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March 12, 2014

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The Honorable Rhea Suh  
Assistant Secretary, Policy, Management and Budget  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
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Assistant Secretary Suh:

After your second nomination hearing before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on February 4, I submitted to you a list of written follow-up questions for the record. My purpose was to understand your positions and personal views on a number of critical issues. I am also still trying to learn your role within the decisional hierarchy of the Department of the Interior during your time as Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget since 2009.

The position of Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks is one that has tremendous importance to those of us in the West, especially my home state of Alaska. Our states have, as you know, such a large amount of land within their borders managed by the Federal Government. Although lands in restricted use administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service are of particular significance, it must be noted that all lands, both public and private, that are impacted by the Endangered Species Act also would be under your jurisdiction and purview.

Unfortunately, your responses to date have not provided any additional clarity with respect to a large number of my questions. This is especially troubling insofar as many of these questions are the same or quite similar to the ones I posed in our private meeting and your first and second nomination hearing before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Each time, you have responded either by saying that you simply do not know (despite serving for nearly five years in the senior leadership of the Department) or by giving what might be called "stock answers" that fail to show your personal engagement or willingness to answer the question. As I see it, neither response is acceptable for a Presidential appointee seeking Senate confirmation. I am therefore resubmitting a subset of my questions along with your prior answers. These questions and answers are indicative of the larger concern articulated above. I ask you to supplement your answers to these questions as soon as possible, recognizing that I would like to have thorough and complete answers of the quality that you would expect if you were posing the questions.

**Endangered Species Act –**

It has come to my attention that EPA has initiated an Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service on the proposed rule regarding Section 316(b) of the Clean Water Act governing power plant cooling water intake structures. The rule has the potential to be applied in an overly broad manner such that it could require facilities to install cooling towers or stop operations if a threatened or endangered species is located in a water body from which the facility draws water, even if there is no evidence of impact to that species.

Do you believe the 316(b) proposed rule should require a power generator to monitor all species in a water body from which a facility draws water, or should the rule only focus on threatened and endangered species directly affected by the intake structure?

In the past, 316(b) monitoring focused on the prevention of “adverse environmental impact” on threatened and endangered aquatic life. Do you believe the scope of monitoring should be expanded to look at species that *may* be in the water body and *might* be indirectly affected by intake structures?

Do you think it is appropriate to order a facility to install a cooling tower or stop operations if a threatened or endangered species is located in a water body from which the facility draws water, when there is no evidence of impact to that species? If yes, should any consideration be given to the impact on electric reliability?

Please describe the contacts that you, or anyone within DOI, have had with EPA on this issue.

**Answer:** I am aware that the EPA and the Fish and Wildlife Service are engaged in a Section 7 consultation on this rulemaking, but I have had no involvement in this consultation. While I have no direct knowledge of contacts between the Department and EPA on this matter, I understand Section 7 consultations are managed in the Ecological Services program within the Service.

**Requested Follow-Up:** Please respond to each sub-question individually and provide your personal opinions where asked on these matters. Please also explain the “indirect” knowledge, if any, that you have with respect to this matter.

**Sage Grouse –**

Do you believe that the National Technical Team Report on the Greater Sage-grouse is based on the best available science?

Should you be confirmed, what other sources of information outside of the National Technical Team Report will you use if or when the FWS makes a listing determination related to the greater sage grouse?

**Answer:** Although I am not familiar with the specifics of the National Technical Team Report, I know that the FWS is committed to using the best available science to guide its listing decisions. I understand the Report was designed to serve as a resource for the BLM and Forest Service to inform their planning processes. In addition, I have been

informed that the FWS created a Conservation Objectives Team of State and FWS experts who developed a report, informed by the NTT Report, of up-to-date information from States, and other scientific information to describe conservation objectives for the bird to inform the state and federal planning efforts underway. If confirmed, I will ensure the FWS considers both of these documents, other available scientific information, species experts and sustained public engagement in making its listing decision.

**Requested Follow-Up:** Please respond to the first question above that asks whether you believe that the National Technical Team Report on the Greater Sage-grouse is based on the best available science. I would ask that you review the specifics of the report, if you have not yet had the opportunity to read it, as the Sage-Grouse is a top concern of many Western States.

### **Wilderness –**

The recent King Cove road decision by Secretary Jewell has highlighted a very real reason why I am incredibly concerned about any new proposals to designate wilderness in Alaska, or anywhere, for that matter.

