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March 17, 2008

The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Extension of Comment Period for the Draft Programmatic Oil Shale & Tar Sand
Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Secretary Kempthorne:

On behalf of a number of Colorado local governments and organizations and many concerned citizens who reside on the Western Slope, I request that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) extend the comment period for the Draft Programmatic Oil Shale & Tar Sand Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for an additional 60 days, up to May 19, 2008.

I supported the inclusion of a one-year moratorium on oil shale development in the FY08 omnibus spending bill. The joint explanatory statement that accompanies this provision states:

The Appropriations Committees are aware that oil shale has the potential to be an important energy resource, which will be integral to our nation's future energy security. But this development must proceed thoughtfully and with the full support of the states of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. While industry is still many years away from establishing the commercial viability of new oil shale extraction technologies, there is concern that the Department of the Interior may be moving ahead before the full impacts of such a program are known, and without full and complete cooperation of the affected States. It is essential that these States have a meaningful opportunity to review and comment on the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), draft proposed commercial leasing rules and regulations, and relevant resource management planning documents. Therefore, the Secretary is directed to provide adequate time after the completion of the PEIS for the Governors of the affected States of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming to review any draft proposed or final commercial leasing regulations, with additional time for public comment as appropriate.

An extension of time for comment will provide the opportunity for the meaningful review intended by Congress.

In addition, the voluminous draft PEIS deserves careful review and consideration by affected communities, citizens and other public interest groups. Several counties and municipalities have submitted formal requests for an extension of the comment period, including the City of Rifle, the Town of Carbondale, Eagle County, and Pitkin County. In addition, the Front Range Water Council made up of Denver Water, Northern Colorado Conservancy District, Colorado Springs Utilities, City of Aurora, Board of Water Works of Pueblo, Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District and Twin Lakes Reservoir and Canal Company, has also requested an extension. These entities supply water to about half of Colorado's population.

I urge the BLM to give these and other entities more time to review the draft PEIS so that the BLM has the full benefit of their perspective and concerns.

Sincerely,



Ken Salazar
United States Senator

cc: Mitchell Leverette, Division Chief, Division of Solid Minerals
Sally Wisely, Colorado State Director, BLM