

# News Release



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## **Western Energy Alliance Calls on Salazar to Reinstate Utah Leases** *Department of Interior report exonerates producers, leaves Secretary no choice but to allow development of clean American energy*

(Denver) – Western Energy Alliance (formerly IPAMS) today called on Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar to reinstate 77 leases in Utah in light of a Department of Interior (DOI) report showing that the reasons for canceling the leases were unfounded. Although the report was completed seven months ago, it was only released this week following mounting pressure from local Utah officials and the state’s congressional delegation.

“This report from DOI confirms what we’ve been saying all along,” said Kathleen Sgamma, Western Energy Alliance’s Director of Government Affairs. “The 77 leases were improperly withdrawn. Given that the justifications for the withdrawal are incorrect, we hope the Interior Secretary will reinstate these leases and award them to companies who legitimately purchased them at the lease sale.

Contrary to previous DOI claims, the report from the Interior Inspector General confirms that there was nothing nefarious about the lease sale and nothing about the seven year process that preceded the sale was “last minute” or “rushed.” Furthermore, as detailed in the report, all controversial leases near national parks were pulled from the lease sale by BLM after reaching consensus with the National Park Service (NPS).

“This week the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands will hold a hearing on ‘Creating Rural Jobs with America’s Public Lands’, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is holding a Jobs for America Summit. Secretary Salazar could take immediate steps to create energy jobs by reinstating the leases and taking other measures to enable western producers to develop the clean American energy on federal lands that our nation needs to survive,” concluded Sgamma.

[Click here to view the Inspector General's report](#)

### **Reason Salazar gave for cancelling leases:**

“In its last weeks in office, the Bush Administration rushed ahead to sell oil and gas leases at the doorstep of some of our nation’s most treasured landscapes in Utah,” said Secretary Salazar.<sup>1</sup>

### **What Salazar’s own Inspector General found to be true:**

“Moreover, the emails confirmed that updating the RMPs had been an ongoing process for over seven years and that Sierra set June 2008 as the initial target deadline for completion.”

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<sup>1</sup> Department of the Interior Press Release [Secretary Salazar Restores Balance in Controversial Last-Minute Oil and Gas Lease Sale near Utah National Parks](#), dated February 4, 2009.

### **Reason Salazar gave for cancelling leases:**

The 77 parcels, which total about 103,225 acres, are all in the vicinity of two National Parks and Dinosaur National Monument.”<sup>2</sup>

### **What Salazar’s own Inspector General found to be true:**

“ The meetings at the field level eventually led to a November 24, 2008 meeting between [Mike] Snyder [Regional Director, Intermountain Region, National Park Service], [Selma] Sierra, [Utah BLM State Director], [Jeff] Rawson, [Associate Utah State Director] and other NPS and BLM personnel. This meeting resulted in a consensus between BLM and NPS concerning what parcels would be deferred from the lease sale and what stipulations and conditions would be placed on included parcels.

### **Background and Key Facts as confirmed by the DOI report:**

- The National Park Service agreed to the leases sold at the December 2008 sale. Prior to the sale, BLM removed 109 parcels of 195,515 acres from the sale in coordination with NPS. BLM removed all parcels adjacent to national parks, leaving only one adjacent to a national monument. With one exception, parcels were miles away from parks, and most tens of miles away.
- Western Energy Alliance has maintained all along that Secretary Salazar’s decision to withdraw the 77 leases and subsequent rhetoric about the decision demonstrate an unfortunate lack of regard for the seven-year public planning process that produced the RMPs upon which the December 2008 lease sale was based.
- The December 2008 lease sale was the result of a comprehensive, seven-year public land management planning process in which everyone – environmental groups, the National Park Service, EPA, other federal and state agencies, and the general public – had ample opportunity to participate.
- The State of Utah, Tribes, federal agencies, local governments, and many citizens who enjoy or depend on these public lands invested seven years of time and resources into the planning process.
- The RMPs appropriately represent a balance of multiple uses from all segments of society and government, not just the single interest of conservation. **No new acreage was opened to leasing that was not available under the Clinton Administration, and no lands have fewer environmental protections than before.**
- In a letter to Mike Snyder, NPS Regional Director following two days of collaboration between BLM and NPS, Utah State Director Selma Sierra agreed to defer all parcels of concern to the Park Service from the sale and implement additional environmental protections on others, leaving only 132 parcels actually offered for sale to which NPS did not object.<sup>3</sup> Until now, this fact has been overlooked by DOI, including in the report from Deputy Secretary David Hayes that criticized BLM for failing to coordinate with NPS.<sup>4</sup>
- The IG Report includes information on the coordination, citing comments from Mike Snyder, Regional Director, Intermountain Region, National Park Service and Selma Sierra, Utah BLM State Director. The Park Service agreed to the remaining parcels.

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### **About Western Energy Alliance**

*Western Energy Alliance, founded in 1974, is a non-profit trade association representing more than 400 independent natural gas and oil producers, service and supply companies, banking and financial institutions, industry consultants, and their 480,000 employees who are committed to environmentally responsible natural gas and oil development in the Intermountain West. More information on Western Energy Alliance and its members is available at [www.westernenergyalliance.org](http://www.westernenergyalliance.org).*

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Memo to Regional Director, Intermountain Region, National Park Service, from Director, Utah State Office, BLM, dated November 25, 2009, regarding Discussions and Agreements Regarding December 19, 2008 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale of Lands Proximal to Arches National Park, Canyonlands National Park and Dinosaur National Monument. [http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/ut/lands\\_and\\_minerals/oil\\_and\\_gas/december\\_2008.Par.50809.File.dat/NPS%20letter%2011-25-08%20M.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/ut/lands_and_minerals/oil_and_gas/december_2008.Par.50809.File.dat/NPS%20letter%2011-25-08%20M.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Report to Secretary Ken Salazar Regarding the Potential Leasing of 77 Parcels in Utah dated June 11, 2009. <http://www.doi.gov/utahreport/>