AGENDA ITEM or FINAL CONTRACT REVIEW SUBMITTAL FORM

Agenda Item: Correspondence; Senator Michael Bennet, Senator Co

Action Requested: Board of County Commissioners' Signature

Parties to the Agreement:

Term Begins: **Term Ends:** **Grant Contract #:**

Summary:

Please see the attached draft correspondence for consideration.

Fiscal Impact:

Submitted by: Katherine Haase **Submitter's Email Address:** khaase@gunnisoncounty.org

Finance Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reviewed by: Discharge Date:

County Attorney Review: ◉ Required ○ Not Required

Comments:
OK db 5/13/15

Reveiwed by: GUNCOUNTY1\dBaumgarten Discharge Date: 5/13/2015 Certificate of Insurance Required

Yes ○ No ◉

County Manager Review:

Comments:

Reveiwed by: GUNCOUNTY1\mbirnie Discharge Date: 5/13/2015

○ Consent Agenda ◉ Regular Agenda ○ Worksession Time Allotted: 10 minutes

Agenda Date: 5/19/2015

Revised April 2015

May 19, 2015

The Honorable Michael Bennet
458 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Cory Gardner
Senate Dirksen Office Building, SD-B 40B
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Scott Tipton
218 Cannon HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Legislative Exchange Proposal for Thompson Divide Leases

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Gardner and Mr. Tipton,

The Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners is charged with protecting the health, safety and welfare of our citizens; by extension, that goal includes the protection of our environment. Our Regulations for Oil and Gas Operations were adopted to ensure that those goals are met while also providing the oil and gas industry with a set of standards in which responsible exploration and production of oil and gas resources could be permitted. We recently were presented with an interesting idea that would allow for this responsible exploration while lending toward protecting an environmentally sensitive area in our region. We commend SG Interests for coming forward with a proposal that would be a large part of a permanent solution for the Thompson Divide area.

As presented to the County, the proposed federal legislation would allow SG Interests, the lessee of 18 federal oil and gas leases in the Thompson Divide area and, in addition, the lessee of the adjacent Wolf Creek deep rights held indefinitely by production, together totaling approximately 30,000 acres of White River National Forest (WRNF) surface, to exchange those leases for approximately 30,000 acres of federal leases in the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest (GMUG). The GMUG mineral acres proposed for exchange are in an area that the Forest Service designated as available for potential oil and gas leasing in the 1993 GMUG Oil and Gas Leasing Plan Amendment. This exchange would allow for further discussions on how to manage lands in the Thompson Divide area into the future and to come up with a permanent solution for this extremely sensitive area. Approximately 600 acres of the proposed exchange lands are in Gunnison County.

While we support the concept of a land exchange that may result in a more permanent solution to the oil and gas development issues in the Thompson Divide area, this must be done in collaboration with our neighbors located in Mesa, Delta, Pitkin and Garfield Counties. We feel that it is necessary to include all counties, towns and interested parties that are potentially impacted by any exchange, in this important dialog. We must consider not only the benefits to a final solution on the Thompson Divide; but to also make certain that the new leases are compatible with the needs and desires of those communities. Please note that Gunnison County will commit to continue to be part of this extremely important conversation with all interested parties.

We are pleased that SG Interests is participating in dialogue, and are hopeful that this is a large step toward a permanent solution to the Thompson Divide development issues.

DRAFT

We applaud the Colorado delegation for working together to find a balanced solution to this divisive issue.

Sincerely,

Paula Swenson, Chairperson	Phil Chamberland, Commissioner	Jonathan Houck, Commissioner