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

July 20, 2010

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Ms. Mary Kendall
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Inspector General
1849 C Street NW - Mail Stop 4428
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Inspector General Kendall,

In testimony before the House Committee on Natural Resources, Secretary Salazar agreed to cooperate with any Inspector General investigation into the changes made to the Interior Department's 30-Day Safety Report¹ after it had been peer-reviewed. As you know, this report, which included a recommendation for a six-month deepwater drilling moratorium on the Outer Continental Shelf, was presented to the President and the American people as having been peer-reviewed by a group of prominent engineers. Specifically, the language of the report states that "the recommendations contained in this report have been peer-reviewed by seven experts identified by the National Academy of Engineering."² Following the release of the report it was discovered that this statement was patently false. The engineers have come forward to declare that the report was edited by political appointees after their review but prior to presentation to the President.

There are important questions about this incident that must be answered. Who in the Administration ignored the recommendation of scientists and made these changes? Were any laws broken? Who made the decision to misrepresent the views of the scientists? Were the changes influenced by the White House? Were the changes recommended by outside groups? Recent media reports suggest the Administration is acting on advice and recommendations made by the *Center for American Progress* including the recommendation for a moratorium on the OCS.

When testifying before the Committee, you initially asserted that the Inspector General office may not be able to investigate because the issue of the moratorium is subject to an ongoing court case. However, you later indicated that it would be possible to open an investigation. To be clear, we are not asking you to investigate the moratorium. We are asking you to investigate the changes made to the 30-Day Safety Report by political appointees that were presented to the public as a peer-reviewed scientific paper.

¹ Also known as the "Increased Safety Measures for Energy Development on the Outer Continental Shelf, May 27, 2010

² 30-Day Safety Report, Page 4

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The decision to alter the report after the peer-review process severely undermines trust in the Department of the Interior and the federal government. In one of his early speeches, Secretary Salazar said, "I pledge to you that we will ensure the Interior Department's decisions are based on sound science and the public interest, and not on the special interests."³ Clearly, the decision to establish a six-month moratorium was not based on sound science. The outside experts who cosigned the report have raised serious concerns that the imposition of the moratorium would exacerbate any safety issues associated with deepwater drilling.

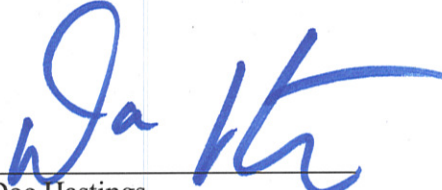
Finally, during the previous Administration, the Inspector General's office had a record of aggressively investigating exactly these types of actions. In fact, you personally testified on July 31, 2007 before the Natural Resources Committee at a hearing on "The Political Influence of the Bush Administration on Agency Science and Decision-Making." During that testimony you discussed a report that when issued stated "In the end, the cloud of MacDonald's overreaching, and the actions of those who enabled and assisted her, have caused the unnecessary expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars to re-issue decisions and litigation costs to defend decisions that, in at least two instances, the courts found to be arbitrary and capricious."⁴

We expect you to hold the Obama Administration to this same standard. We strongly believe the altering of this 30-Day Safety Report is an egregious example of disregarding science and merits equal examination. This overreaching by political appointees in either the Department or the White House have caused the unnecessary expenditure of significant Department funds to re-issue decisions, has adversely impacted tens of thousands of citizens through lost wages and jobs, cost business hundreds of thousands of dollars, and incurred litigation costs to defend the moratorium that the court has found to be arbitrary and capricious.


We strongly encourage you to open an investigation into the allegations and the decisions made associated with this 30-Day Safety Report. Since the Secretary has publicly pledged his full cooperation, there is little doubt that the Inspector General's office could quickly investigate the influences and actions that resulted in the changes to the engineering safety report that was presented to the President.

We look forward to hearing from you promptly regarding your decision on this matter.

Sincerely,



Doc Hastings
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources

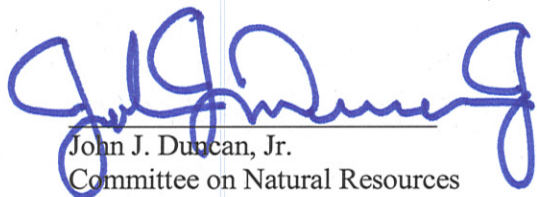


Doug Lamborn
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Minerals


³ Secretary of the Interior Salazar Pledges Accountability & Change In Employee Listening Session, January 22, 2009

⁴ Report of Investigation: The Endangered Species Act and the Conflict between Science and Policy, December 15, 2008


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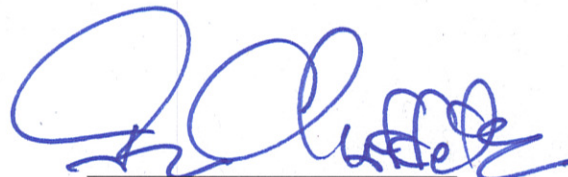
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