



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

SEP 27 2019

The Honorable Michael F. Bennet
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

The Department is in receipt of your September 26, 2019, letter to Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt regarding your views on Mr. William Perry Pendley's role at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Secretary has asked me to respond on his behalf.

Since joining the Department at the end of July 2019, Mr. Pendley has done an admirable job leading the BLM. He has shown a strong commitment to ensuring the BLM is a good neighbor, and has worked collaboratively with those closest to the lands it manages to support the Bureau's multiple use, sustained yield mission. He has made it a priority to engage with BLM employees as the Bureau's restructuring and relocation move forward, ensuring that affected employees receive information and counseling, if needed. He has also worked hard to support BLM's firefighting team, which is working tirelessly to implement preventative measures to limit the size and scope of wildfires, treat current wildfires already underway, and protect wildfire-prone areas to best safeguard people and their communities.

In his short time at the Department, Mr. Pendley has also presided over several BLM conservation actions that have added almost 24,000 acres of important conservation lands to the Bureau's jurisdiction. These include access along the John Day River for hunting, fishing, hiking, biking and other outdoor recreation activities; acquisition of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse from the U.S. Coast Guard, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and approval of a Public Land Order that extends a withdrawal on 37.5 acres of public land in Florida, enabling the BLM to continue preserving unique features adjacent to the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge.

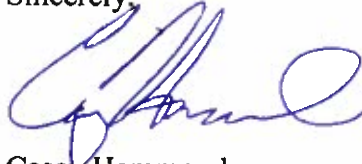
As an attorney, Mr. Pendley takes the law and his statutory responsibilities at the BLM seriously. At a recent appearance before the House Natural Resources Committee on the BLM reorganization, he addressed head-on the mischaracterization of his long career and views on public lands. He made clear that he stands with the Secretary and the President in their opposition to the wholesale disposal or transfer of federal lands. And he reaffirmed that he takes compliance with all ethics requirements seriously. He has sought, obtained, and followed the advice of the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official and other senior career ethics officials for ethics advice regarding particular matters involving his former clients or entities represented by his former employer, and has implemented a robust screening process to ensure compliance with the requirements.

Secretary Bernhardt has set a high bar both for the work that the BLM carries out and for the reorganization efforts that will bring the Bureau into the 21st century. Because there is no Principal Deputy in the BLM that would automatically become acting Director by operation of

law, delegation of the authority of the Director is necessary to ensure uninterrupted management and execution of the duties of that position during the period pending Senate confirmation of a nominee to the position. Mr. Pendley has shown that he is both well-suited and uniquely qualified to perform this important leadership role as we await the nomination of a permanent Bureau Director.

This response also been sent to the cosigners of your letter.

Sincerely,



Casey Hammond
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
For Land and Minerals Management

cc: The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
The Honorable Tom Udall
The Honorable Jon Tester
The Honorable Martin Heinrich
The Honorable Kamala Harris
The Honorable Jeff Merkley
The Honorable Sherrod Brown
The Honorable Bernie Sanders
The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
The Honorable Edward Markey
The Honorable Mazie Hirono