

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPUBLICANS

CONGRESSMAN DOC HASTINGS, RANKING MEMBER

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Interior Dept's Utah Decision Costs Jobs says Hastings, Top Republican on House Natural Resources Committee

WASHINGTON D.C. – Today, House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Republican Doc Hastings responded to the decision by Interior Secretary Salazar to withdraw tracts of lands in Utah that were offered for lease in December after a seven-year environmental review process. This decision by the Secretary stops the issuance of leases and could cost American taxpayers millions in lost lease bids, production royalties, and the energy needed to offset rising imports of oil and gas.

Upon notification of the Secretary's decision, Ranking Republican Hastings said, "This action will come as a disappointment to communities that were counting on these energy leases to generate high-wage jobs in these difficult economic times, and to all Americans who responded to record-high gas prices by telling their government to increase environmentally-responsible, American-made oil and gas development so our nation is less dependent on foreign imports and future price spikes that can cripple our economy.

"At a time when Congress is debating how best to stimulate our nation's economy, it's certainly not helpful to have the federal government telling companies that are willing to invest millions of their own dollars to create new jobs and new sources of American-made energy, to take their money elsewhere," added Rep. Hastings.

The areas offered for lease had been blocked for several years while revisions to six Resource Management Plans (RMPs) were completed, a process that took seven years and required compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA requires full public participation in the RMP revision process. The American people, local and state governments, tribes, environmental organizations, and cooperating federal agencies all took part in the revision of these plans.

The revised plans were more restrictive than the Clinton-era versions and identified fewer acres suitable for oil and gas leasing and development.

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