakota has played a significant role in making the U.S. the world's leading producer of oil and natural gas, and development on public lands is vital to that contribution.

Western Energy Alliance represents over 480 companies engaged in all aspects of environmentally responsible exploration and production of oil and natural gas in North Dakota and across the West. The Alliance represents independent producers, the majority of which are small businesses with an average of fifteen employees.

The Preliminary Parcel List outlines the existing stipulations that would apply to each of the nominated parcels for the protection of other resources. These include restrictions to protect historic and archaeological resources, as well as sites that are culturally significant to contemporary populations of Native Americans; riparian areas, wetlands, and other waterways; wildlife, including those protected under the Endangered Species Act; and aesthetic values. These existing stipulations are robust and sufficient to address other resource concerns.

Oil and natural gas development has proven to be a valuable economic driver for the nation, contributing significant revenues to federal, state, and local coffers, and providing thousands of well-paying jobs. These revenues are used to fund infrastructure, education, and other vital services for communities. In North Dakota, oil and natural gas exploration and production supports nearly 20,000 jobs with wages totaling over \$1.6 billion, and contributes over \$4.3 billion in economic impact and over \$3.5 billion in federal and state taxes.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment, and should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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Sincerely,



Brian J. Meinhart
Policy Analyst

Cc: The Honorable Jack Dalrymple, Governor, State of North Dakota
The Honorable John Hoeven, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Heidi Heitkamp, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Kevin Cramer, U.S. House of Representatives
Burke County Commission
Williams County Commission
Divide County Commission
Golden Valley County Commission
Bowman County Commission