

# News Release

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## Misinformation Skews Public Debate on Energy Development

Distortion of facts, misinformation leads to bad public policy for natural gas & oil leasing in Utah

(DENVER)- The Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States (IPAMS) today highlighted the misinformation propagated by environmental groups that has muddled policy decisions.

On February 4, 2009, the Department of Interior issued its decision to withdraw 77 leases from the December 2008 Utah lease sale. The Department's stated reason at the time was that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) failed to coordinate with the National Park Service (NPS), and that more time was needed for environmental review.

On May 20, 2009, Secretary Salazar issued a letter to Senator Robert Bennett stating that in fact there had been coordination between NPS and BLM prior to the sale. He committed to specific steps his newly confirmed Deputy Secretary David Hayes would take to review the 77 cancelled lease parcels.

Even after Secretary Salazar acknowledged that he had relied on misinformation in making his contentious decision, Utah's environmental lobby has continued to distort the facts, and the media has continued to repeat these distortions.<sup>1</sup>

"Environmental organizations continue to distort the facts about natural gas and oil leasing in Utah," said Kathleen Sgamma, IPAMS Director of Government Affairs. "Besides the misinformation on the coordination between NPS and BLM, they have misrepresented the environmental analysis that formed the basis for the December lease sale, completely ignoring seven years of analysis conducted with consultation from NPS. We are concerned that these half-truths from the environmental lobby may be directly affecting policy making, and negatively impacting America's economy and energy security."

"Public land management should be a balance. Only 0.07 percent of public lands are occupied by natural gas and oil activity in the West - a balance that results in 27 percent of the nation's supply of natural gas. We hope that environmental organizations will consider these facts in the future and refrain from distorting the facts in order to influence policies that affect the livelihood of over 230,000 Westerners," concluded Sgamma.

(more)

### Myths from the Environmental Lobby

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<sup>1</sup> "Salazar, Bennett reach oil-and-gas deal," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 21, 2009; 'SUWA Scoffs at Bennett's Interior Department Victory, KCPW interview of David Garbett, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance by Elizabeth Ziegler, May 21, 2009.

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**Myth 1:** The sale was a “last minute give away” by the outgoing Bush Administration

**Fact:** The law requires BLM to conduct quarterly lease sales. The December 2008 sale was a regular quarterly sale.

**Myth 2:** There was a “rush” to open lands to the natural gas and oil industry.

**Fact:** BLM spent seven years conducting environmental analysis. The culmination of that seven-year process was that no new acreage was open to natural gas and oil, and no lands have fewer environmental protections than before. **The withdrawn parcels had been open for leasing for the prior thirty years.**

**Myth 3:** The National Park Service was not consulted.

**Fact:** NPS was involved in the seven-year planning and environmental analysis process. NPS did not object to any of the leasing designations that kept the 77 leases open for natural gas and oil activity. Despite that coordination, BLM deferred to last-minute objections by NPS and pulled all leases of concern prior to the sale.

**Myth 4:** The leases threatened national parks.

**Fact:** Lease parcels immediately adjacent to the parks were withdrawn prior to the sale. Most of the 77 leases were several miles away from the parks, and all of the leases were near existing natural gas fields or other leases.

**Myth 5:** The Resource Management Plans are flawed.

**Fact:** BLM complied with all applicable laws in developing the plans over a seven-year period, and worked with local, state, and federal agencies, tribes, and the public. BLM added protections for wildlife, cultural, air, water, and other resources.

**Myth 6:** A lawsuit in the DC District Court means that the leases should not have been auctioned off in the first place.

**Fact:** The judge issued a restraining order to temporarily prohibit the issuance of the leases in order to give the court time to review the case on its merits. The Department of Interior’s decision prevented the case from running its course and allowing the court to rule on the facts.

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## About IPAMS

*The Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States (IPAMS), founded in 1974, is a non-profit trade association representing more than 400 independent natural gas and oil producers, service and supply companies, banking and financial institutions and industry consultants committed to environmentally responsible natural gas and oil development in the Intermountain West. More information on IPAMS and its members is available at [www.ipams.org](http://www.ipams.org).*