September 14, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

With ever greater concern about the dire state of the climate emergency, we write to urge you to phase out oil and gas production on federal lands and waters by 2030.

Climate disasters are increasing in frequency and severity.¹ Wildfire flames and smoke are forcing communities to evacuate across the country. Sea level rise is shrinking coastal areas and dismantling infrastructure. Hurricanes are becoming stronger, devastating entire communities, and headlines of record-breaking heat and cold are starting to become normal. July was the hottest month in recorded history.² The climate crisis is here now and causing widespread death and destruction.

Given the severity of the crisis we face, we respectfully urge the Department of the Interior to use its statutory authority to phase down the fossil fuel production on public lands and waters. Doing so will build upon your efforts to fight the climate crisis and maximize benefits for all Americans. This is a crucial action that can be taken rapidly and is supported by hundreds of climate justice groups.³ The Mineral Leasing Act, Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act, and other laws provide clear authority for the Department of the Interior to control rates of fossil fuel production on leased land. Every oil and gas operator that signs a lease agreement with the Department of the Interior acknowledges Interior’s broad authority to control activity under their leases, including phasing down the fossil fuel production from leased lands.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently released its proposed rule on onshore oil and gas regulations on public lands and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management is expected to release its draft five-year plan for offshore leasing. We urge you to include a managed decline of oil and gas production on public lands in the final BLM rule. This step can also set the stage for BOEM to initiate its own rulemaking and release a five-year plan with no new leases.

The climate science is abundantly clear: it is time to stop fossil fuel expansion and begin fossil fuel phase out. Climate pollution from the world’s already-producing fossil fuel fields, if fully developed, would push global warming past 1.5 degrees Celsius leading to the most catastrophic impacts of climate change. To maintain a likely chance of limiting warming to 1.5° C, the U.S. should end all oil and gas production by 2031. Phasing out oil and gas production on public lands and waters is a key step towards that goal that the Administration can take immediately.

Almost a full quarter of all the United States’ greenhouse gas emissions come from federal public lands, alone. There is no way to curb ever increasing risks of climate disasters without eliminating this source of climate pollution. Climate science demands nothing less than ending the federal fossil fuel program entirely.

It is still possible to keep international climate commitments and limit warming to 1.5° C. If we are to reach this goal, however, we must continue to turn our current climate trajectory around in the next couple of years. To do this we must pair the historic investment in climate in the Inflation Reduction Act with strong administrative actions such as a phase down of fossil fuel production on public lands. Our constituents are counting on the federal government to use all tools at our disposal to save our planet.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

