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## Documents Requested on Interior Department's Decision to Close Drakes Bay Oyster Company

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA – 04) sent letters today to U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Department of the Interior Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall seeking information about the Administration's decision to not allow the continued operation of the Drakes Bay Oyster Company within the Point Reyes National Seashore in Northern California and an investigation into the science used to estimate the farm's environmental impacts. The oyster farm has been operating in Drakes Estero for decades, supports 30 jobs and accounts for approximately 40 percent of California's oyster market.

[Click here](#) to read the letter to Secretary Salazar.

[Click here](#) to read the letter to Deputy Inspector General Kendall.

Serious questions have been raised about the science used by the National Park Service to justify the closure of the oyster farm. This includes a scientific integrity complaint filed by a member of the National Academy of Sciences that alleged the Department manipulated scientific data to overestimate disturbance to harbor seals and other impacts on the National Seashore soundscape. For example, the draft estimated the farm's impact by using sound measurements for a jet ski from New Jersey and a cement mixer and failed to explain their use as substitutes for the farm's actual boats and equipment. The Office of the Inspector General issued a report dismissing these scientific integrity allegations.

*"The National Park Service has for years been dogged by allegations that the science used to estimate harbor seal disturbances and more recently impacts on the National Seashore's soundscape do not justify closure of the Drakes Bay Oyster Company, which has provided a sustainable source of shellfish in northern California and employed more than 30 workers. It is imperative that the Department's decision be based in sound science and consistent with federal law"* **wrote Chairman Hastings in the letter to Secretary Salazar.**

In 1976, part of the National Seashore was designated wilderness while the area encompassing the oyster farm was designated as "potential wilderness." In 2009, Congress passed legislation that specifically authorized the Secretary of the Interior to approve a 10-year extension on the farm's authorization and special use permit. Despite this legislation, the Department decided the authorization should expire because commercial activities are incompatible in a wilderness area and that the 2009 law did not trump Congress' previous

determination that the area should be wilderness.

The letters to Secretary Salazar and Deputy Inspector General Kendall, requests copies of documents relating to the Department's decision and the final Inspector General's report and urge the Department to make decisions based on sound science.

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