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October 21, 2019

Honorable David L. Bernhardt
Secretary
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

I write to highlight issues that the State of Colorado, local governments, sportsmen, businesses, conservationists, and agricultural leaders have raised regarding the proposed Resource Management Plan (PRMP) and final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO). The enclosed letters suggest the PRMP currently lacks adequate measures to protect water supplies, air quality, wildlife habitat, and the burgeoning recreation economy. I request that you reengage with the community to develop a balanced plan that respects local priorities before the Department finalizes the current proposal.

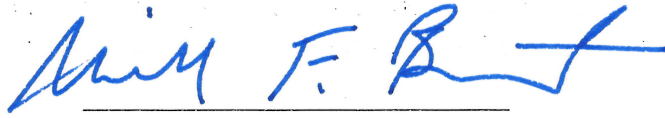
Local governments in the area are invested in the PRMP because the UFO's management of natural resources deeply affects their way of life. They have been engaged throughout the BLM UFO planning process, both on behalf of their residents and through their status as cooperating agencies. Yet the drastic and unexplained changes to the PRMP have undercut the governments' good faith engagement efforts. BLM's decision to introduce the PRMP with new provisions that directly contradict local feedback at the last minute and provide no opportunity for individuals, cooperating agencies, and stakeholders to share feedback undermines years of collaboration and local engagement. The lack of transparency and unwillingness to work with the involved communities is troubling.

As you will see in the attached letters, the communities that the PRMP affects are very concerned about what the plan will mean to the careful balance they have developed together over the years. Three Colorado counties have filed formal protests to the PRMP. Their concerns include threats to clean water, lack of consideration for at-risk wildlife, and negative effects on their local economies. The PRMP's proposed leasing in the North Fork Valley is particularly concerning to many agricultural producers in the Valley who believe that oil and gas development will threaten the already fragile local water infrastructure and harm their operations.

As a western Colorado native, I know that you share a love for the land and our diverse communities. As these communities continue to change, economies that once depended primarily on natural resource development now also rely on wildlife habitat, recreation, and agri-tourism. To thrive, they need partners in Washington who will listen to their concerns and act in their interests. Therefore, before your agency

finalizes any plan for the UFO, I request that you work with these communities to develop a final plan that respects long-standing local priorities and represents a balanced use of our nation's public lands.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Cc: Jamie Connell, Colorado State Director, US Bureau of Land Management