

April 9, 2020

Russell T. Vought  
Acting Director  
U.S. Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Acting Director Vought,

On behalf of our members and communities impacted by oil, gas, and mining across the United States, we write to urge all agencies, including independent agencies, to place a moratorium on all new permitting and rulemakings, and extend all existing public comment periods until at least 60 days after the national emergency is lifted. We also urge you to reschedule all public hearings until it is safe for the public to gather.

All people have a right to participate in our government's decisions about oil, gas, mining, and related infrastructure affecting our public lands, public health and environment. In the midst of a global pandemic, our government urges us to stay at home and maintain social distance. During this difficult time, with many people facing daily health crises in their own communities, our government should not march ahead with business as usual.

Many oil, gas, and mining facilities disproportionately impact rural and systematically oppressed communities who already face many obstacles to their meaningful participation in public comment and permitting processes. The global pandemic also disproportionately impacts these types of communities. Stay at home orders in place across the country may limit access to internet, mail, phone service, or travel, making it difficult for communities to meaningfully engage in public comment periods, and the COVID-19 pandemic makes it unsafe to gather to participate in public hearings.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has created unanticipated hardships on us all. Our government should not respond to one health crisis by making decisions that potentially increase other health and environmental threats—especially when the public that our government ostensibly serves cannot adequately participate in the decision making process. Instead the government should focus on protecting all people during this difficult time.

Out of respect for public safety, for public lands, and for our democracy, the federal government should immediately hold open all public comment periods for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews until 60 days after the national emergency is lifted, and similarly pause all permitting, leasing, and rulemaking for oil, gas, mining, and its infrastructure.

Sincerely,

Allegheny County Clean Air Now  
Arizona Mining Reform Coalition  
Athens County's Future Action Network  
Beyond Plastics  
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance  
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance  
Boise Chapter of Great Old Broads for Wilderness  
Breathe Easy Susquehanna County  
Breathe Project  
California Coastal Protection Network  
Catskill Mountainkeeper  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Center for International Environmental Law  
Central Western PA Climate Reality Chapter  
Clean Water Action  
Climate Hawks Vote  
Coalition for a Nuclear Free Great Lakes  
Coastal Alliance to Protect our Environment  
Communities First--Sewickley Valley  
Connecticut Coalition Against Millstone  
Copper Country Alliance  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Dominican Sisters of Houston  
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa Peace and Justice Office  
Dominican Sisters of Springfield, Justice Committee  
Don't Waste Michigan  
Earthjustice  
Earthworks  
Endangered Species Coalition  
Environmental Working Group  
Extinction Rebellion Kentucky  
First Peoples Worldwide  
FracTracker Alliance  
Franciscan Sisters of the Poor  
FreshWater Accountability Project  
Friends of the Earth  
Friends of the Inyo  
Friends of the Land of Keweenaw, FOLK  
Gas Free Seneca  
Gila Resources Information Project  
Grand Riverkeeper Labrador, Inc.  
Greenpeace US  
Healthy Gulf  
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC

Hudson River Sloop  
Clearwater, Inc.  
Information Network for Responsible Mining  
LEAD Agency, Inc.  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
League of Conservation Voters  
LITE Initiatives  
Malach Consulting  
Mercy Ecology  
Mining Impact Coalition of Wisconsin  
Mono Lake Committee  
Mountain Watershed Association  
Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment  
Network for Oil and Gas Accountability and Protection  
New Mexico Environmental Law Center  
New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light  
Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness • Northern California Recycling Association  
Occidental Arts and Ecology Center  
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition  
Oil Change International  
Osprey Orielle Lake  
Peak Plastic Foundation  
Pennsylvania Alliance for Clean Water and Air  
Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania  
Plastic Oceans International  
Plastic Pollution Coalition  
Protect PT (Penn-Trafford)  
River Guardian Foundation  
Rock Creek Alliance  
Save Our Cabinets  
Save Our Shores  
Save Our St Vrain Valley  
Save the South Fork SalmonSeneca Lake Guardian  
Sierra Club  
Silver Valley Community Resource Center  
Sisters of St. Joseph Brentwood NY Office of Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, PA  
Southeast Alaska Conservation Council  
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance  
Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, LA Province  
Texas Campaign for the Environment

The 5 Gyres Institute  
The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education  
The Lands Council  
The Last Plastic Straw  
The Story of Stuff Project  
Turtle Island Restoration Network  
Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition  
WaterLegacy  
Weber Sustainability Consulting  
Western Watersheds Project  
WildEarth Guardians  
Zero Waste USA  
Zero Waste Youth USA

CC:

Administrator Wheeler, United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Secretary Bernhardt, United States Department of Interior  
Secretary Perdue, United States Department of Agriculture  
Secretary Brouillette, Department of Energy  
Chairman Chatterjee, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
Secretary Chao, Department of Transportation  
Lieutenant General Todd T. Semonite, Chief of Engineers and Commanding General of the U.S.  
Army Corps of Engineers