



NEIL GOLDSCHMIDT
GOVERNOR

BOOTH GARDNER
GOVERNOR

February 24, 1989

The Honorable Manuel Lujan, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Lujan:

Congratulations on your selection to serve as Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior. As the Governors of Oregon and Washington, we view your appointment with a sense of optimism. Together we can establish working relationships which will enable us to address and resolve critical land and water, fish and wildlife, parks and recreation, and energy resource issues vital to our northwest states. We are confident such working relationships can respect and protect legitimate federal, state and tribal interests.

As a fellow Westerner and former elected official, you clearly understand that Interior, more than any other federal agency, administers the policies and programs with the greatest potential to impact the western states. As Secretary, you are now the steward of the full range of the nation's natural and energy resources and trustee for the interests of America's Indian people. You have a unique opportunity to restore much needed balance to Interior's programs for natural resource conservation and protection as well as for energy development.

The Northwest is a region in which our abundant natural resources and a high quality environment are critical to our economy and way-of-life. We have frequent and ongoing relationships with Interior's programs and agencies. Often, these relationships are positive, exhibiting respect and understanding for one another's perspectives and legitimate interests. In one critical area, however, such positive relationships have not historically existed. This unfortunate instance is the Minerals Management Service's (MMS) ill-conceived proposal to open the entire outer continental shelf (OCS) off the Oregon/Washington coast to oil and gas leasing and development.

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Since 1984, the Northwest states have diligently provided extensive communications and comments to Interior about its OCS leasing proposals. The states' position has been clearly articulated by four different governors representing both political parties. The states' position has consistently focused on several basic principles:

First, we understand the importance of energy development and are not totally opposed to a balanced OCS leasing program. In our view, a balanced program must be consistent with an overall energy policy that recognizes the value of both conservation and production. Such a program must involve all affected parties in key leasing decisions and reflect legitimate state, tribal, regional and national interests. The program must also be based on sound scientific information and credible analysis. In our view, the current leasing proposal clearly fails these tests of balance.

Second, necessary scientific and environmental studies should be agreed to, completed and analyzed before leasing proceeds. There is much to learn, but with the current federal leasing schedule, too little time to learn it.

Third, there are certain areas that are too important to the economic, environmental and community well-being of the Northwest and the nation to be risked for any single interest - even one as important as energy development. Such areas should not be considered for leasing.

The states of Oregon and Washington believe the points outlined above combine to form a balanced approach to OCS leasing. This approach could enable a reasonable leasing program which protects the marine and coastal environment and economy. We are, therefore, extremely disappointed to have received no substantive response from Interior or MMS which positively addresses our concerns. Despite our efforts to cooperate, the fact remains that not one square inch of the nearshore OCS areas of concern to Oregon/Washington have been removed from the leasing plan. MMS still intends to proceed with a blanket lease sale program in our region with wholly inadequate scientific and environmental information. This is simply not acceptable to us.

We are extremely troubled by the ironic decisions made earlier this month to "indefinitely postpone" lease sales in California and Florida while proceeding on schedule with the leasing plan for Oregon and Washington. Such actions appear to reinforce Interior's traditional failure to recognize legitimate Northwest interests, concerns and values.

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According to Interior's own estimates, California and Florida have greater energy potential than Oregon and Washington. Interior also ranks the Oregon/Washington planning area higher in terms of environmental sensitivity and marine productivity than any other in the lower 48 states. Yet, the Florida and California sales are halted while the sale for Oregon/Washington is still on schedule. Why? Is this sound energy development and resource management policy.

Let us return to our initial theme of optimism. We recently concluded a successful agreement with the Interior Department to establish a federal/state/tribal OCS task force for the Northwest. We ask that you support this body and permit it to help guide leasing discussions in our region. This task force can be a positive, cooperative tool for all parties. Your support will send a clear signal that other cooperative efforts are possible.

Here in the Northwest, you have a unique opportunity to reestablish the positive federal, state, tribal and Congressional relationships necessary for Interior to successfully conduct its diverse programs. If good relationships can be developed, and state and tribal interests respected, there should be no need to invoke Congressional appropriations and oversight authorities to influence the management of Northwest OCS programs on an ongoing basis. In order to begin renewal of these relationships and preserve any option for a future Northwest leasing OCS program, we respectfully request that you take the following actions, now, regarding the proposed Oregon/Washington OCS lease sale:

First, postpone Lease Sale #132, now scheduled for 1992, indefinitely until there is consensus among the Pacific Northwest OCS Task Force members on an adequate environmental/scientific studies program for the region, the agreed-upon studies have been concluded and the study results are known to all parties.

Second, remove from consideration for leasing the critical areas adjacent to Olympic National Park, the mouths of key estuaries and harbors, prime commercial and recreational fishing grounds and sensitive wildlife habitat areas previously identified by the states.

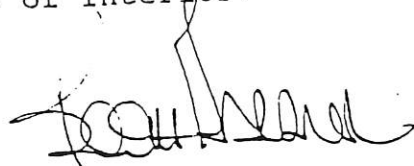
Third, commit the Department of Interior to a balanced national energy policy and to restructure its OCS leasing program within the context of such a policy.

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We pledge to work cooperatively with you and other Interior officials to assist in the successful implementation of all the diverse programs of the Department of Interior.

Sincerely,


Neil Goldschmidt
Governor
State of Oregon


Booth Gardner
Governor
State of Washington ,