

November 30, 2012

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
Secretary of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We the undersigned sportsmen's groups, other conservation organizations and scientific societies recognize the vital role public lands play in providing our nation's best wildlife habitat, clean water for fish, outstanding air quality and tremendous recreational opportunities. We also recognize the Nation's energy needs and support a globally competitive energy program that incorporates responsible energy principles that allows both energy extraction and fish and wildlife resource protection. We believe that a basic tenet of responsible public lands management is to ensure long-term sustainability of what you referred to as America's "crown jewels."

Development of oil shale has been attempted for more than a century. Oil shale deposits underlie arid portions of northwestern Colorado, southwestern Wyoming and northeastern Utah. This area is also home to some of our nation's most valuable fish and wildlife habitats. Streams flowing through this area provide water for important fisheries as well as for family farms, orchards, ranches, homes and rural communities that dot this landscape. Legendary world class fisheries including the Green, White, Uintah, Lake Fork, Strawberry and Duchesne Rivers all flow through the area. Smaller headwater streams provide hundreds of miles of quality fishing experiences. The Green River below Flaming Gorge and Strawberry Reservoir, the top two fishing destinations in Utah, are located in this area, which also includes North America's largest migratory mule deer herd, tremendous elk herds, and important populations of greater sage grouse, black bear, bald eagles and mountain lions. Hunting, fishing, other wildlife-based activities and outdoor recreation are cornerstones of the regional economy and integral to the area's lifestyle, heritage and identity.

Our organizations urge caution in the opening of federal public lands for commercial oil shale and tar sands development. Research must precede any commercial leasing, and that research must demonstrate that extraction technologies and mitigation options exist that will protect clean air and water, conserve fish and wildlife, and sustain the economies that depend on those resources.

The decision announced on November 9, 2012 strikes a good balance but we do urge caution relative to the increased risk of damage to important Greater sage grouse habitat in Wyoming. This decision protects many important fish and wildlife habitats from the expected impacts of commercial scale oil shale and tar sands development, it also provides adequate lands for a robust research pilot program, and requires that operators

successfully fulfill the terms of a research, development and demonstration lease before they can secure commercial development rights. By requiring companies first to prove their technologies and assess the impacts to communities, human health, and fish and wildlife, this decision helps ensure that commercial oil shale and tar sands development will be initiated only following a fuller understanding and evaluation of their impacts.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff to find the appropriate balance that enables energy production on federal public lands while protecting its vital fish and wildlife resources.

Sincerely,

*Gus Rassam, Executive Director*

American Fisheries Society

*Benjamin Bulis, General Manager*

American Fly Fishing Trade Association

*Gordon Robertson, Vice President-Government Affairs*

American Sportfishing Association

*Noreen Clough, Conservation Director*

Bass Angler Sportsmen Society

*Jim Martin, Conservation Director*

Berkley Conservation Institute, Pure Fishing

*Suzanne O'Neill, Executive Director*

Colorado Wildlife Federation

*David Nickum, Executive Director*

Colorado Trout Unlimited

*Larry Schweiger, CEO*

National Wildlife Federation

*Howard Cushing, National Representative*

New York State Conservation Council

*Steven Riley, CEO*

North American Grouse Partnership

*Brian Murphy, CEO*

Quality Deer Management Association

*Howard Oliver, Chairman-Legislative Affairs*

Sportsmen Defending Public Lands N E

*Whit Fosburgh, CEO*

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

*Chris Wood, President and CEO*

Trout Unlimited

*Robert Dibble, President*

Utah Council of Trout Unlimited

*Gray Thorton, CEO*

Wild Sheep Foundation

*Winifred Kessler, President*

The Wildlife Society

*Jim Broderick, Chairman*

Wyoming Council of Trout Unlimited

*Steve Kilpatrick, Executive Director*

Wyoming Wildlife Federation