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October 6, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
1848 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

I write to request that the Department of Interior move forward on an administrative solution, or present an alternative, to provide oil and gas lease revenues rightfully owed to Colorado. I would also like to invite you to visit the western Colorado counties that have long been owed these revenues, to hear directly how costly this oversight has been for our West Slope communities.

Under the terms of the Transfer Act (Section 3404 of Public Law 105-85), all Federal Mineral Lease revenues from the Naval Oil Shale Reserve were to be disbursed under the terms of the Mineral Leasing Act after the funds were no longer needed for clean-up and restoration at the Reserve. On August 7, 2008 the Secretary of Energy and the Secretary of the Interior jointly certified that the funds were no longer needed for clean-up. From that point on, future revenues from portions of the Naval Oil Shale Reserve should have been distributed to Colorado and a number of our western counties under the terms of Section 35 of the Mineral Leasing Act. Our office has worked to remedy this oversight through legislation since 2008, but have been hampered by congressional inaction and procedural rules in the House of Representatives. It is our understanding that millions of these dollars may have already been inappropriately used to offset other federal expenditures, and the entire remaining fund is at risk, without immediate action.

Colorado and its counties have been owed these royalties for far too long, and we must resolve this issue. I ask you to take all available steps to ensure that this money, which rightfully belongs to the State of Colorado and its counties, is distributed as soon as possible. I also ask you to explore any options to distribute funds directly to the relevant counties in order to avoid further delays or reductions in funds. If your Department decides it is unable to take action, please advise us of your decision so that we may return to the pursuit of a legislative solution.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and I look forward to your response. Please feel free to contact my office if you need any additional background information or have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael F. Bennet". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator