



**Wyoming Outdoor Council**

[wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org](http://wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org)

262 Lincoln Street  
Lander, WY 82520  
307.332.7031

The Honorable Liz Cheney  
416 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

October 13, 2017

Dear Congressman Cheney,

We write to you in gratitude for your service to Wyoming, and in the hopes that you will find the Wyoming Outdoor Council's input and perspective valuable as you consider legislation. The Wyoming Outdoor Council is Wyoming's oldest and largest home-grown conservation organization, operating since 1967. We have members and supporters throughout the state and offices in Cheyenne, Jackson, Lander, Laramie, and Rock Springs. Our staff are experienced, they know Wyoming, and they have a well-earned reputation for rolling up their sleeves and working constructively with our state officials, industries, and the public. We also have a long record of participation in federal oil and gas development plans and projects, and we regularly engage with the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Game and Fish Department, the State Legislature, and the governor's office. We write to you from the depth of 50 years of experience.

On behalf of our 5,700 members and supporters, we would like to express our unequivocal opposition to draft legislation now before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources. The Opportunities for the Nation and State to Harness Onshore Resources Act (ONSHORE Act) would essentially transfer management authority for the permitting of federal oil and gas resources to the states while abandoning the collective responsibility for oversight and analysis of the potential environmental impacts of these activities on public health and important shared resources.

The ONSHORE Act would remove the traditional checks and public input that help create a balance between development and conservation. By declaring that oil and gas leasing and permitting would no longer be a major federal action, this draft legislation would set environmental protections back half a century by allowing oil and gas developers to circumvent our nation's bedrock environmental protection law—the National Environmental Policy Act.

While this might make things a bit easier for drillers on public lands in the short run, it would be bad for these companies and their workers, the nation's environment, and our economy in the long run. This is because the United States is the world's largest economy and—for the last half century—the one nation where the most ambitious, smartest, best educated, hardest working, entrepreneurial people want to live, work, invent, and start new businesses. The United States attracts and retains these talented people because they know if they live here they will not only have economic opportunities, but they and their children will breathe clear air, drink clean water, and experience unparalleled opportunities for recreation on public lands and open spaces. And this factor—the quality of life a country and state can offer—will only become more important to state and global economies as this century progresses.

It is our position that this proposed act is unwise and its intent is contrary to America's celebrated, nonpartisan values and traditions—dating back to President Theodore Roosevelt—of championing *both* economic development and environmental protections. These traditional values of balance, which are also an integral part of Wyoming's culture, come from a deep insight: conservation and economic development, in the long term, will always depend on each other. This draft legislation is fundamentally objectionable to us as it devalues America's public lands to the exclusive benefit of the fossil fuel industry while also limiting the right of all Americans to participate in how their lands are managed. Don't get us wrong: we understand the importance of oil and gas development. But we also know there are ways it can be done right, in locations that make sense—and there are some places where it shouldn't happen.

Federal land management agencies are entrusted with the distinct task of managing public lands for multiple use now and for future generations. This bill would abandon that trust as well as the deep-rooted responsibility of performing science-based environmental analyses of the likely impacts from proposed oil and gas developments. In America and Wyoming, we value our public lands for family outings, hunting, fishing, camping, and many other activities. In Wyoming especially, we also dearly value wildlife, clean air, and clean water. Our public lands, our natural resources, and our shared environment should be protected today and conserved for future generations. Oil and gas development is a valid use on our public lands, but—in accordance with our most cherished values—it should not be prioritized above all others.

Many states currently manage their own oil and gas programs but have highly limited—or nonexistent—environmental review, especially when it comes to wildlife, historical and archeological values, viewsheds, and recreational resources. For example, the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission's primary authority is to prevent waste during recovery and to protect correlative rights. This agency's rules are also minimally designed to protect human health and the environment, but only when it comes to immediate human or animal safety around the facility, contamination of soils, and underground and surface waters at drilling or production locations. The WOGCC does not apply, nor does it have the capacity, budget, or expertise to apply any wildlife habitat stipulations except for those related to Greater sage-grouse. Neither does the agency address, nor does it have the capacity, budget, or expertise to address archeological, recreational, viewshed, or any other important resources. A few states are similar to Wyoming, but most have even less capacity and expertise to address these issues.

In closing, we oppose the ONSHORE Act because it would eliminate essential public involvement—including Wyoming voices—in proposed oil and gas development on federal lands, and it would hand over management authority for the permitting of federal oil and gas resources to the states while neglecting the responsibility for oversight and analyses of the potential environmental impacts of oil and gas development on public health and other important shared resources.

There are ways of making the federal leasing and permitting process more efficient without abandoning our collective responsibility to protect the environment. For this reason, we strongly urge you to oppose the ONSHORE Act.

We would welcome the opportunity to speak with you and your staff in more detail about our concerns and suggestions. I have listed my contact information below and am glad to continue this dialogue. We thank you for your service to our state and for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,



Lisa McGee

Lisa McGee, Director  
Wyoming Outdoor Council  
[lisa@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org](mailto:lisa@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org)  
307.733.3845 (office)  
307.413.2790 (mobile)

Cc: Members of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources

The Honorable Paul Gosar, Chairman  
The Honorable Louie Gohmert  
The Honorable Doug Lamborn  
The Honorable Rob Wittman  
The Honorable Steve Pearce  
The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson  
The Honorable Scott Tipton  
The Honorable Paul Cook, Vice Chairman  
The Honorable Garret Graves  
The Honorable Jody Hice  
The Honorable Darin LaHood  
The Honorable Jack Bergman  
The Honorable Rob Bishop  
The Honorable Alan Lowenthal, Ranking Member  
The Honorable Anthony Brown  
The Honorable Jim Costa

The Honorable Niki Tsongas  
The Honorable Jared Huffman  
The Honorable Don Beyer  
The Honorable Darren Soto  
The Honorable Nanette Diaz Barragan  
The Honorable Raul Grijalva