

The Truth about BLM Director Caswell's Letter to the Editor

Sorry, wrong. Perhaps Director Caswell is up to so much last-minute mischief with the Bush administration that he forgot that BLM regulations allow the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management to suspend a lease sale (43 CFR § 3120.1-3). In fact, the Utah BLM cancelled its November 2007 lease sale.

Really? BLM has already withdrawn half of the acreage they started with because of problems the public and the National Park Service pointed out that BLM had failed to analyze. At this rate, in three more weeks there won't be any more "carefully vetted" parcels to lease.

Well . . . If by "development" he means sitting on bureaucrats' desks, then perhaps these were seven years in the making. However, as the *Salt Lake Tribune* and the *New York Times* have pointed out, it wasn't until the waning days of the Bush administration that the BLM decided to finish these plans so as to cement the Bush administration's legacy of mismanagement. Apparently, they had some pressing deadline that caused them to flood the public with thousands of pages of documents in the space of a few short weeks.

Letter to the Editor of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, 12/12/08



Dear Letters Editor:

The Tribune's recommendation ("Halt lease sale," Nov. 28) that the Bureau of Land Management in Utah "do...nothing" with its December 19 sale of oil and gas leases **ignores the fact that the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended in 1987, requires each BLM state to hold quarterly lease sales where there is an interest in such sales.** Moreover, contrary to what the Tribune editorial argues, **the parcels to be sold have been carefully vetted** for environmental impacts through a public process that included input from the National Park Service, resulting in the deferral of lease sales on parcels covering 83,000 acres. **Land-use plans authorizing leasing were seven years in development – and thus clearly were not rushed.** These plans, which reflected voluminous public input and cooperation with both the State of Utah and county governments, substantially increase resource protections by limiting off-highway vehicle use and by tightening oil and gas leasing stipulations.

The BLM carries out a multiple-use mission aimed at facilitating authorized uses of the public lands while protecting their natural, historical, and cultural resources. This is a complex and challenging mission, one that inevitably leads to controversy because some members of the public value certain land uses over others or, in some cases, strongly take issue with certain uses even though they are authorized by law. The BLM in Utah will focus on the mandates that Congress has given it through law, and in so doing will ensure that authorized uses of the public lands are carried out in an environmentally sound manner.

Sincerely,
James Caswell
Director, Bureau of Land Management
Washington, D.C.

We agree. The BLM does have a multiple use mandate. Unfortunately, under the Bush administration, multiple use has come to mean that public lands are to be used for oil . . . AND . . . gas development. Congress' intent that multiple use include conservation, wilderness preservation, wildlife protection, and non-motorized recreation has been thrown out the window.