

Interior nominee focus of Colorado bid to keep BLM agency in Grand Junction

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GRAND JUNCTION | Colorado U.S. Sen. John Hickenlooper says he is urging President Joe Biden's Interior secretary nominee to keep the headquarters of the Bureau of Land Management in the Western Slope city of Grand Junction.

Hickenlooper met Tuesday with Deb Haaland, a Democratic U.S. representative from New Mexico, and invited her to western Colorado to "hear from the community first-hand" about why the public lands agency headquarters should stay, his office said in a statement.

The Democratic senator said that "I made the case that, done correctly, we can better protect and manage our public lands by having a BLM headquarters out west. I look forward to working with her when she's confirmed as Interior Secretary to make this a reality."

Hickenlooper sits on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which will hold a hearing on Haaland's nomination in the coming weeks.

The meeting came a day after Hickenlooper, Democratic U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet, Republican Rep. Lauren Boebert and Gov. Jared Polis met remotely with local officials to discuss a lobbying effort aimed at Haaland.

The Grand Junction Sentinel reported that Haaland has criticized the decision by the Donald Trump administration to move the public lands agency headquarters from Washington, D.C., to Grand Junction.

Supporters of the move argued BLM headquarters staff should be closer to the lands they manage. Critics say the effort effectively weakened the agency.

Interior Department spokeswoman Melissa Schwartz has said the department's new leadership will study the issue.

