



704C East 13th Street, Suite 568
Whitefish, MT 59937
406-438-1918

FOIA Officer
Office of the Secretary
US Department of the Interior
E-Mail osfoia@ios.doi.gov

August 19, 2017

FOIA REQUEST

Dear Records Request Officer:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, I request access to and copies of all digital correspondence involving any of the following people or entities and any of the Department of the Interior officials listed below at any point since and including June 1, 2017:

People and Entities

- Ryan Benson, Matt Lumley, Denny Behrens or anyone with an e-mail address ending in @biggameforever.org
- Kathleen Sgamma, Tripp Parks or anyone with an e-mail address ending in @westernenergyalliance.org
- Bruce Hinchey, John Robitaille, Esther Wagner or anyone with an e-mail address ending in @pawyo.org
- Alan Olson or anyone with an e-mail address ending in @montanapetroleum.org
- Anyone with an e-mail address ending in @api.org
- Anyone with an e-mail address ending in @coga.org
- Anyone with an e-mail address ending in @nmoga.org
- Anyone with an e-mail address ending in @ipaa.org
- Dave Galt (daveg@bkbh.com)
- Deimer True
- Don Peay
- Mike Lange
- Bradley Hamlett
- Jason Hairston

“Digital correspondence” should include copies of e-mails sent by, sent to, or carbon copying (“CC”) any of these DOI officials:

- Secretary Ryan Zinke
- Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt
- James Cason
- Kathleen Benedetto
- John Ruhs
- Casey Hammond
- Gregory Sheehan
- Anne Kinsinger
- Cynthia Moses-Nedd
- Timothy Williams
- Amanda Kaster
- Vincent DeVito
- Any member of the “Sage Grouse Review Team” not otherwise listed

Fee Waiver Request

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii), Western Values Project requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. The subject of this request concerns the operations of the federal government, and the disclosures will likely contribute to a better understanding of relevant government procedures by the public in a significant way. Moreover, the request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes. 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).¹

Western Values Project requests a waiver of fees because disclosure of the requested information is “in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding” of government operations and is not “primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.”² The disclosure of the information sought under this request will document and reveal the operations of the federal government, including how public funds are spent and how officials conduct the public’s business.

On August 17, E&E News revealed that the Department of the Interior’s recommendations for changes to federal greater sage grouse conservation plans were very similar to those highlighted by the Western Energy Alliance, an oil and gas industry trade group. This request seeks to reveal what contact members of the Department’s sage grouse review team had with industry representatives as they considered changes to these plans.³

This request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes. As a project of a 501(c)(3) organization, Western Values Project does not have a commercial purpose and the release of the information requested is not in Western Values Project’s financial

¹ See, e.g., *McClellan Ecological Seepage Situation v. Carlucci*, 835 F.2d 1282, 1285 (9th Cir. 1987).

² 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii)

³ Scott Streater, “Interior panel echoed industry wish list in revising plans,” *E&E News*, 08/17/17.

interest. Western Values Project's mission is to give a voice to Western values in the national conversation about resource development and public lands conservation, a space too often dominated by industry lobbyists and their government allies. Western Values Project will use the information gathered, and its analysis of it, to educate the public through reports, press releases, or other media. Western Values Project will also make materials it gathers available on our public website <http://www.westernvaluesproject.org/>.

Accordingly, Western Values Project qualifies for a fee waiver.

Conclusion

If possible, I would prefer to receive this information electronically via e-mail at csaeger@westernvaluesproject.org.

If you have questions or need additional information from me, please feel free to call me at (406) 438-1918.

If my request is denied in whole or part, I ask that you justify all deletions by reference to specific exemptions of the act. If any documents are withheld based on the Agency's interpretation of any exemption, we request that you provide an index of those documents as required under *Vaughn v. Rosen*, 484 F.2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973), *cert. denied*, 415 U.S. 977 (1974). Specifically, this *Vaughn* index should describe withheld documents with enough specificity as to determine whether the material is exempt under the act and must describe each document or portion withheld.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Chris Saeger
Executive Director
Western Values Project