



**WESTERN RESOURCE
ADVOCATES**

For Immediate Release
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WRA Statement on DOI Announcement of Oil and Gas Lease Reforms

Today, the Department of the Interior finalized onshore oil and gas leasing reforms that are designed to protect special landscapes, wildlife habitat and water. The new rules will help defend the Rocky Mountain West from runaway leasing and drilling policies. Western Resource Advocates supports the reforms.

“Secretary Salazar’s reforms are a long overdue breath of fresh air and injection of good government where it has been sorely lacking,” according to Lands Program Director Mike Chiropolos. “Interior is doing its best to ensure that failures like the one that is devastating the Gulf don’t repeat themselves in the Rockies where our communities and spectacular lands are at stake.

Among Interior’s reforms is raising the bar for use of “categorical exclusions,” a leasing practice that by-passes adequate review and safeguards to expedite approval of industry drilling proposals. According to Chiropolos, “One month ago, almost nobody had heard of ‘categorical exclusions.’ But as the current Gulf disaster unfolds, the danger of granting these exceptions is clear to the entire nation – not just the people and wildlife of the Gulf. In the aftermath of the Gulf disaster, eyes will again turn to on-shore drilling, including right here in the Rockies. These reforms are of national importance.”

In the last ten years, WRA has protected hundreds of thousands of acres from improper, and sometimes illegal, leasing and is a leader in the fight to reform drilling policies in the West.

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