

Climate Denial at the Interior Department Threatens our Public Lands and Clean Energy

U.S. Bureau of Land Management, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, rejects concerns over climate impacts of opening public lands in Utah for oil and gas drilling and fracking, citing “**substantial amount of professional disagreement**” over climate change. Below is the verbatim excerpt (with key portions highlighted):

Comment 5 – WildEarth Guardians: “The high costs to society from the leasing and possible subsequent burning of public lands fossil fuels must be properly analyzed and presented to the public and agency decision makers.”

BLM Response to Comment 5: *At the present time, there is a substantial amount of professional disagreement and uncertainty as to what impacts greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have on climate and, as a result, it is not possible to determine what social costs, if any, could be caused by emissions of GHGs. The latest IPCC report (IPCC WG1AR5, 2014) states the equilibrium climate sensitivity is likely in the range of 1.5°C to 4.5°C (high confidence), extremely unlikely less than 1°C (high confidence), and very unlikely greater than 6°C (medium confidence). No best estimate for equilibrium climate sensitivity can now be given because of a lack of agreement on values across assessed lines of evidence and studies. Given that this range represents potential impacts from minor to major it would be purely speculative, at best, to try to determine what, if any, social costs might result from impacts across this range. Until further refinements in analytical techniques are verified through observational data, it is not possible to estimate impacts. Even if it were assumed, arguendo, that the impacts of GHG emissions could be evaluated with any degree of certainty, it still would not be possible to formulate an estimate, that would be anything but pure speculation, as to the potential social costs of GHG emissions that may result from the May 2015 oil and gas lease sale because any attempt to estimate the potential GHG emissions that might result from the May 2015 oil and gas lease sale would also be pure speculation on account of the complete uncertainty at the present time with respect whether, where and the procedures that might utilized in oil or gas development operations that may occur in the future as a result of issuing leases for the proposed May 2015 lease sale parcels.*

From BLM Environmental Assessment for May 2015 Oil and Gas Lease Sale in the Cedar City Field Office of Southwestern Utah, see pages 62-63, available online at https://www.blm.gov/ut/enbb/files/2015_02_06_CCFO_FINAL_EA_May_2015_O&G_Lease_Sale.pdf and Environmental Assessment for May 2015 Oil and Gas Lease Sale in the Richfield Field Office of Central Utah, see page 68, available online at <https://www.blm.gov/ut/enbb/files/RFO.EA.Final.2.13.2015.pdf>.