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**Committee on Natural Resources**  
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**Opening Statement of  
Chairman Doc Hastings  
Committee on Natural Resources  
Full Committee Oversight Hearing on  
“Department of the Interior, Spending and the President’s  
Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Proposal”  
Thursday, April 3, 2014**

I believe all of us here today understand and recognize the importance of natural resources to our lives and economy. Our natural resources support millions of American jobs throughout the country, they provide energy to power our homes and businesses, they deliver water to communities, they enable the manufacturing of products, and they provide opportunities for recreation and much more.

Yet there is not always agreement on how to best manage and harness these natural resources. These differences, and the priorities of both sides, are perhaps most evident every year when examining this President’s budget proposals.

The United States’ debt is currently over \$17 trillion. This places our economy and livelihood of future generations at risk. For years Republicans have stressed the need to do more with less. Given this budget crisis, we need to cut wasteful spending, make tough choices, and prioritize. That should be the goal of the Interior Department and every other federal department and agency. Unfortunately, with a budget proposal that is higher than last year’s enacted levels, I’m afraid the Interior Department’s budget misses the mark and doesn’t do enough to prioritize and reduce spending.

There is no better example of misplaced priorities than with the proposed full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Once again, the Department’s budget emphasizes federal land acquisition over the proper maintenance and care of the land it already owns. The National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are facing billion dollar maintenance backlogs; this is where the Department should be focusing resources.

Of course, prioritizing spending is just part of the solution. The Department should also actively look for ways to generate new revenue and grow the economy. Unfortunately, many of the policies outlined in this budget will have the opposite outcome. This budget relies on new taxes, fees, and red-tape that will have the effect of slowing economic growth.

American energy production bears the brunt of this regulatory assault. U.S. energy production is the second highest source of revenue to the U.S. treasury – and that’s the reason the Administration is able to say that this budget would bring in more revenue than it spends. But that misses the point. The Obama Administration in this budget is forfeiting billions of dollars in new revenue by continuing to stifle energy production on our federal lands.

Under this Administration, total federal oil production has declined 7.8 percent and total federal natural gas production has declined 21 percent. President Obama’s offshore leasing plan for 2012-2017 offered

the lowest number of lease sales in history and keeps over 85 percent of offshore acreage off limits. Onshore, the Administration has had the lowest years of federal acres leased for energy production going back to the 1980s. This is the Obama Administration's legacy when it comes to federal energy production.

I will acknowledge that the world has changed immensely over the last few years. The U.S. is becoming a global leader in energy production, but this is happening in spite of the Administration's best efforts to keep our energy resources under tight lock and key. The Administration doesn't seek to encourage new production in this budget, instead they seek to impose new taxes and fees that will have the opposite effect.

Other policies being carried out by the Department will also negatively hurt jobs – including efforts to impose duplicative hydraulic fracturing regulations, the reckless and disastrous rewrite of the 2008 Stream Buffer Zone Rule, and new ESA listing decisions resulting from close-door settlement agreements. I'm sure all of these topics, among others, will be raised during the course of today's hearing.

Finally, I want to remind the Secretary that this Committee has and will continue to stand ready to work in a bipartisan fashion to responsibly manage our federal lands. From issues like helium and Secure Rural Schools, to the more than 50 non-controversial bills currently awaiting action in the Senate, I believe that reasonable people can disagree, but in the end can reach reasonable conclusions. However, if the President continues to take a go-at-it-alone approach, our ability to collaborate and work with the Department will be sorely tested.

I'd like to thank Secretary Jewell for being here today and look forward to hearing from her.