



CREATING GOOD JOBS, A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT, AND A FAIR AND THRIVING ECONOMY

February 22, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Joe Manchin
Chairman, Senate Committee on
Energy and Natural Resources
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
Ranking Member, Senate Committee
on Energy and Natural Resources
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Manchin, and Ranking Member Barrasso:

As a coalition of labor unions and environmental groups, collectively representing millions of members and supporters, the BlueGreen Alliance writes in support of the nomination of the Honorable Debra A. Haaland as the next Secretary of the Interior.

This nomination comes at a critical time in our country. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are facing record economic and racial inequality, as well as the impacts of climate change. Our public lands have an essential role to play in meeting climate goals, with their potential for carbon sequestration, job creation, and responsible energy development. Despite the role that public lands play in our nation's economic and environmental well-being, our parks and recreation facilities most recently received a "D+" grade from the American Society of Civil Engineers. Getting our parks and recreation facilities to a "B" grade over the next 10 years could support or create an estimated 632,000 job-years across the U.S. economy. Policies that make strategic investments in public lands—such as in natural infrastructure, clean energy, and reclamation—will bring immediate and long-term benefits to workers and communities. Immediate economic recovery policies are now even more desperately needed as a result of COVID-19.

In order to meet our goals, we will need leadership at the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) that recognizes the vital role of public lands. Investing in the reclamation of abandoned coal mines and orphaned oil and gas wells can immediately create good-paying jobs while remediating environmental problems and laying the foundation for economic development and diversification in these communities. Responsibly developing wind and solar on public lands and waters is also an excellent opportunity to invest in our economic recovery while expanding our clean energy resources, and creating good jobs in the process. By investing in the build-out of offshore wind—including investments in worker training and domestic supply chains—we can meet renewable energy goals while creating good jobs and revitalizing American manufacturing.

These investments must go hand in hand with measures to ensure these jobs are quality jobs and that the communities impacted have the tools and resources they need to emerge with stronger, fairer economies. Additionally, we will need leadership that will work to establish environmentally, economically, and socially responsible production, recycling, and reclamation of minerals and materials critical to anchor clean technology manufacturing in the U.S.

The DOI should be headed by someone who will understand the critical role that our public lands can play to combat climate change and build economic growth, while ensuring responsible energy development and the needs of a clean energy future. Having served as Vice Chair of the House Natural Resources Committee and Chair of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, Representative Haaland has the experience to meet this challenge head on, ensuring public lands help us achieve climate goals, create jobs, and build resilience.

Throughout her career, Secretary-designee Haaland has worked to build equity, justice, and resilience in communities in New Mexico and across the country. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, she has fought to improve health care access for Native American communities. She also recognizes the importance of ensuring communities have access to the tools needed for a fair and equitable transition to the clean energy future, supporting legislation to diversify local economies and provide crucial technical assistance and grant funding. We know she will stand with vulnerable workers and frontline communities to ensure that happens.

As the new administration grapples with responding to the intersecting crises of climate change, economic and racial inequality, Rep. Debra Haaland's leadership at the Department of the Interior will be essential to move the agency forward in a way that creates and sustains good jobs, lifts up communities and workers, and builds a more just, equitable, and cleaner economy.

We urge you to swiftly confirm this nominee.

Sincerely,



Jason Walsh
Executive Director
BlueGreen Alliance