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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

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May 14, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

As Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources, which has primary oversight responsibilities over the Department of the Interior and the Minerals Management Service (MMS), I request that you promptly provide to the Committee the following information in order to assist its oversight responsibilities related to the *Deepwater Horizon* incident:

- All documents related to the inclusions of categorical exclusions (C)(10) (approval of an exploration plan, development/production plan, or Development Operation Coordination Document) and (C)(12) (approval of an Application for Permit to Drill) into Part 516, Chapter 15 of the Departmental Handbook (516 DM 15), including any analyses that were conducted to justify the inclusion of these items onto the categorical exclusion list, and all correspondence with the White House Council on Environmental Quality regarding the inclusion of these categorical exclusions;
- The chapter related to MMS implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that was in effect prior to the effective date of the current 516 DM 15, as well as any prior versions of such chapters dating back to 1982; and
- Data showing when categorical exclusions were first used for the approval of exploration plans, development/production plans, Development Operation Coordination Documents, or Applications for Permits to Drill, and the number of categorical exclusions that were issued for the approval of each for each subsequent year.

The Honorable Ken Salazar

May 14, 2010

Page Two

Please produce the requested information in a timely fashion and prior to the May 26, 2010, Committee on Natural Resources hearing on “*Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Strategy and Implications of the Deepwater Horizon Rig Explosion.*”

If you have questions regarding this request, please contact Deborah Lanzone, Staff Director, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, at 202-225-9297.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,



Nick J. Rahall, II

Chairman

Committee on Natural Resources

Cc: S. Elizabeth Birnbaum, Director, Minerals Management Service