

September 9, 2010

Mr. Bob Abbey, Director
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
1849 C Street, NW, Rm. 5665
Washington, D.C. 20240
Email: Director@blm.gov

Mr. Ken Salazar, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington D.C. 20240

Re: Call for thorough investigation of documented illegal and unethical practices by BLM in New Mexico

Dear Director Abbey and Secretary Salazar:

We are writing to follow up on our July 21, 2010 letter to you concerning documented ethical improprieties in the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Farmington Field Office (FFO) in New Mexico. We are concerned that we haven't yet received a response from you regarding that letter and Mr. Henke's hiring as President of the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association (NMOGA). It is incumbent upon the United States Department of the Interior to restore trust, protect the public interest and impose real reform in the BLM/FFO.

Despite our cooperation in the investigation of Steven P. Henke, we were forced to wait two months for a delayed and heavily redacted response to our Freedom of Information Act request for the Office of Inspector General, United States Department of Interior (USDO I) Case Number OI-CO-09-0259-I Report of Investigation. (Attachment A to this letter). As expected, the Report verified that Mr. Henke took gifts and favors from natural gas companies, which are prohibited sources. However, limiting the investigation and Report to only Mr. Henke suggests that a certain level of cover-up has occurred. This is an extremely disappointing development that further diminishes the public trust of the BLM and calls into question decisions and modes of operation that have been occurring in BLM offices in New Mexico over the past 10 years.

Specifically, we request a complete independent investigation of activities of the BLM/FFO and the BLM New Mexico State Office. Since Mr. Henke, in his role as District Manager, has now been documented as having received gifts from prohibited sources, it is reasonable to believe that his actions permeated the culture at the BLM/FFO and that other BLM employees may also have systemically accepted gifts from prohibited sources. It is critical that this investigation be announced immediately to guard against the potential loss of evidence.

There is also now significant evidence that Mr. Henke unduly and improperly used his position to develop reciprocally benefitting relationships with oil and gas companies in the San Juan Basin that betrayed public trust. We reiterate our request for you to take action on restricting Mr. Henke from any involvement with BLM in his new position as NMOGA President per 18 U.S.C. § 207.

Recent United States Department of Interior policy guidance, including Bureau of Ocean Energy Management Regulation and Enforcement (BOEM) has focused on ethical standards, but the actions in the present matter suggest that this guidance is an empty promise. BOEM ethics rules for offshore oil work should be extended to all DOI agencies that work onshore oil and gas. Our memberships expect that regardless of what is written into guidance documents and agency press releases, real and decisive action must be taken by those in a position of leadership to evaluate what has happened in the BLM offices in New Mexico (onshore activities). The results of these evaluations are needed as a precursor to restoring the public trust and credibility of the BLM/FFO and the BLM State Office in New Mexico, and now brings into question the commitment of national leadership to address and rectify identified problems. Immediate action to protect public resources and to restore eroded public trust is urgently needed and we implore you to respond.

Please respond in writing. Thank you for your attention to this significant development.

Sincerely,

s/Mike Eisenfeld

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