



For Immediate Release

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It's Not an Either-Or Situation: Congress Needs to Encourage Responsible Energy Development Both Onshore And Offshore

House should avoid a "band-aid approach" and pass a comprehensive bill that encourages more responsible development of all our energy resources

WASHINGTON – Unless Congress sets aside election-year posturing before its August recess, it may squander a once-in-a-generation chance to reform our nation's energy policies.

That rare opportunity resides in landmark legislation (H.R. 3534) that passed the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee July 15, 2010. Unfortunately, the bill, known as the Consolidated Land, Energy, and Aquatic Resources (or CLEAR) Act, may become a shadow of its former self as it moves to the House floor for consideration.

The version of the bill passed by the committee addresses a wide range of energy issues, including Gulf oil spill responses, safety provisions, offshore and onshore oil and gas drilling reforms and renewable energy incentives.

But as the CLEAR Act moves to the full House, there's concern that a comprehensive energy bill could present representatives with too many difficult political decisions during an election year. Consequently, Congressional leadership is considering streamlining the bill so it only addresses the Gulf spill and offshore drilling. Unfortunately, that would mean several common-sense onshore drilling reforms would be dropped.

"If this supposedly comprehensive energy legislation only deals with the Gulf, our Congressional leaders will have wasted a golden opportunity," said Todd Keller, senior manager of Public Lands Campaigns for National Wildlife Federation. "This kind of band-aid approach won't create the cleaner energy future our children and grandchildren deserve.

"Congress obviously needs to take immediate action to prevent another offshore drilling tragedy," Keller said. "But that doesn't mean it should ignore the effects of irresponsible drilling on our public lands, where thousands of spills are affecting fish, wildlife and water quality. This shouldn't be an either-or situation."

In endorsing the committee-passed CLEAR Act, and assuming key components of it are not

guttled before going to the House floor, the National Wildlife Federation praised the bill for addressing the urgent questions about the Gulf spill. As written, the legislation would:

- Abolish the Minerals Management Service (MMS);
- Separate royalty collection from the issuing of leases and environmental enforcement in order to eliminate the internal conflicts of interest that plagued MMS;
- Require that offshore operators employ the best available technology in both drilling and in any oil spill response; and
- Establish a Gulf restoration program.

In addition, the National Wildlife Federation said it was encouraged by the bill's onshore reforms. Among other things, those reforms would:

- Establish mandatory best management practices to ensure that energy development is done responsibly and minimizes any impact on fish and wildlife;
- Require the public disclosure of any use of toxic materials;
- Remove special exemptions that allow certain oil and gas developments to avoid environmental reviews; and
- Create a leasing process for solar and wind development on public lands.

The National Wildlife Federation also urged Congress to oppose any amendments that would prevent the permanent and full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The LWCF uses some of the receipts from offshore oil and gas leases for state and local conservation efforts and for protection of national treasures, such as parks, forests and wildlife areas.

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The National Wildlife Federation is America's conservation organization inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.

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