BRUCE WESTERMAN OF ARKANSAS
CHAIRMAN

VIVIAN MOEGLEIN
STAFF DIRECTOR

JARED HUFFMAN OF CALIFORNIA
RANKING DEMOCRAT

ANA UNRUH COHEN
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

September 4, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Mr. Lanny Erdos
Acting Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals Management
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: Request for Public Comment Period on the Proposed Leasing Notice for the American Samoa Outer Continental Shelf (PACM-1) and the Proposed Leasing Notice for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Outer Continental Shelf (PACM-2)

Dear Secretary Burgum and Acting Assistant Secretary Erdos:

We write to request that the Marine Minerals Administration (MMA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) establish a formal, open public comment period of no less than 90 days regarding the Proposed Leasing Notice (PLN) for the American Samoa Outer Continental Shelf (OCS Mineral Sale PACM-1), published in the Federal Register on July 17, 2026 (89 FR 14479), and for the PLN for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Outer Continental Shelf (OCS Mineral Sale PACM-2), published in the Federal Register on August 18, 2026.

The introduction of offshore critical mineral leasing represents a major shift in DOI practices and the application of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA). Because PACM-1 and PACM-2 are the first lease sale of their kind, they will set a direct precedent for all future submerged minerals leases across the United States Outer Continental Shelf. It is vital that the federal government ensures regulatory certainty, economic viability, and the protection of state, territorial, and Tribal interests in this and future mineral sales on the OCS.

We respect the statutory role of the Governors of American Samoa and CNMI in reviewing the PLN and representing the interests of the territories. However, MMA's reliance on the Governors as the *only* source of review and comment on the PLN is a more restrictive approach to public comment than virtually any other taken in OCSLA history—falling well short of the procedural transparency and environmental review typically offered for oil, gas, and offshore wind lease sales. Given the unprecedented nature of the proposed activity, a 90-day public comment period is warranted to ensure relevant parties have time to properly assess the PLM and provide substantive feedback to MMA and DOI.

A first-of-its-kind lease sale opening federal waters to a commercially untested and environmentally impactful industry should favor more transparency, not less. It is especially important since the proposed lease sales have the potential to create long-term fiscal and policy consequences. The PLNs lock in historically low rental and royalty rates[1] despite both the novelty of the activity and the limited public record supporting any valuation of these resources. There is also the potential for impacts on marine ecosystems, fisheries, cultural resources, and state and territorial interests. In addition to the Governors, it is critical that affected business and commercial stakeholders, local communities, subject-matter experts, and other relevant parties also have a formal mechanism to register their concerns, offer technical expertise, and provide feedback on the Environmental Assessment and the proposed terms and conditions of the lease sales. We therefore urge that MMA open a formal public comment period of no less than 90 days for OCS Mineral Sale PACM-1 and PACM-2.

Further, meaningful public engagement requires that the people of American Samoa, CNMI, their Governors, and all other relevant parties have full access to information about the lease sale. We therefore also request that MMA make the documentation of its interagency consultations publicly available, as soon as possible and before closing the PLNs to further comments.

Finally, we note that our concerns weigh equally in other places where seabed mining has been proposed - stakeholders with economic, cultural, and subsistence interests in Alaska, Guam, and Virginia all deserve an opportunity to be heard on proposed mineral leases in their regions.

MMA's decision to advance these unprecedented and consequential lease sales without a formal public comment period reflects a troubling lack of transparency for far-reaching actions that could affect public goods and resources. Opening a comment period and providing all of the supporting documentation should not be treated as a discretionary courtesy or a procedural obstacle; rather, it is the minimum necessary step to allow affected communities, experts, and the public to scrutinize the proposed terms, question whether the adjacent states or territories and the public would receive a fair return, and identify risks that MMA has not adequately addressed.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response by September 14, 2026.

---

1 OSCLA requires a minimum royalty rate of 12.5% for offshore oil and gas leases. Royalty rates in PACM-1 are 2% for the first five years of production, and 5% thereafter.

Sincerely,

Jared Huffman
Ranking Member,
Committee on Natural
Resources

Aumua Amata Coleman
Radewagen
Member of Congress

Kimberlyn King-Hinds
Member of Congress

James C. Moylan
Member of Congress

Ed Case
Member of Congress