

From: [Matthew Russell](#)
To: [LeaseSale, BLM_NM](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Protest of the New Mexico State Office's August 26, 2020 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale
Date: Tuesday, June 30, 2020 3:14:08 PM
Attachments: [BLM Lake Somerville June 2020.pdf](#)

Director Spisak,

Please find attached a letter from Texas State Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst protesting the inclusion of parcels located near Lake Somerville in the August 26, 2020 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale.

Regards,

Matthew Russell | Communications Director
Office of State Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst
Chair, Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
Capitol Office GE.4 | 512-463-0118
kolkhorst.senate.texas.gov

COMMITTEES:
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES, CHAIR
FINANCE
NOMINATIONS
TRANSPORTATION
WATER & RURAL AFFAIRS

THE SENATE OF TEXAS



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AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711
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LOIS W. KOLKHORST

STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 18

June 30, 2020

Tim Spisak
Bureau of Land Management
301 Dinosaur Trail
Santa Fe, NM 87508

Re: *Protest of the New Mexico State Office's August 26, 2020 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale*

Dear Director Spisak,

I hereby file this protest of Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) proposed August 2020 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale, and Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-NM-040-2018-0060-EA, pursuant to 43 C.F.R. § 3120.1-3. Pursuant to the Sale Notice, which states that I "may file a protest either by hand delivery, mailed in hardcopy form, or temporarily through email at blm_nm_leasesale@blm.gov,"¹ I am filing this protest through email. I formally protest the inclusion of each of the following parcels in Texas:

TXNM 142049 TX-2020-08-0012
TXNM 142050 TX-2020-08-5274
TXNM 142051 TX-2020-08-6678
TXNM 142052 TX-2020-08-6674
TXNM 142053 TX-2020-08-6675
TXNM 142054 TX-2020-08-6677

I represent nearly one million Texans in the Texas Senate, including thousands who live near the Lake Somerville parcels in Bureson, Lee, and Washington Counties. Many of these residents depend on Lake Somerville as their primary source of clean drinking water. The parcels

¹ BLM June 22, 2020 Notice of Competitive Oil and Gas Internet Lease Sale. Available at: https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/1503677/200357367/20019848/250026052/August%202020%20OG%20Lease%20Sale%20Notice_508.pdf

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included in the lease sale are also in close proximity to popular Lake Somerville parks which attract thousands of visitors each year.

While I have been a staunch advocate for oil and gas drilling in Texas, the Lake Somerville parcels included in this sale notice could unnecessarily pose a credible risk to the drinking water of thousands of my constituents. The environmental assessment fails to paint a meaningful picture about the risks to public health. It fails to adequately analyze the effects of leasing parcels in or near Lake Somerville on environment and water resources vital to the region. It also fails to disclose site specific methods that would mitigate significant flow reductions from the new activity resulting from the leases. Further, it does not completely account for the impacts on vegetation and soil resources near Lake Somerville, including the total amount of land that could be cleared, how much erosion and sedimentation could result, and the resulting impact to soil, air, and water quality.

As Chair of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, I am gravely concerned that the proposed leasing may result in the contamination of groundwater and surface water around Lake Somerville. To ensure the public health for thousands of Texans, I urge you to exclude the parcels named above near Lake Somerville from the August 26, 2020 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lois W. Kolkhorst". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst