

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN DOC HASTINGS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## House Republicans Send Letter Raising Concerns Over President Obama's Nominee for Fish, Wildlife and Parks Assistant Secretary

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Following up on concerns raised during the Senate confirmation hearing on Ms. Rebecca Wodder, House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) and 38 House Republicans sent a [letter](#) to the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate Environment & Public Works and Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committees raising more questions over her nomination as Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior (DOI).

The DOI Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks oversees the management of over 180 million federal acres and directly influences current and potential federal regulations impacting private lands, water rights, energy projects and other infrastructure. The letter raises serious concerns over Ms. Wodder based upon her long-time record at the Wilderness Society and American Rivers, as well as the foreseeable conflict of interest as a political appointee working on regulations and contracts with her prior employers. American Rivers has been party to 150 lawsuits against various parties, including the federal government. In fact, the organization has lawsuits currently pending against some of the federal government's land and water plans operated in part by the Interior Department.

*"This position is essential to the economy, jobs and livelihood of rural America. Ms. Wodder's record and previous employment raises serious red flags and I question her ability to represent broader, impartial interests at the federal level,"* **said Chairman Hastings.**

Several independent groups have also sent letters in opposition to Ms. Wodder's confirmation. They include the [National Rural Electric Cooperative Association](#), [the Tri-City \(WA\) Regional Chamber of Commerce](#), [the Association of Washington Business](#), [the Franklin PUD electric utility company \(WA\)](#) and [a coalition of 19 Pacific Northwest farm, utility, port and navigation, food and forest product groups and other businesses in the Northwest.](#)

[Full text of letter:](#)

Dear Senators:

As you consider President Obama's nomination of Ms. Rebecca Wodder as Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior, we respectfully write to let you know of our serious concerns with her record as the head of American

Rivers, a single-purpose interest group focused on litigating against the federal government and removing economically important infrastructure. We seriously question whether she could adequately represent broader and more balanced interests at the federal level, especially at a fragile economic time with national unemployment exceeding nine percent.

The position for which Ms. Wodder has been nominated oversees the management of at least 180 million federal acres and would have a direct influence on current and potential federal regulations impacting private lands, water rights, energy projects and other infrastructure. This is troubling given her past activities at the Wilderness Society and American Rivers, a non-governmental organization with a long record of receiving American taxpayer dollars while actively litigating against the federal government on multiple fronts. Between 1988 and 2011, American Rivers has either sued or been a party to 150 lawsuits against various parties, mostly the federal government. In fact, American Rivers is currently party to seven lawsuits against American taxpayers and the federal government.

One illuminating piece of litigation revolves around American Rivers' longstanding lawsuit against the federal government's operation of four multi-purpose dams in the Pacific Northwest. These dams, located on the lower Snake River in Washington state, provide multiple benefits including emissions-free, renewable hydroelectricity (enough power to serve a city the size of Seattle), navigation to deliver agricultural products to market, recreation and the good-paying jobs associated with these benefits. Writing in the August 25, 2003 edition of The Dissident Voice, Ms. Wodder wrote that "Breaching the four dams on the lower Snake River would be the single most effective way to bring back wild salmon." This is a completely unproven statement and the reality is breaching these dams is an extreme action that would have devastating economic impacts across an entire region while not actually assisting fish recovery. Despite broad agreement, including from the Obama Administration, on a biological opinion for Columbia Basin salmon recovery, Ms. Wodder's organization continues an over decade long lawsuit campaign against the federal government in an effort to demolish these dams.

There are numerous examples of how the policies advocated by Ms. Wodder at American Rivers will have serious impacts throughout the country. First, she effectively advocated for federal regulations that caused up to 40 percent unemployment in parts of the San Joaquin Valley, California by diverting farm water under the guise of protecting the Delta smelt, a three-inch fish. Second, she endorsed last Congress' controversial legislation (H.R. 5088 and S. 787) that many argued could allow the EPA to regulate street and gutter water run-off and man-made ditches. This could cause significant job loss throughout rural America and the National Association of Counties, a non-partisan entity composed of locally elected officials, was concerned that this legislation could lead to "more court cases" and federal groundwater regulation. Third, by naming the Susquehanna River as one of "America's most endangered rivers," her organization attempted to stifle the domestic production of affordable natural gas through hydraulic fracturing.

Furthermore, we are also concerned that this appointment may run afoul of President Obama's own goal of ensuring that political appointees would not work on regulations or contracts directly and substantially related to their prior employer. Ms. Wodder has received significant, long-term compensation during her tenure at American Rivers. As previously noted, the organization currently has numerous pending lawsuits against the very agencies over which she would have regulatory authority and for others that directly or indirectly have been involved in litigation with the Interior Department. This creates a very real and serious conflict of interest.

As Members of the House of Representatives, we appreciate the unique role of the Senate in the confirmation process. Nonetheless, the policies advocated by this nominee would be so detrimental to jobs, our economy and the livelihood of rural Americans that we felt compelled to make our views known and ask that you take them into consideration.

Sincerely,

Doc Hastings (R-WA)  
Raul Labrador (R-ID)  
Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)  
Chip Cravaack (R-MN)  
Dan Benishek (R-MI)  
Glenn Thompson (R-PA)  
Jeff Landry (R-LA)  
John Fleming (R-LA)  
Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-MO)  
Bob Gibbs (R-OH)  
Denny Rehberg (R-MT)  
Louis Gohmert (R-TX)  
Sam Graves (R-MO)  
Tom McClintock (R-CA)  
Devin Nunes (R-CA)  
Doug Lamborn (R-CO)  
Jeff Flake (R-AZ)  
Kristi Noem (R-SD)  
Rob Bishop (R-UT)  
Jason Chaffetz (R-UT)  
Don Young (R-AK)  
Bill Johnson (R-OH)  
Stevan Pearce (R-NM)  
Scott Tipton (R-CO)  
Ben Quayle (R-AZ)  
Cynthia Lummis (R-WY)  
Paul Gosar (R-AZ)  
Bill Flores (R-TX)  
Mike Coffman (R-CO)  
Cory Gardner (R-CO)  
Ken Calvert (R-CA)  
Trent Frank (R-AZ)  
Wally Herger (R-CA)

Howard “Buck” McKeon (R-CA)  
Paul Broun (R-GA)  
Vicky Hartzler (R-MO)  
Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO)  
Jeff Denham (R-CA)  
Steve Southerland (R-FL)

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