



October 16, 2009

## Setting the Record Straight on the NYT Editorial *"A Clearer Look at Drilling" is Foggy on the Facts*

Earlier this week, the *New York Times* wrote an [editorial](#) regarding the Obama Administration's recent decision to block energy development in Utah and its upcoming decision regarding offshore drilling on America's Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). Unfortunately, the piece was so misleading that a simple letter to the editor would not fully address all of the *New York Times*' inaccuracies and information gaps. The following point by point response sets the record straight:

### **EDITORIAL: A Clearer Look at Drilling**

The New York Times  
October 14, 2009

*Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's decision to freeze oil-and-gas development on 60 drilling sites in Utah is one more sign that the Obama administration will take a **more sensible approach** to energy exploration on public lands than its predecessor's **drill-now, drill-everywhere policies**. Mr. Salazar faces even tougher calls ahead.*

- **Actually, the Department's decision to only allow 17 out of 77 pending Utah oil and gas leases to be developed is one more sign of the Administration's **clear lack of commitment** to job creation and all-of-the-above energy development. Please see below to view a list of other actions the Administration has taken to block American energy development and new energy jobs.**
- **It's important to remember that the Clinton Administration offered 31 million more acres for oil and gas development than the Bush Administration. If the Obama Administration continues to lock up more land for energy use, it will single handedly establish its own **drill-never, drill-nowhere policy**.**

*The Utah decision, announced last week, involves parcels leased **in the waning days of the Bush administration without proper environmental review or full consultation with the National Park Service**. The service was particularly disturbed by the prospect of drilling on fragile lands near two national parks and a national monument. Mr. Salazar condemned the Bush administration's "headlong rush" to lease the sites.*

- **The Utah lease sale was the culmination of **seven years of environmental analysis** as part of the Resource Management Plan (RMP) process. The Bureau of Land Management used this environmental analysis as the basis for the lease sale. If**

seven years of analysis isn't enough, what is?

- The RMPs were developed in a cooperative process that included representatives from the State of Utah, local government officials, the **National Park Service**, Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The planning process was open to public comment and included public meetings.

*Days before heading out the door, the Bush administration also proposed a five-year offshore oil-and-gas leasing plan that would expand drilling in America's Arctic waters by nearly 80 percent, **including millions of acres in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas**. Mr. Salazar has been **reviewing** this plan as well — and rightly so.*

- Actually, the **current 2007 – 2012 offshore drilling lease plan already included** a leasing schedule for the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. The Chukchi and Beaufort lease sales were held in February 2008 and April 2007 respectively. This plan obviously included extensive environmental analysis.
- The new 2010-2015 offshore drilling plan simply updated the existing 2007-2012 plan to include areas that were previously off limits. *The New York Times* and the Administration should remember that the moratorium was lifted in the spirit of bipartisanship by a Republican Administration and a Democrat Congress.
- Unfortunately, “reviewing” is often just another word for “delaying.” In fact, Secretary Salazar recently hinted that a six-month review could turn into a three-year delay on a new offshore drilling plan.

*Drilling in the unforgiving Arctic environment is risky business. Oil spills would be hard to contain, and the ecological damage to some of the world's richest fisheries could be staggering. The idea of opening Alaskan waters to drilling has powerful support in the oil-and-gas industry and among most Alaskan politicians, including Gov. Sean Parnell, Sarah Palin's successor who made a special trip to Washington last week to lobby Mr. Salazar.*

**Most** scientists, however, are urging caution.

- How does the *New York Times* define “**most**”? For example, does their vague calculation include the American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG) – the world's largest association of geoscientists? The AAPG has 34,000 members and supports environmentally responsible oil and gas exploration and development onshore and offshore.

*And last week **70 members of the House** called on Mr. Salazar to set aside the five-year plan and defer all leasing and drilling in the Arctic until a “science-based analysis” can determine where such activities can safely occur.*

- Unfortunately, the *New York Times* failed to mention that:
  - On July 31<sup>st</sup>, **98 House Republicans** sent a letter to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar to officially encourage the Department to end the delay and

finally move forward with expanded offshore oil and natural gas production.

- On September 16<sup>th</sup>, **16 House Democrats** wrote to the Secretary of the Interior in support of the 2010-2015 offshore drilling plan and said “we believe it is crucial that the United States utilize all of its available resources.”
- On September 18<sup>th</sup>, a bipartisan group of **35 Senators** sent a letter to encourage the Secretary of Interior to move forward with the 2010-2015 offshore drilling plan. They noted that “this development will bolster our nation’s economy, create new jobs and decrease our dependence on foreign sources of energy.”
- In total, **149 Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle** have clearly petitioned the Administration to open new areas for oil and gas development.

*Their letter also urged him to restore protections for Alaska’s Bristol Bay, the most productive fishery in American waters. President George H.W. Bush declared the bay off-limits to drilling after the Exxon Valdez disaster — a move reversed by President George W. Bush.*

*Mr. Salazar has repeatedly promised a **better balance** between the country’s energy needs and the preservation of its fragile environments. Rescinding the Utah leases honors that promise. Doing all he can to protect the Arctic would honor it as well.*

- Unfortunately, the Administration’s energy policy has been **anything but balanced**. In only nine months, the Administration:
  - Reinstated a defacto moratorium on expanded offshore drilling
  - Withdrew oil and natural gas leases in Utah
  - Delayed the new round of oil shale research, demonstration, and development leases in Colorado, Wyoming and Utah
  - Continued to push National Energy Tax legislation that the Congressional Budget Office Director said this week will “cost jobs”
  - Delayed mining permits
  - Failed to permit a single offshore commercial wind facility.

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