

March 9, 2011

Hon. Ken Salazar, Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar,

Our organizations represent millions of Americans with diverse interests, from hunters and anglers to environmentalists and clean energy advocates. DOI recently released its budget for the 2012 fiscal year, and although not all of our priorities were addressed, we would like to thank you for taking another important step toward reforming the offshore drilling industry. By prioritizing funding for the Bureau of Offshore Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE), your budget will help institute essential reforms including:

- Completing the reorganization of MMS/BOEMRE
- Hiring additional engineers, scientists, and inspectors
- Conducting vital new research on oil spills

We are also pleased to see that your plan will shift some of the financial burden from taxpayers onto oil companies by way of increased fees, and that the administration seeks to recapture tax breaks that the fossil fuel industry has enjoyed for decades. We agree with the administration that it makes no sense to subsidize fossil fuels; for far too long the public has subsidized these corporations' massive profits while also bearing the ever-growing risks associated with offshore drilling, and this adjustment is both reasonable and fiscally prudent.

The continuing resolution passed earlier this month by the House of Representatives also increased funding for BOEMRE. In today's often-partisan environment, this is a golden opportunity for bipartisan cooperation, which couldn't have come at a better time: Director Bromwich recently issued the first deepwater permit since the spill. Your agency's improved, more-rigorous permitting and environmental review process requires a commensurate investment in staff and technology, and we hope that the Administration and Congress will work together to bring an increased measure of safety to our offshore oil and gas industry.

Again, thank you for taking positive action on this important issue. We look forward to our continued engagement with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

Defenders of Wildlife

Environment America

League of Conservation Voters

National Audubon Society

National Wildlife Federation

Ocean Conservation Research

Sierra Club

The Wilderness Society

Cc: Michael Bromwich, Director, BOEMRE