What is your personal view of wilderness? What criteria should be used when determining whether to establish new wilderness?

**Answer:** Millions of Americans appreciate and enjoy wilderness areas for their pristine resources and recreational values including hunting and fishing. Wilderness is one of many federal land designations, but only Congress may designate wilderness areas. I will continue to support the appropriate management of our current wilderness areas, and will continue to defer to Congressional action on the designation of new wilderness areas. In the Wilderness Act, Congress has developed the criteria for designating wilderness, which generally includes size, natural condition, and opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation.

**Requested Follow-Up:** Please respond with your personal views about: the federal wilderness designation, whether you believe the statutory criteria are in need of reform, and, if so, what reforms you would recommend.

### **Natural Gas Development –**

You earlier referred to natural gas as the “greatest threat to the ecological integrity of the West.” I understand that you now support the president’s all-of-the-above energy strategy.

If confirmed, do you plan to take any action that restricts or prevents natural gas development on federal lands?

**Answer:** If confirmed, I will continue to support the President’s all-of-the-above energy strategy and work with all parties to facilitate safe and responsible energy development on public lands within the context of applicable laws and regulations.

**Requested Follow-Up:** Please explain why you are not able to answer this question with “yes” or “no”? Please identify specific actions that you believe would be within your

authority to avert what you understand to be the greatest threat to the ecological integrity of the west. Do you favor greater restrictions on natural gas development on federal lands? If so, please outline those restrictions that would have your support. If not, please say so clearly and unequivocally

**King Cove Road –**

Who, specifically, at the Department is working to identify and evaluate options that would improve access to affordable transportation and health care for the residents of King Cove, as Secretary Jewell pledged would happen?

**Answer:** The Secretary is committed to engaging the leadership of all the relevant bureaus and offices within the Department to work with you, the State of Alaska and the King Cove community to develop viable modes of transportation from King Cove to Cold Bay, which will ensure the human health and safety needs of the community are met.

**Requested Follow-Up:** Please respond with the names of specific persons within the Department of the Interior who are assigned to resolve the ongoing transportation challenge for residents of King Cove who may require access to the all-weather airport at Cold Bay.

Please outline the specific actions the Department of Interior has undertaken to help the people of King Cove between December 23, 2013, when Secretary Jewell rejected the road, and today.

**Answer:** I am not aware of any actions the Department has taken on this issue since December 23, 2013.

**Requested Follow-Up:** Please seek knowledge of and provide information concerning specific actions that the Department of the Interior has undertaken since December 23, or explain why you are unable or unwilling to provide such information.

If you do not believe the road is an acceptable alternative, please provide examples of alternatives that you believe would be as reliable and safe as a road. How do you propose to pay for those ideas?

**Answer:** I have reviewed the Record of Decision which outlines a variety of alternatives to improve access and the availability of medical services for the people in the region while preserving the values and resources of the Izembek refuge and the areas protected as designated Wilderness. These alternatives include providing a marine-road link by implementing a landing craft or passenger ferry. I have not yet had the opportunity to assess the costs and benefits associated with these options, but I look forward to engaging in meaningful dialogue with you to give full consideration of these and other opportunities that present a path forward, should I be confirmed.

**Requested Follow-Up:** Please respond to the question regarding how you would propose paying for the stated alternatives to the King Cove Road.

**ANWR –**

When do you expect the final plan for ANWR to be released? Will it include a development alternative?

**Answer:** My understanding is that the final Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan is under review in the Department. I am not aware of a release date or of what will be included in the plan.

**Requested Follow-Up:** Please determine the expected date of release for the final ANWR plan, and seek-out knowledge as to whether the plan will include a development alternative. Please convey what you learn or state why you were unable or unwilling to learn and convey the requested information.

Secretary Jewell has repeatedly stated her intentions to work at a local level when making land management decisions that impact a specific region. Are you aware of the level of support among Alaskans regarding the responsible development of the 1002 Area?

**Answer:** My understanding is that the 1002 Coastal Plain is an area important to the entire country, for a variety of reasons. I fully support the Secretary's commitment and efforts to land management decision-making rooted in sustained engagement with local communities in fulfilling the Department's responsibility to manage the nation's natural resources on behalf of the American public.

**Requested Follow-Up:** My question asked whether you were aware of the support of Alaskans for the development of the 1002 Coastal Plain; please provide me with an answer to that question. And please communicate what you know about the extent and depth of that support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator