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Committee on Natural Resources
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Opening Statement of Chairman Rob Bishop (UT-01)
House Committee on Natural Resources
Oversight Hearing on "Examining the Department of the
Interior's Proposed Fiscal Year 2016 Budget"
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Good morning. Today, the Committee on Natural Resources will receive testimony from The Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior, on the President's Fiscal Year 2016 budget request for the Department of the Interior.

With our national debt currently exceeding \$18 trillion, the Administration's overall federal budget, including the Interior Department's \$13 billion budget proposal, continues a disappointing trend of runaway federal spending, while failing to put forward creative solutions to ongoing problems with our federal land, water, oceans, and energy resources. The sad truth is that a large portion of money spent within the Department's jurisdiction will never reach the ground nor deliver tangible benefits, as our agencies are consumed by growing litigation costs and layers of prescriptive environmental regulations that cause more harm than good.

Instead of addressing these challenges in a meaningful way, the Administration has proposed millions in new spending and miles of new regulatory red tape that will perpetuate existing management challenges and compound bureaucratic failures. For example, the budget would seek to spend millions of new taxpayer dollars to purchase more federal lands despite massive maintenance backlogs and increasing catastrophic wildfires measuring in the billions of dollars on existing federal assets.

Federal lands should be valuable assets to our local communities. If managed properly, these resources could reap significant financial and economic returns for the U.S. Treasury, states, and local economies. Instead, they are a liability to local communities and our environment, and a drain on limited taxpayer resources. A report issued this week by the Property and Environmental Research Center highlights this basic failure. The study, which compares state and federal land management programs with similar multiple-use characteristics and objectives, found that due to starkly contrasting statutory, administrative and regulatory frameworks governing their lands, states earn an average of \$14.51 for every dollar spent on land management while the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service generate only 73 cents in return for every dollar spent on federal land management.

Beyond our fiscal challenges, over the past 6 months, the Department's bureaus and sub-agencies have also proposed or have already finalized more than 200 new rules and regulations, including a BLM proposed rule to regulate hydraulic fracturing. According to at least one study, this rule, if finalized, could cost \$345 million annually, imposing unnecessary burdens upon

states and local communities that rely upon these resources for economic security and job growth, which brings me to a broader point.

In less than a decade our country has gone from energy dependence to energy abundance. In 2014, the U.S. overtook both Saudi Arabia and Russia as the world's largest oil producer. These gains can be attributed to energy production taking place on state and private lands that are outside direct federal control. Despite the President's professed commitment to further reducing our dependence on foreign oil, his Administration has ramped up regulations and other actions that are adversely impacting this shared goal. While oil and natural gas production has surged on non-federal lands, President Obama has managed astonishing production declines on federal lands.

America has 4 billion acres of mineral rights when offshore is included. The federal government controls more than 60 percent of that total while just 25 percent of total fossil fuels produced in this country are derived from these assets. We have the ability to rid our dependence of foreign oil – if we act to responsibly develop both federal and non-federal assets. Yet just this past month, the Interior Department and its sub-agencies and bureaus have taken significant actions to lock up even more of these resources, including in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge, the Outer Continental Shelf, and swaths of the Arctic region. At the same time, the Administration is pursuing a sweeping Climate Action Plan, new federal methane emission regulations, federal fracking standards, regulating groundwater, and a range of other duplicative and harmful policies. Combined, this agenda moves America further from, rather than closer to, greater energy security.

A large number of the agencies and laws within the Committee's jurisdiction were created or written for a different time when we had different needs, and for too long the debate over related policies has been mired in failed paradigms of the past. Today, not enough time is spent scrutinizing policies and bureaucracies that are failing to address today's needs. Unfortunately, this budget keeps us on the same old path and relies on the same stale paradigms.

I believe our nation's leaders can do better than the budget request we are here to review. I hope the Administration is willing to work with us on a better plan. I look forward to hearing Secretary Jewell's testimony as we begin this process. Thank you.