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Comments: Thank you for allowing the public to comment on the proposed oil and gas leasing in the Ruby Mountains located in northeast Nevada. I am not a citizen of Nevada, but I know the state very well and have marveled at the oasis-like landscapes of mountains which dot the arid Great Basin Region. The Ruby Mountains are prime example of that landscape. I've always had a partial interest in the Ruby Mountains ever since I would travel east to west and vice-versa. They have intrigued me. I want to make sure that the beauty and integrity of this oasis is still there when that chance for me comes to explore the Rubies. By the way, I am a prime example of why these National Forests belong to the totality of people in this country, not just those who are lucky enough to have these areas outside their back door. We have the same discussion of those National Forest lands here in southwestern Montana.

When I first looked at commenting on this issue, I was surprised to see how close some of these proposed oil and gas leasing acreages were to the Ruby Mountain Wilderness. I don't understand the rationale. For this reason alone, I find this proposal unacceptable. But secondly my thoughts go to the wildlife and their respective habitat. From what I understand, the Ruby Mountains host the state's largest mule deer herd. When it comes to wildlife habitat, there is such a close connection between the forested regions of the higher terrain and the alluvial fans which surround them that the disruption is magnified. This affects the winter and summer ranges of a herd that represents almost one-quarter of the state's mule deer population.

One of the concerns we have here in Montana is the survival of the sage grouse. Their habitat is disappearing at an alarming pace all across the Great Basin and Intermountain West. It is strongly believed that one reason for that is the rate their habitat is being destroyed by lands being opened up for oil and gas leasing. Why would you abound in that effort?

For all of these reasons and more, I urge the cancellation of this extraction permit. U.S. public policy on energy extraction has run-amuck. The Nation needs to review it leasing policy on public lands. National Forest lands were originally set aside for the protection of the watersheds, the forest and the wildlife. They were set aside for the intrinsic value themselves which included the enjoyment of the American people. The value of minerals, oil and gas which lie underneath the surface very seldom comes back to aid the pocket book of its people. Instead it enriches the corporate few. For these reasons I oppose the leasing of these lands for oil and gas.

Thank you for allowing me to comment. I appreciate any time you can give them.