

Prepared Statement of
Doc Hastings, Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources
before the
Committee on House Administration
Wednesday, March 6, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the work of the Committee on Natural Resources and to present a 2013 budget request.

The budget request submitted for consideration reflects a freeze at the amount allocated for 2012. Information submitted also includes 1) actual funds spent in 2012, 2) the impact of an 11% reduction from the 2012 allocation, and 3) a 5% increase over actual 2012 spending.

Recent Budget Reductions

Two years ago, I had the privilege of becoming Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee following the 2010 election of a new Republican Majority. At the outset of this new Majority, the Committee budget request proposed for 2011 and 2012 reflected a real reduction of 5% from the total allocation of the 111th Congress. In practical terms, this meant the Committee's budget was reduced 6.8% from 2010 to 2011. At the beginning of 2012, a further reduction of 6.4% was made to the Committee's budget. This unanticipated reduction of \$503,665 in 2012 required finding even greater efficiencies as the top priority was maintaining personnel and technical expertise.

Following these reductions, the 2012 allocation is 12.7% less than the Committee received in 2010, which means the Committee is operating with \$1,076,000 less than three years ago.

Aggressive efforts have been made over the past two years to reduce non-personnel/salary categories of the budget. Every category has seen reductions. The number of phones used has been reduced. Web services for Majority and Minority websites has been reduced. Supply costs have been reduced by seeking outside vendors with lower prices. A number of subscriptions have been eliminated, while lower prices negotiated for others. Training was halted. Equipment replacement costs have been revaluated and are reviewed annually. The travel budget has also been reduced significantly to a base level.

In total, the Committee has reduced the non-personnel/salary categories of the budget by 50.5% from 2010 to the amount proposed for 2013 (\$844,748 reduced to \$418,101.)

The overriding goal of these deep reductions has been to operate as efficiently as possible and dedicate as much of the Committee's resources to maintaining personnel as possible. It is important that the Committee have the staff needed to fulfill its mission and the workload

expected of it by the House. However, the reductions to the personnel/salary category have directly affected the ability of both the Majority and Minority to hire and retain staff.

As the non-personnel/salary budget categories have been reduced, the percentage of the Committee's budget allocated to personnel-allocation has grown. Under the 2013 request that the Committee has submitted (for a freeze at the 2012 allocation), personnel/salary will represent 94.3% of the Committee's budget.

2013 Committee Budget Request

With this high percentage of the Committee's budget dedicated to personnel/salary, further reductions would directly impact the existing staff of the Majority and Minority. Even freezing the 2013 budget at the 2012 allocation, which is the Committee's request, would apply difficult pressure to the staffing capability of the Majority and Minority as each strives to maintain the expertise it needs to uphold its responsibilities to the House.

Efforts to reduce non-personnel/salary budget categories have continued throughout 2012 and for 2013, and the extra savings will be applied to personnel/salary. Comparing 2013 to 2012, travel, website services, supplies, printing, and equipment are all reduced. The one new expenditure (\$3000) for 2013 is for security training for IT staff that has been deferred for the past two years, which cannot be responsibly postponed further.

Regarding the travel budget, the amount allocated in the 2013 proposal (\$50,000) reflects a 75% reduction from the amount allocated in 2011 and represents less than the amount actually spent on travel in 2012, which was low to avoid an potential appearance of controversy in an election year. In each of the budget scenarios presented to you, the travel budget has been set at \$50,000 to ensure that the Committee maintains a core capability to respond to events, such as occurred in the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, as well as to be able to travel to those areas of the country directly affected by the Committee's policies, especially to those areas suffering severe economic hardship and double-digit unemployment levels with a direct connection to federal lands, policies or laws due for reauthorization.

Comparing the Committee's request for 2013 for a freeze at the 2012 allocation to the amount actually spent in 2012, the difference is approximately \$170,000 and is attributable to intentional delays in hiring by the Majority in mid-to-late 2012. While the staff may not be needed from August to December of an election year when Committee activities were at their lightest, they are a necessity at the outset of the 113th Congress and President Obama's second term.

Comparing the Committee's request for 2013 for a freeze at the 2012 allocation to 5% above the amount actually spent in 2012, this would be an increase in the Committee's budget over the amount allocated in 2012. While the Committee would certainly be grateful for such an

increase, due to these fiscal times, a freeze at the 2012 allocation is requested. For illustration purposes, a 5% increase would primarily be dedicated to personnel/salary with discreet amounts restored to the training, web services, supplies and equipment categories (a total of \$43,000) to bring them to a more sustainable level, as the other budget scenarios reduce these below the amounts expected to be needed in the long-term.

