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Longmont City Council joins letter to President-elect Joe Biden's administration

- John Fryar
- January 17, 2021 at 12:00 p.m.

Longmont's City Council this week joined other local officials across the nation in calling on incoming President-elect Joe Biden's administration and Congress to address the climate crisis, protect public lands and support Western U.S. mountain communities.

The letter, sent Thursday to Biden and Congress, includes calls to halt new oil and gas leases and industry bailouts, support for local governments in relief packages, restoration of protections for Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante national monuments, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It also calls for increased environmental and public health safeguards, and work to conserve 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030, according to The Mountain Pact.

The letter states, "While the catastrophic COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for our Western mountain communities, our public lands have also been a bright spot, providing a refuge from the pandemic with our residents and visitors finding solace in the outdoors more than ever. Public lands are the backbone of our mountain communities and vital for our way of life. As local elected officials tasked with helping our regions' economies recuperate, we know that protecting our public lands and outdoor recreation opportunities, along with taking bold climate action, will boost the economy as we recover from the impacts of COVID-19."

More than 100 local elected Western officials, including all seven Longmont Council members, signed the letter, according to Colorado Mountain Pact.

Specific recommendations in the letter to the Biden administration and Congress include:

- Halting new oil and gas leases on public lands and waters
- Rejecting any royalty relief and lease suspension provisions for the oil and gas industry in future COVID relief packages
- Supporting state and local clean energy building requirements and initiatives, emissions reduction programs and utilities with renewable energy
- Including conservation-friendly financial support for local governments in future COVID relief packages
- Modernizing the country's antiquated public lands royalty system and ensure that those who profit from them provide a fair return to the taxpayers
- Ensuring the outdoors is a place for all by prioritizing environmental justice
- Restoring environmental and public health safeguards
- Working to conserve 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030.