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The Mountain Pact Relieved by Forward-Looking Conservation Policies in President Biden's Executive Orders

Today, President Biden will sign many executive orders that will help tackle climate change by halting oil and gas leasing on public lands and conserving 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030. The Mountain Pact recently released a [letter, signed by over 120 Western local elected officials](#), along with a [report](#) asking for many of these actions to be taken by the new administration. In response to the executive orders, some mountain West local elected officials in The Mountain Pact network released these statements:

Anna Peterson, Executive Director of The Mountain Pact, an organization that works with local elected officials across the west on federal climate and public lands policies said, “Our Western mountain community residents and visitors are finding solace in the outdoors more than ever as we deal with COVID. Public lands are the backbone of our communities and vital for our way of life. We are thrilled with the forward-looking steps the Biden administration has taken in the past week, and with today’s executive orders, to protect our public lands and to take bold climate action. These actions will move us towards a more sustainable future and help boost the economy as we recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

City of Flagstaff, Arizona Mayor Paul Deasey said, “Our communities are dealing with dire, long-term, and costly health and climate impacts like drought, more catastrophic wildfires, and dust on snow, which makes the snow melt earlier and faster. The City of Flagstaff is in the largest contiguous Ponderosa Pine Forest in the world and we need to do everything humanly possible to protect this natural resource. We are grateful to the Biden administration for taking real climate action to reduce emissions that directly affect Western mountain communities like ours by halting oil and gas leasing on public lands.”

Santa Fe County, New Mexico Commissioner Anna Hansen, said, “What a stark contrast to have a President take serious and bold climate action and make it a cornerstone of his agenda. We are ecstatic that the Biden administration is working diligently, and so early on, to correct so many misguided decisions of the former administration made in the name of “energy dominance”.

Summit County, Utah Chair Glenn Wright said, “Summit County contains the headwaters for the Weber, Provo and Bear Rivers, which produce the majority of the water supply for the Wasatch Front, housing 85% of the population of Utah.

Reduced snowpack and increased frequency of major catastrophic fires are an existential threat to this water supply and the economy of Utah. Less than three years ago the Dollar Ridge fire, in neighboring Duchesne County, produced significant damage to elements of the Central Utah Project.

President Biden’s climate initiatives are a crucial national response. These policies must include economic transition assistance to counties that are reliant on fossil fuel extraction to adapt their economies to a carbon neutral future.

Town of Telluride, Colorado Mayor Pro Tem Todd Brown said, “As we shoulder the burden of increased and costly climate impacts like having our snow melt weeks earlier than normal and not having rain for months on end as we experienced in 2020, we are grateful that the Biden administration is taking such bold climate action. We look towards a future where our public lands and waters are protected and support millions of clean energy and outdoor recreation jobs which will generate reliable revenue to support local economies. We are also thrilled by his selections of Representative Deb Haaland for Secretary of the Interior and Ann Marie Bledsoe Downes for Deputy Solicitor for Indian Affairs. It is beyond time that Indigenous women lead these agencies.”

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Founded in 2014, [The Mountain Pact](#) mobilizes local elected officials in over 80 Western mountain communities with outdoor recreation based economies to speak with a collective voice on federal climate, public lands, and outdoor recreation policy.