Comparing the Committee's request for 2013 for a freeze at the 2012 allocation to an 11% reduction below the 2012 allocation, it is understood that this would represent the effect of sequestration. Should the sequester be executed and maintained government-wide for all of Fiscal Year 2013, the Committee will certainly fulfill its duty to execute the difficult choices such an outcome would require. Should the sequester reductions in government spending be replaced by other reductions, the Committee would work to make the decisions necessary to implement a partial year sequester. The request for a freeze at the 2012 allocation for 2013 will take careful management, and an 11% sequester reduction would require real, impactful adjustments to the existing staff of the Committee. A full sequester for 2013 equal to an 11% reduction would reduce the Committee's budget by \$810,271. Personnel/salary would be reduced by \$750,000 and slightly over \$60,000 would come from the already reduced non-personnel/salary categories of the budget. This \$750,000 reduction in staff funding would reflect the 2/3-to1/3 divide between the Majority and Minority. The Majority would lose \$500,000 in the salary budget for staff, and the Minority would lose \$250,000. A loss of this amount would result in the Majority having a more than \$1 million lower salary budget than the Democrat Majority on the Committee had in 2010. And the Majority staff budget would be over \$600,000 less than the original salary budget allocated to the new Republican Majority on the Committee in 2011. For the Majority, positions identified as core capabilities just last year would go unfilled and positions occupied at the beginning of this year would need to be vacant by the end of the year.

Responsibilities and Workload of the Natural Resources Committee

The Committee's jurisdiction under House Rule X is deep and broad, which necessitates maintaining a diverse staff with specialized expertise, which both the Majority and Minority must strive to accomplish with tightened salary budgets. Hiring and retaining knowledgeable staff to responsibly manage the Committee's activities is increasingly challenging as budgets are reduced, salaries are frozen or stable, and due to increasing competition from other employers. Areas of legislative expertise needed include: offshore and onshore energy production (oil, natural gas and renewable), coal production, mining and minerals, Indian affairs, National Parks, National Forests, forestry and wildfires, other federal lands, Reclamation hydropower dams and irrigation projects, Department of Energy Power Marketing Administrations, fisheries, wildlife, general ocean activities, the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, Territories and Insular Areas, Department of the Interior, NOAA, and more.

To better understand how this jurisdictional list translates into the real, practical world – it represents:

- 566 federally recognized Indian Tribes with 56 million acres of trust land and an enrolled population of 1.9 million American Indians and Alaska Natives;
- 398 National Park Service units (parks, battlefields, trails, historic sites, etc.) encompassing 84 million acres;
- 245 million acres of Bureau of Land Management property;
- 561 wildlife refuge units under the Fish and Wildlife Service comprising 150 million acres of land and water;
- 155 national forests of the Forest Service (shared with Agriculture Committee) covering 193 million acres;
- generation and distribution of 25,566 megawatts of power by the Power Marketing Administrations to 40 million people in 34 states;
- irrigation water delivery to 10 million farmland acres that produce 60 percent of the nation's vegetables and 25% of its fresh fruit and nut crops; and,
- commercial and recreational fisheries that support over 1.5 million jobs and generate \$183 billion per year to the economy.

With 69 staff positions, the Committee oversees more than 130,000 federal workers at these departments and agencies with budgets in excess of \$15 billion per year.

The Committee is responsible for one of the largest (often the second highest) source of non-tax revenue to the federal government in the form of oil and natural gas leasing and production. Approximately \$1 billion per month is collected by the Interior Department from such development – an amount that peaked to over \$23 billion in Fiscal Year 2008 and has average \$13 billion annually for the past five years.

Statistics from the 112th Congress demonstrate the demands the breadth of our jurisdiction places on Committee staff. Examining summaries of legislative activity for House Committees from the last Congress, the Natural Resources Committee ranked:

- 4th in total bills referred to it (nearly 700);
- 1st in number of bills reported out of Committee (over 100);
- 1st in bill reports filed;
- 1st in number of bills passed by the House;
- 4th in bills considered under a rule;
- 3rd in public laws enacted; and,
- 5th in total hearings held among authorizing committees (over 200).

Not only does the Committee expect to maintain this pace of activity for the 113th Congress, but there are a number of reauthorizations due for action during the next two years, including the

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act that oversees the nation's ocean fisheries and represents a major legislative undertaking.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to share this information on the Committee on Natural Resources. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.