

January 26, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Colorado Groups Support Halting New Oil and Gas Leasing and Permitting Onshore and Offshore

Dear President Joseph R. Biden Jr.:

On behalf of the undersigned climate, conservation, and equity organizations and the thousands of members we represent in Colorado, we congratulate you and Vice President Kamala D. Harris on your historic election win.

We applaud your commitment to climate, conservation, and equity action. We stand behind your Day One pledge to end new federal oil and gas leasing and permitting on public lands and waters, including here in Colorado. We urge you to follow through on your campaign pledge by imposing an immediate moratorium on new federal oil, gas, and coal leasing and permitting. The moratorium should allow for no state exceptions while the Department of the Interior initiates a comprehensive review to align our nation's federal fossil fuel programs with its climate goals.

Climate change is an existential threat to Colorado and the United States. The climate crisis is already causing more destructive hurricanes, floods and wildfires, rising seas, hotter heatwaves and droughts, and increasing food and water insecurity--including in the Colorado River Basin. It is causing the collapse of ecosystems and hastening the extinction crisis. Colorado's ski industry has declared that climate change is its "greatest threat" and that "government must act."¹ Parts of western Colorado have already seen warming of 2°C; further warming threatens organic agriculture in the region. The Colorado Legislature has declared that climate change "adversely affects the state's economy, air quality and public health, ecosystems, natural resources, and quality of life."² Overwhelming scientific consensus holds that without deep and rapid emissions reductions, warming will exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius and will result in catastrophic damage around the world. Every fraction of additional warming above 1.5 degrees Celsius will worsen these harms, threatening lives, health and safety, livelihoods, the economy, and national security for this and future generations.

¹ Aspen-Snowmass. 2020. See: <https://www.aspensnowmass.com/we-are-different/programs-and-practices/activism>

² H.B.19-1261, Climate Action Plan to Reduce Pollution, available at: <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb19-1261>

New federal fossil fuel leasing and development is incompatible with avoiding a 1.5 degree Celsius limit. The potential carbon emissions from the oil, gas, and coal in the world's currently operating fields and mines would take us beyond 2°C of warming. The reserves in currently operating oil and gas fields alone, even with no coal, would take the world beyond 1.5°C.³ Accordingly, it is in the national interest of the United States to cease the expansion of fossil fuel leasing and development and implement a managed decline of fossil fuel extraction on public lands and waters.

This would complement the State of Colorado's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 26% below 2005 levels by 2025, 50% by 2030, and 90% by 2050.⁴ It would reduce significant out-of-state emissions caused by the export of Colorado's oil and gas to other jurisdictions. The Colorado Legislature has declared that, "we must work together to reduce statewide greenhouse gas pollution in order to limit the increase in the global average temperature to one and one-half degrees Celsius, which scientists agree would provide a more stable and hospitable climate for current and future generations and mitigate the risk of catastrophic climate impacts in Colorado."

In addition to helping to safeguard Colorado's climate, ending new leasing and permitting would protect many of our state's most vulnerable communities. Oil and gas infrastructure is already omnipresent in some parts of Colorado, with development and its pollution threatening public health, schools, neighborhoods, low-income communities and communities of color. We further urge your administration to work with communities to address the impacts such an order would have on fossil-fuel reliant economies and ensure that safeguards are in place to support an equitable transition. Ending new leasing and permitting would provide your administration with the time it needs to repair the damage caused by the previous administration and advance a science-based approach to the federal fossil fuels that addresses, rather than exacerbates, these problems.

The need to act is critical. Under the Trump administration, hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands have already been leased to the oil and gas industry. The administration is currently planning to sell more than 111,000 acres of new oil and gas leases in March of 2021 and more than 34,000 acres in June 2021.

³ Oil Change International. 2016. *The Sky's Limit: Why the Paris Climate Goals Require a Managed Decline of Fossil Fuel Production*, Available at: <http://priceofoil.org/2016/09/22/the-skys-limit-report/>

⁴ H.B.19-1261, Climate Action Plan to Reduce Pollution, available at: <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb19-1261>

We appreciate your consideration of our views and stand ready to work with your administration to shape and implement your administration's climate, conservation, and equity priorities.

Sincerely,

1. 350 Colorado
2. Be the Change, Colorado
3. Call to Action Colorado
4. CatholicNetwork
5. Center for Biological Diversity
6. Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition
7. Citizens for a Healthy Community
8. Clean Energy Action
9. Colorado Businesses for a Livable Climate
10. Colorado Coalition for a Livable Climate
11. Colorado Latino Forum
12. Colorado Rising
13. Colorado Sierra Club
14. Community for Sustainable Energy
15. Estes Valley Clean Energy Coalition
16. Fort Collins Sustainability Group
17. Great Old Broads for Wilderness
18. High Country Conservation Advocates
19. Mothers Out Front
20. National Parks Conservation Association
21. Physicians for Social Responsibility Colorado
22. RapidShift Network
23. San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council
24. Seven Generation, LLC;
25. The Climate Mobilization - Colorado
26. The Wilderness Society
27. Unite North Metro Denver
28. Western Environmental Law Center
29. Wild Connections
30. WildEarth Guardians
31. Wilderness Workshop
32. Wind & Solar Denver