Chairman Hal Rogers
House Committee on Appropriations
Fiscal Year 2014 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill
Subcommittee Markup
July 23, 2013
Opening Statement As Prepared

Thank you for yielding, Chairman Simpson.

As the Chairman noted, this bill is the first where push comes to shove during this budget cycle. Reduced by 18.6% compared to last year, the Interior & Environment account is down a full 25% as compared to FY10. Those sorts of large, successive reductions are likely to become only more common across programs until the President and this Congress can come to agreement to rein in the mandatory spending that is cannibalizing our Nation's priorities.

With an allocation of $24.3 billion, this Subcommittee was faced with extremely hard choices, and I believe they have risen to the challenge. As with the other Appropriations bills, this legislation prioritizes the programs that are exclusively the responsibility of the federal government.

As wildfires continue to rage out West, destroying lives and property, the FY14 Interior & Environment Appropriations Bill provides the funding needed to fight these fires, which was gutted in the President's Budget Requests. This legislation also provides $130 million for modern aircraft to replace the dangerous, decrepit Korean War-era aircraft our federal firefighters continue to press into service.

The operations account of the National Park System is funded at $24 million over last year's enacted level. This funding will ensure that the National Parks will remain open to be visited by American families. The program to reimburse communities for property taxes lost due to federal land ownership, known as Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), is reauthorized for another year. This funding is vital for supporting local schools and public services nationwide.

Supporting these priorities within this tight budget allocation required significant reductions to, and even the elimination of, other programs. Land acquisition had to be zeroed bill-wide. These cuts will be painful – but perhaps they will make clear the need to put America's fiscal house in order.

The vast majority of the cuts fall on the Environmental Protection Agency, which is reduced by $2.8 billion, a full 34% down from FY13. That is no accident. As the American economy struggles to get up to speed, this Agency has introduced countless regulatory obstacles to growth and job creation, all without approval from Congress. The fruit of this labor has been readily apparent in southeastern Kentucky. In exchange for the use of millions of taxpayer dollars, the EPA helped to put 5,700 Kentucky miners in the unemployment lines between 2011 and 2012. New regulations and the uncertain business environment they create have shuttered coal plants nationwide. One-fifth of this country's coal fleet has been retired under this Administration, with many more to come unless something is done about it. The closure of one of those plants, Big Sandy in my District, will mean a further 120 jobs lost and a rate hike of between eight and a whopping *thirty-one percent* for customers throughout the region.

And now the President wants to put the nail in the coffin by regulating greenhouse gases on new and existing power plants, regardless of fuel source. This is a regulatory tilting of the playing field in favor of other energy sectors that will prove disastrous for the American families, businesses, and our energy security. It is no wonder that the White House talking points memo on these regulations explicitly advised staff to avoid discussion of "net job numbers," as these New Source Performance Standards have been forecasted to add hundreds of thousands to the unemployment lines. The pain already felt in Appalachia will be known across the country if these regulations are allowed to take effect.

I am proud to say that this legislation serves as a check on the EPA, reducing its operations funding and prohibiting this harmful regulatory energy tax and several other proposed rules that would serve only to harm our economic recovery.

Thank you, I yield back.

#####