

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

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LT. GOVERNOR

May 12, 2023

Tracy Stone-Manning
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: Conservation and Landscape Health Proposed Rule (RIN 1004-AE92)

Dear Director Stone-Manning:

I write today to urge the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) withdraw the proposed Conservation and Landscape Health Rule (Rule) and reengage stakeholders in a transparent, public process to examine whether such a rule is even necessary. Absent withdrawal and reengagement, I request the BLM extend the public comment period for the proposed Rule and to provide at least one in-person public meeting in Montana at a date, time, and location most convenient to those impacted by the proposed Rule.

The proposed Rule the BLM has advanced is undoubtedly one of the most expansive and substantive changes to federal land management policy and law in decades, arguably since the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 was signed into law. I am very concerned that such an impactful policy proposal went straight to a draft rule, bypassing any notice of scoping or coordination with impacted parties. The BLM should rectify this significant failure by withdrawing the proposed Rule and working with stakeholders immediately.

The public comment process for the proposed Rule is also riddled with glaring problems. Given the proposed Rule's far-reaching impacts, especially on states in which the BLM has a presence, it is frustrating to see your agency offer such a diminutive amount of time for state, local, and tribal governments, stakeholders and partners, and the public to engage. Having a mere 75 days to review and provide comment on a rule that would fundamentally alter how the BLM operates is disingenuous and runs counter to the narrative perpetuated by this Administration that it is interested in listening to the American people on its proposals. A reasonable person could conclude the BLM and the Administration have little to no interest in engaging the public on this significant proposed Rule.

Despite how expansive this proposed rulemaking is, the BLM is offering a scant number of in-person public meetings. The agency is failing to visit other western states, including Montana, that will be directly impacted by this egregious federal overreach. I urge you to set up, at a minimum, an in-person meeting in Lewistown, Montana. It is imperative for you and your staff to sit across from landowners, permittees, stakeholders, and Montanans so you can hear firsthand about the implications of this rulemaking. As someone who hails from Montana, you understand the value of in-person, face-to-face conversations with neighbors.

The BLM failed to involve the public in its creation of the draft proposed Rule, and it should be withdrawn in favor of a more transparent and collaborative process. Absent wholesale withdrawal and reengagement, I urge the BLM, at the very least, to extend the public comment period by a minimum of 60 days and prepare for a public meeting in Lewistown, Montana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Gianforte", is written over a printed name and title. To the right of the signature is a large, stylized blue star or asterisk symbol.

Greg Gianforte
Governor