

Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Full Committee Hearing to Examine the BLM Land Use Planning Process under FLPMA
November 19, 2025

Opening Statements:

Senator Mike Lee, Chairman (R-UT)

- The hearing is being held to consider how the BLM permitting process and its relation to the intent Congress expressed in passing the FLPMA. The process has become rigid and slow.
- Resource management plans have become very large and static documents and have taken years to write and revise; they have become outdated.
- A functional system should allow for timely adjustments and stable expectations for project sponsors.

Senator Martin Heinrich, Ranking Member (D-NM)

- The BLM has a complicated job.
- Land use planning is robust and requires integrating information and priorities from local residents, businesses, Tribes and local governments and others. The planning process ensures that all uses are considered, and everyone's voices are heard.
- All can agree that the plans are updated too frequently, and the BLM hasn't been able to keep up with revisions in alignment with current priorities and technologies.

Witnesses:

Hon. Derek Brown – Attorney General, Utah

Mr. Jim Kenna – Retired State Director, Bureau of Land Management

Mr. Micah Christensen – Natural Resources Counsel, Wyoming County Commissioners Association

Mr. Adam Cramer – Chief Executive Officer, Outdoor Alliance

Mr. Greg Sheehan – President and CEO, Mule Deer Foundation

Direct mentions of Tribal issues in Testimonies

Mr. Christensen

- There is a need for the federal government to empower local land managers to appreciate the value of partnering with the state and local and Tribal governments. The objective would be to craft RMPs that address conservation for the betterment of our nation today and tomorrow.

Mr. Cramer

- Planning requires engagement from local levels with input from local communities and consultation with Tribal governments.

Mr. Sheehan

- Challenge with FLPMA gives limited direction on how BLM is supposed to develop plans that meet the expectations of Congress and the public.
- With limited direction, BLM has to fill in the gaps, balancing regulations and policy so that states, Tribes, counties, industries, conservation groups, and all the public are happy.

Direct mentions of Tribal issues during the Q&A:

Senator Angus King (I-ME)

- Asked whether one way to address the long process is for Congress to be more specific in terms of FLPMA so that there is no tremendous discretion on the administration in power.
 - Mr. Sheehan: agreed and said it is worth considering. Section 202 says coordinate with state, local and Tribal governments; to use their planning efforts and prioritize areas of critical environmental concern.

Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA)

- Noted Mr. Kenna's distinguished career, including more than 40 years as BLM Director for California. Highlighted the success of Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) for incorporating public and Tribal participation into land use planning.
- Further emphasize that Tribal consultation should be genuine and not a box checking exercise.

Senator Ruben Gallego (D-AZ)

- Asked Mr. Kenna on his experience with Tribal consultation and the importance of transparent local engagement in improving project stability.
 - Mr. Kenna: A lot transpires in a face-to-face kind of relationship so there is a need to engage with Tribal councils and Tribal protection preservation officers. Perspectives differ among Tohono O'odham, Hopi, Navajo and a nation up north. These points of view need to be assembled.