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

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August 17, 2009

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

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Salazar and Secretary Vilsack:

Nearly six months after the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was signed into law, there are still numerous questions regarding how this economic stimulus money is being spent, how projects are being selected and how many jobs are actually being created. With the nationwide unemployment rate close to 10% and our national deficit reaching a historic \$1.3 trillion, the Administration must be fully transparent about how spending decisions are being made, why the promise of immediately funding projects hasn't been kept, and precisely what jobs have actually been created by the low percentage of funds that have actually been paid out.

When the stimulus bill was passed in February, President Obama said that funds were needed to immediately create jobs. The Department of Interior was said to have a backlog of "shovel-ready projects." Yet after six months, less than one percent of stimulus funds allocated to the Department of the Interior have gone out the door. According to Recovery.gov, out of the \$3 billion allocated to the Department of Interior, only \$390.28 million (13%) has been obligated and only \$26.2 (0.87%) million has been paid out. The American people are left wondering where are the jobs that were to be created immediately.

News reports also note that many stimulus funding hopefuls across the country have been disappointed when their application or proposal was denied without explanation. This raises the

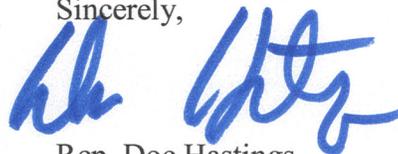
question of how decisions on spending are being made and what criteria is being used to judge projects and award funding. Full and open transparency dictates that the Administration reveal how it selects which projects will receive funding.

To facilitate this transparency and shine light on the decision-making process for stimulus funding, I request that each of your Departments please provide the following information by September 17th:

1. An explanation of why the Forest Service is sending millions of stimulus dollars to states (Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts and Rhode Island) that have no Forest Service land? Considering the immense fire-threat posed to communities and states in the Western United States by overgrown and under-maintained Forest Service lands, how is it justified to spend millions of dollars in Northeastern states with no National Forests? Which officials within the Administration, both in the Department of Agriculture and the White House, reviewed and approved the allocation of these funds? For what specific projects were these awards made and what was the specific number of jobs that were to be created?
2. A list of all the stimulus projects that were considered or proposed by the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service as possible projects to receive stimulus funding.
3. A specific explanation of which officials made the decisions to select which projects received stimulus funding. What was the review and approval process within the agency, Department, OMB and White House, including which officials had a role in the review and decision-making process?
4. The role OMB played in deciding what projects were selected, including whether OMB approval was required for each project to receive funding.
5. A current estimate of how many jobs have been created as a result of each Department's stimulus spending, preferably on a project-by-project basis.

Thank you for attention to these requests to help increase transparency and openness.

Sincerely,



Rep. Doc Hastings
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources