



January 19, 2021

Dear President-elect Joe Biden, Interior Secretary Designee Deb Haaland and EPA Administrator Designee Michael Regan,

Western Leaders Network is pleased to offer our warmest congratulations on your election as the 46th president of the United States and your nominations to lead these vitally important agencies. As we enter our nation's 245th year, we respectfully call upon your administration and the 117th Congress to prioritize conservation and climate action, and to consult and collaborate with local leadership on decisions and policy that affect our lands, air and water.

We are grateful that the incoming administration has promised to prioritize conservation and climate issues over the next four years, and urge you to keep that promise, as our local economies, our quality of life, our livelihoods and our futures depend on it here in the West.

As local and tribal elected officials, we understand firsthand the connection between the health of our environment and the sustainability of our communities, and how climate change impacts – such as severe drought and wildfire seasons, lower snowpack and the destruction of wildlife habitat – devastate our local economies and degrades our way of life. If we hope to address these problems, recover economically from the COVID-19 pandemic, and ensure the existence of natural places for future generations, we must accelerate conservation, regulate the use and development of our natural resources, and implement policies to slow the warming of our climate.

Western Leaders Network was founded in 2017 as a nonpartisan nonprofit to organize local and tribal leaders throughout the eight Interior West states to amplify their voices and take action at the local, state and national levels to protect our air, waters, public health and public lands. Today, more than 450 tribal and local elected officials are part of our network across the Interior West states. We've spent the past four years defending the West from unprecedented regulatory rollbacks, unfettered energy development and blatant disregard for the will of the public. We hope that by working in concert with local leadership, the new administration and Congress can begin to reverse the damage done, "build back better," and move swiftly toward viable climate solutions.

Western Leaders Network respectfully urges the new presidential administration and Congress to protect our natural places and local economies here in the West by:

- Restoring the boundaries of and strengthening protections for **Bears Ears and Grand Staircase national monuments**, which enhance local economies and quality of life, and protect invaluable natural and cultural resources;

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- Signing an executive order to **protect 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030**, which is imperative to protect public health and mitigate the costly and destructive impacts of climate change;
- Enacting strong **federal regulations to reduce methane** and other harmful greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas industry, which is key to addressing the climate crisis;
- Executing a **freeze on federal fossil fuel leasing** to reduce climate emissions and allow time for the creation of a transition plan to a clean and renewable energy future for public lands;
- Developing a **rule governing fracking on federal land for existing oil and gas development** to ensure strong casing and cementing/well integrity standards to protect water and air quality;
- Signing an executive order **advancing environmental justice and equity across all federal agencies**; and
- Reforming **the Mining Act of 1872** to protect lands, waters and communities from mine pollution and hold hard rock mining companies accountable for reclamation costs.

Thank you for listening to the voices of western leaders, and we look forward to working with you to implement these important measures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gwen Lachelt". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Gwen Lachelt
Executive Director