

News Release



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Western Congressional Members Defend Use of Categorical Exclusions

Underscore the need to keep key energy law intact to produce American energy

(Denver)- The Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States (IPAMS) today thanked Western Congressional Members of the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee for highlighting the role of categorical exclusions (CX) in enabling environmentally responsible development of American natural gas and oil. IPAMS thanks Representatives Doc Hastings (R-WA), Ranking Member of the Committee; Rob Bishop (R-UT); Doug Lamborn (R-CO); and Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) for drawing attention to the fact that CXs under Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 help to increase American energy security by eliminating redundant analysis and unnecessary red tape while providing protection of the environment.

"Congress mandated the use of CXs to enable energy development where the environmental impact is minimal, such as on existing well pads, and where drilling was previously analyzed in an environmental analysis document," said Kathleen Sgamma, IPAMS Director of Government Affairs. "These four Members of Congress correctly emphasized that CXs are instrumental in allowing federal land managers to focus more on actual, on-the-ground environmental protection, such as inspections and enforcement, rather than on redundant analysis which keeps them out of the field and behind their desks."

"According to a study from the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC), an environmental advocacy group, the number of environmental inspections performed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) generally increased over the last decade until 2006 to 2008, when inspections more than doubled. It's no coincidence that the dramatic increase in BLM inspections corresponds with full implementation of CXs in 2006," added Sgamma.

(more)

The Department of the Interior (DOI) is considering major reforms to the federal onshore natural gas and oil program that will severely curtail the use of CXs. If DOI does so, federal land managers will lose an important tool that has been instrumental in expediting energy development while protecting the environment. The Members rightly point out that DOI cannot pick and choose which laws to follow. Congress, including then Senators Barack Obama and Ken Salazar, mandated the use of CXs; it did not provide Interior with discretion in their use. As the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently reported, there are many examples where BLM failed to use CXs or applied additional restrictions, which is a violation of the law.

IPAMS supports Representatives Hastings, Bishop, Lamborn and Lummis in calling for DOI to implement the GAO's sensible recommendations of revised guidance and better oversight, and not the wholesale gutting of CXs.

[Link to House Natural Resources Committee letter](#)

[Link to GAO Report, *Energy Policy Act of 2005: Greater Clarity Needed to Address Concerns with Categorical Exclusions for Oil and Gas Development Under Section 390 of the Act*, GAO-09-872, September 2009](#)

[Link to WORC study](#)

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The Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States (IPAMS), founded in 1974, is a non-profit trade association representing more than 400 independent natural gas and oil producers, service and supply companies, banking and financial institutions and industry consultants committed to environmentally responsible energy development in the Intermountain West. More information on IPAMS and its members is available at www.ipams.org