

April ##, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
The Capitol S-128
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
The Capitol S-128
Washington, DC 20515

Re: FY2024 Funding Request to End Fossil Fuel Leasing by the Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

Dear Chair Murray and Vice Chair Collins:

On behalf of ## organizations and our millions of members and supporters, we request that you zero out funding for all fossil fuel extraction on our public lands and offshore waters. After the release of the U.N. Emissions Gap Report 2022, U.N. Secretary-General Guterres pled to every nation on the planet that we must all “End our reliance on fossil fuels. Avoid a lock-in of new fossil fuel infrastructure. Invest massively in renewables.”¹ We are gravely concerned that Congress continues to lock-in more fossil fuel infrastructure every year, deepening this reliance on fossil fuels, and therefore we ask you to reverse course.

Despite the profound urgency of the climate crisis, year after year, and regardless of the which political party retains control of Congress, every year Congress continues to direct the Department of the Interior to authorize destructive fossil fuel extraction on our public lands and oceans. This zombie, status quo funding occurs despite how it continues to perpetuate lasting harm to tribal nations, frontline communities and other groups, all while it exacerbates impacts to the climate, our public lands and wildlife populations.

Zombie funding of the Department of the Interior’s fossil fuel programs have resulted in the Biden administration approving 6,430 permits for oil and gas drilling on public lands in its first two years.² While such activities greatly benefit the richest polluters in the history of the planet, the burning of fossil fuels results in unhealthy levels of air pollution, which increases many health risks including premature death, lung cancer, asthma attacks, stillbirths and developmental delays in children.

Therefore, we ask that Congress zero-out all funding in the FY2024 Interior appropriations bill that supports any oil, gas, and coal leasing, production, or extraction on public lands and offshore

¹ World headed for climate catastrophe without urgent action: UN Secretary-General, United Nations Environment Programme (2022), <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/world-headed-climate-catastrophe-without-urgent-action-un-secretary-general>.

² Biden Administration Oil, Gas Drilling Approvals Outpace Trump’s, Massive Fossil Fuel Expansion Undermines U.S. Climate Commitments (2023), <https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/biden-administration-oil-gas-drilling-approvals-outpace-trumps-2023-01-24/>.

waters and instead support workers, a just transition to clean energy, and the restoration of our public lands.

Funds should be reallocated away from fossil fuel extraction and shifted towards renewable energy, restoration, and protection of wildlife habitat to address the millions of acres that have been degraded by fossil fuel extraction. This transition will ensure our lands and waters are preserved for current and future generations.

Specifically, we request the following for FY2024:

Bureau of Land Management – Oil and Gas Management

Eliminate funding for approvals of new oil and gas leases, and any approving applications for permits to drill on public lands and waters. Since FY2016, the appropriated amount for oil and gas management has increased nearly 90% from \$59.7 million³ to \$112.9 million in FY2023.⁴ This has resulted in larger and larger areas of public lands being locked away exclusively for oil and gas development.

Bureau of Land Management – Coal Management

Eliminate funding for new coal leases, expansions, and permits. Existing coal already authorized under federal leases is estimated to extend through 2041.⁵ Given the need to phase out coal as expeditiously as possible there is no rational justification to continue with any future funding for coal leasing or permitting under any scenario.

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management – Conventional Energy

Zero out funding for conventional oil and gas energy leasing, exploration, development, and production on offshore waters. Since FY2015, the appropriated amount for oil and gas management has increased nearly 25% from \$49.6 million⁶ to \$61.5 million in FY2023.⁷

Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 – Suspend Section 50265

Congress should suspend during fiscal year 2024 the requirements found within Section 50265 of the Inflation Reduction Act, which requires the Department of the Interior to offer at least 2 million acres of public lands and 60 million acres of offshore waters for oil and gas leasing each year as a prerequisite to installing any new solar or wind energy.⁸ The deployment of renewable energy on public lands and waters should not be held hostage to ever-greater expansions of oil and gas development. Section 50265 undermines this nation's ability to address the climate crisis and only serves to enrich the fossil fuel industry.

³ 114th Cong. Rec., Vol. 161, No. 184—Book III at H10226 (Dec. 17, 2015).

⁴ 117th Cong. Rec., Vol 168, No. 198 at S8803 (Dec. 20, 2022).

⁵ Over-Leased: How Production Horizons of Already Leased Federal Fossil Fuels Outlast Global Carbon Budgets, EcoShift Consulting, prepared for the Center for Biological Diversity and Friends of the Earth at 1, (July 2016), https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/keep_it_in_the_ground/pdfs/Over-leased-Report-EcoShift.pdf.

⁶ 114th Cong. Rec., Vol. 161, No. 184—Book III at H10242 (Dec. 17, 2015).

⁷ 117th Cong. Rec., Vol 168, No. 198 at S8817 (Dec. 20, 2022).

⁸ Public Law 117–169, Title V, Subtitle B, Part 6, Sec. 50265, 136 Stat. 2061 (Aug. 16, 2022).

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management – Renewable Energy

We recommend that Congress fund this line item at \$67.8 million, an increase of \$25 million from FY2023,⁹ which would increase the funding for renewable energy projects.

* * *

Congress must end business as usual funding of fossil fuel extraction on public lands and waters. If Congress fails to change course, it will simply be impossible to limit warming to below 1.5°C and ensure a livable planet for future generations. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity
Climate Hawks Vote
Food & Water Watch
Friends of the Earth
Oil Change International

⁹ 117th Cong. Rec., Vol 168, No. 198 at S8817 (Dec. 20, 2022).