

News Release



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Western Energy Alliance Commends Montana BLM on Timely Action *Resumption of leasing will help economic growth; concerns remain over retroactive application of new policies*

(Denver) – Western Energy Alliance (formerly IPAMS) congratulated the Montana/Dakotas state office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for its end-of-year actions that will enable economic activity to proceed in 2011. All oil and natural gas leasing activity in Montana and the Dakotas had been halted in 2010 after radical environmental groups filed a lawsuit on the basis of climate change, and the resulting settlement required BLM to perform additional analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

BLM completed the analysis in a timely manner and found that leasing had no significant impact on climate change. In fact, just 0.022% of US greenhouse gas emissions can be related to *all* federal oil and natural gas development in Montana and the Dakotas.

“Western Energy Alliance applauds the Montana/Dakotas BLM for completing the environmental analysis in a timely manner, which enabled a lease sale on December 9, 2010,” said Kathleen Sgamma, Director of Government & Public Affairs. “That sale generated a much needed \$35 million in revenue, which is split between the states and federal government, and will lead to economic investment and job creation by oil and natural gas companies, which already support 488,000 jobs in the West.

“BLM also moved quickly to lift the suspensions on 45 leases from 2008 that were the subject of a frivolous lawsuit by environmental groups. We remain concerned, however, that some leases legitimately sold in 2008 will remain suspended. Those leases were fully compliant with the Mineral Leasing Act and all environmental laws, and had appropriate stipulations applied to them to ensure protection of other natural resources found on the lands. The Department of the Interior is now applying its new policies to leases sold in prior years, and we believe that retroactive application of new policies is not in conformance with American values and legal principles.

“We’re seeing this same retroactive application of new policies to unissued leases in Utah and Wyoming. While we commend Wyoming BLM for working to clear its backlog of unissued leases, many parcels remain in limbo because new policies are being applied retroactively, and the leases that have finally been issued are months and years beyond the 60 day deadline mandated by the Mineral Leasing Act. Great uncertainty remains among those considering investing in energy development on public lands,” said Sgamma.

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About Western Energy Alliance

Western Energy Alliance, founded in 1974, is a non-profit trade association representing more than 400 companies engaged in all aspects of environmentally responsible exploration and production of oil and natural gas in the West. More information on Western Energy Alliance and its members is available at www.westernenergyalliance.org.