

SPORTSMEN FOR **Responsible Energy Development**

July 23, 2013

TO: Members of the House Natural Resources Committee

RE: Oppose H.R. 1965, the Federal Lands Jobs and Energy Security Act

On behalf of the Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development coalition, we write to urge you to oppose H.R. 1965, the Federal Lands Jobs and Energy Security Act, in tomorrow's markup. Our coalition supports energy development on federal lands that balances production with the conservation of fish and wildlife habitat so that our hunting and angling opportunities are sustained. H.R. 1965 would make it harder to achieve that balance by cancelling the Interior Department's 2010 leasing reforms, requiring a set percentage of nominated acres to be offered for lease regardless of potential impacts to fish and wildlife, and returning to a 2008 plan for oil shale development that fails to safeguard fish, wildlife and water resources.

One of the most harmful provisions of H.R. 1965 is the cancellation of the Interior Department's 2010 onshore oil and gas leasing reforms, which have improved the leasing process by reducing the prevalence of lease protests. The reforms provide for up-front analysis and public engagement, thus creating a way to resolve potential conflicts without filing a protest. Early engagement of the public, larger scale planning, and identification of key habitat areas early in the process are all common sense steps included in the leasing reforms.

Where the leasing reforms are being implemented they are resulting in less conflict, better conservation outcomes, and more certainty. Between fiscal 1998 and fiscal 2009, the percentage of oil and gas leases protested jumped from 1 percent to nearly 50 percent. In some states, nearly all lease sales were protested. Now lease protests are declining. In 2011 lease protests were down to 35 percent, and in particular the protests by sportsmen groups declined to a trickle during a period that lease sale revenues were increasing. Cancellation of the leasing reforms would make it more likely that members of the public who wish to participate in leasing decisions would have to resort to filing protests. H.R. 1965 further penalizes those members of the public by charging a \$5,000 documentation fee for any protests of leases, rights of way, or applications for permit to drill.

H.R. 1965 would require that the Secretary of the Interior offer for sale at least 25 percent of the annual nominated acreage not previously made available for lease. This arbitrary figure would have to be met regardless of potential impacts to fish and wildlife habitat and hunting and fishing opportunities.

Finally, H.R. 1965 would require a return to the 2008 rules for oil shale development and mandate a set number of commercial lease sales. The BLM's 2013 proposed regulations for oil shale development set forth a better approach that would take an important step towards ensuring

that commercial oil shale development will only occur with adequate measures in place to conserve other important public lands resources, including fish and wildlife and their habitats.

We are also concerned about how H.R. 1394, the Planning for American Energy Act, could affect the management of public lands. In its testimony on the bill, the BLM said “it would direct Federal land managers to manage lands for the primary purpose of energy development rather than make thoughtful decisions on balanced multiple-use management through a public process based on site specific analysis and consideration.” We urge the Committee to ensure that H.R. 1394 would not result in the prioritization of energy development over other uses of public lands.

The Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development coalition is dedicated to seeing energy developed on our public lands in ways that conserve fish and wildlife habitat and promote hunting and fishing opportunities. We urge that the Committee reject H.R. 1965 because it would make it harder to achieve that balance.

Sincerely,

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