

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN DOC HASTINGS

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Chairman Hastings: Sec. Salazar's Merger of BLM and OSM Could Cost Jobs, Harm Economy, Increase Cost of Energy

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) released the following statement regarding Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar's Order to merge the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Office of Surface Mining (OSM):

"I have serious concerns about this Secretarial Order to suddenly and dramatically alter the management of coal mining and the multiple-use of Western BLM lands. The Obama Administration has not made secret its desire to put an end to America's coal mining industry and this appears to be one more step in that direction.

"My primary concern is the impact to our economy and American jobs. BLM and OSM have separate duties and responsibilities that each help generate revenue for the federal government and support job creation. Any action that could diminish their ability to effectively and efficiently do their job could cause serious harm to our economy. Furthermore, if this was a legitimate effort to streamline government and save money, I must question why this decision was made without consultation with the public or Congress.

"The fact remains that the BLM and OSM have distinctly different missions - nowhere is this more evidenced than the dissimilarity between federal and private coal mining issues. Placing millions of acres of private, Eastern coal mining and land reclamation under the purview of BLM will only serve to complicate BLM's already intricate mission and undermine the entirely different, yet equally important job that OSM currently performs.

"The Committee will conduct strong and direct oversight into this issue, including whether it will have any harmful economic impacts. Next week OSM Director Pizarchik will be testifying before the Energy and Minerals Subcommittee and I am very interested in hearing his thoughts on how this Order will impact that agency and the Administration's duty to responsibly develop our nation's coal resources."

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