

Opening Statement: Chairman James Moran
FY 2011 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior
Secretary Salazar
March 18, 2010

We are pleased to welcome Secretary Salazar to explain the President's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior. Mr. Secretary, you have made much progress in the last year and I know you have a significant agenda for the coming year.

Those of us who sit on this Subcommittee do so because we have a love of the land and a deep and abiding commitment to protect our natural resources and environment. Your Department is at the forefront of those efforts. Our nation has a long history of efforts to protect our natural resources. In 1907, Theodore Roosevelt said,

“Conservation means development as much as it does protection. I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them or to rob by wasteful use, the generations that come after us.”

Had Theodore Roosevelt and his generation of visionaries not created the forest reserves and today's parks and refuges, our nation would be a poorer and diminished place. But it is also true that in our management of these public lands we are not without competing and often conflicting interests. He also said:

“The conservation of natural resources is the fundamental problem. Unless we solve that problem it will avail us little to solve all others.”

Those words are as true today as they were at turn of the last century. And the challenge is still just as great. The Department of the Interior plays an important role in the American economy and our cultural identity. The Department manages 20 percent of the land area of the United States and substantial areas of subsurface minerals and the Outer Continental Shelf energy areas. These areas produce 30 percent of the Nation's energy. The Department is expected to collect \$14 billion in 2011 revenues for deposit into the US Treasury. The Department lands, including the 392 National Park units and 548 National wildlife refuges host more than 470 million visits a year.

The Department also honors the Federal commitment to the First Americans by supporting social service, education and justice programs for nearly 2 million Native Americans. And underlying all is unbiased science which helps the Department and all Americans make better decisions.

The budget requests \$10.78 billion to fulfill all these responsibilities. This amount is basically level with the amount we provided for fiscal year 2010. I know there are some in this body who believe the fiscal year 2010 budget was too high. I firmly believe that our work over these past three years to increase funding for the Department has only partially reversed the previous trend which saw a 17% reduction in the Department's budget requests.

I also recognize the need for deficit reduction. We will scrutinize this request. We may have to increase some areas and decrease others. And we will look to find additional areas of waste. I applaud your initial efforts to deal with a number of management problems at the Department, such as occurred at the Minerals Management Service. But we cannot stop there. I will work with the Inspector General to identify additional actions needed to eliminate remnants of waste, fraud and abuse at the Department.

I am interested in some of your initiatives including your Energy initiative and its focus on increasing renewable energy and doing a better job at producing domestic oil, gas and coal. I am also interested in the climate change research and adaptive management activities at the Department. This is the defining environmental issue of our time, so we need to have a transparent and coordinated approach to climate change science and management, which avoids duplication of efforts across Bureaus and Departments. In addition, I see a large increase requested for land acquisitions. We need to ensure that the budget has the correct balance between acquiring special, new lands and the funds you need to manage and operate those lands.

We will have other questions as we move forward. For instance, I am concerned that the request assumes your department will absorb 96%, or \$109 million, of the increase for fixed costs such as salaries and rent.

Before I turn to Mr. Simpson, I want to recognize one of your staff. Pamela Haze has to be the hardest working person at the Department. She is truly an important resource, without whom we could not do our work. I welcome the opportunity today to thank her for all she does, day in and day out, to serve both you and this Committee.

Mr. Simpson, do you have any opening comments you would like to make?

<Mr. Simpson Opening Statement>

I am also pleased to have the distinguished chairman of the full committee, Chairman Obey at this hearing. Mr. Chairman, would you like to make an opening statement?

<Mr. Obey Opening Statement>

We also have the distinguished ranking member of the full committee, Mr. Lewis, here today, and I invite him to make any comments he might have at this time.

<Mr. Lewis Opening Statement>

Secretary Salazar, you may now proceed with your testimony.
