

Statement of Chairman Rob Bishop
House Committee on Natural Resources
before the Committee on House Administration
Wednesday, February 11, 2015

Thank you for providing me and my colleague, Mr. Grijalva, the opportunity to discuss our 2015 budget request with you. In short, with one of the most productive and active Committees of the House, our budget request seeks a modest 2.5 percent increase for 2015 and 2016 to account for restructuring of the Natural Resources Committee's subcommittee operations, increased staffing needs and resources for anticipated increased field hearings.

Prior to the last Congress, the Committee's total budget allocation was cut by nearly 13 percent, which required the Committee to operate with over \$1 million less than it had previously. The budget request we submit today would continue most functions of the Committee at level funding, including areas for which the committee had already sought and adopted reductions or efficiencies: supplies, web services, subscriptions, equipment and training.

However, the highest percentage of the Committee's budget continues to be dedicated to personnel and salaries. The Committee relies on knowledgeable staff to tackle the Committee's broad jurisdiction and geographical areas, including offshore and onshore energy production, coal production, mining and minerals, Indian and Insular affairs, National Parks, National Forests, wildfires, and other oversight of federal lands, Bureau of Reclamation hydropower and irrigation projects, Power Marketing Administrations, fisheries, wildlife, ocean and marine activities, the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and more.

Rigorous oversight of the multiple federal departments and agencies with combined budgets of more than \$15 billion will be an important priority, and the Committee is restructuring its five subcommittees to create an Oversight subcommittee for this purpose. In addition, the Committee must quickly address reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Secure Rural Schools program.

At the end of the previous Congress, due to the retirement of the previous Chairman, the Committee lost many staff throughout 2014, particularly toward the latter part of the year. Others left during the transition. As a result, just prior to the beginning of this Congress, the Committee was nearly one-third under its allocation for staff positions.

While we are currently in the process of hiring several new professional staff to handle specialized legislative, policy and communications-related positions, this takes time and additional resources, and we anticipate the need to add several more staff. Our budget request will allow both the Majority and Minority to meet its goals of hiring and retaining additional qualified staff to assist in carrying out the functions and priorities of the Committee this Congress.

In addition, the Committee's travel budget allocated at the beginning of the previous Congress (\$50,000) represented a 75% reduction from the amounts previously allocated in 2011, and was lower even than what was actually spent on travel by the Committee in 2012. As a result, the Committee held significantly fewer field hearings.

As the Deepwater Horizon Gulf spill and other sudden events have demonstrated, the need for Members to travel to review areas affected by policies and laws within our jurisdiction can and does happen unexpectedly. This budget request seeks to modestly increase the travel authority to ensure current and new Majority and Minority Members of the Committee will be able to travel to areas of the country that are most directly affected by the Committee's policies and legislation.

Thank you, Chairwoman Miller, Ranking Member Brady and other Members for your time this morning and I look forward to answering your questions.