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October 4, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave S.W.
Washington, DC 20250


Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write to request a 60 day extension of the comment period for the United States Forest Service's (USFS) advanced notice for proposed rulemaking to streamline permitting for oil, gas and mineral development projects in federal forests and grasslands published in the Federal Register on September 13, 2018. We also encourage the Forest Service to provide an opportunity for review and input through public meetings and hearings. The proposed rulemaking is the first major revision to the USFS locatable and hardrock mineral regulations since the mid-1970s and the first for oil and gas since the early 1990s. The proposed changes have major implications for our National Forests.

The USFS manages more than 14 million acres in Colorado across 11 National Forests and two National Grasslands. Coloradans support a balanced approach to managing our public lands that ensures responsible resource development while supporting multiple uses such as grazing, recreation, and timber harvest. However, the Agency appears to be prioritizing oil and gas leasing rather than maintaining a balanced approach that is responsive to community interests. Coloradans also recognize that some resource management decisions now can have long-lasting effects on future generations. For example, there are more than 23,000 abandoned mine sites throughout Colorado, many of which impair water quality. I've long advocated for reform of the Mining Law of 1872 but the proposed rulemaking to expedite permitting of new mining under such an outdated law is concerning.

It is essential that the public have sufficient opportunity to review and provide feedback on these proposals. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator