

August 22, 2012

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary, United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

Thank you for your efforts and commitment to meeting our nation's renewable energy and conservation goals. Each of our organizations is deeply committed to responsibly sited renewable energy development opportunities that avoid and minimize the impacts on wildlife and their habitats. We write to suggest a path forward for needed fundamental improvements to the bald and golden eagle permit process by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). Recently, many of the undersigned submitted separate comments responding to the Service's notices proposing changes to the existing eagle permit regulations. We strongly believe that by working together and with the Service, we could find workable solutions to improve the permitting process and conservation of bald and golden eagles.

The conservation community, the wind industry, states, federally recognized Indian tribes and federal agencies have a long history of working with the Department of the Interior (Department) to develop workable policy recommendations for the responsible siting of wind energy projects. For example, the Wind Turbine Guidelines Federal Advisory Committee brought together scientists, industry, conservationists, federally recognized tribes and representatives from states, to provide recommendations to the Service, which were substantially adopted to help wind energy project developers avoid and minimize the impacts of land-based wind projects on wildlife and their habitats.

In that spirit, we urge the Service to supplement the current notice-and-comment proceedings through continued and collaborative interaction with key stakeholders with the express purpose of examining the issues identified in the two notices regarding eagle permits and the draft eagle conservation plan guidance. There are several potential processes ranging from a negotiated rulemaking, advisory committee, or policy dialogue to less formal interactive technical workshops, a technical conference, an agency task force, and/or a scientific panel. The important denominator is that the process includes a variety of experts on eagles, the permitting process, the regulatory process and energy development. Such a process could explore, for example: additional science and data on assessing eagle populations; further mitigation options; advanced conservation practices; short- and long-term resource needs and administrative priorities; implementation of effective risk criteria; how eagle information gaps should be addressed and how responsibly sited wind farms are allowed to move forward in the interim while this process is on-going; other causes of eagle mortality in addition to wind energy; and generally how to create more certainty for both the species and the wind industry under a regulatory process for eagle permits.

We appreciate this opportunity to share our thoughts with you and look forward to working with you to ensure the best possible outcome for the conservation of the iconic bald and golden eagles and the further development of needed renewable energy. While we understand that the Service will need time to analyze the comments submitted and to evaluate the appropriate next steps, the undersigned will continue to collaborate and discuss these issues. We sincerely hope that the Service will work with us, and other interested parties who are seeking reasonable solutions, to develop a

workable, comprehensive and transparent approach to eagle conservation that we will collectively be able to support.

Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Jamie Clark
President and CEO
Defenders of Wildlife

Denise Bode
Chief Executive Officer
American Wind Energy Association

David Yarnold
President and CEO
National Audubon Society

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Executive Director
Wind on the Wires (WOW)

CC: Daniel Ashe, Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service
David Hayes, Deputy Secretary, US Department of the Interior
Steve Black, Counselor to the Secretary of the Interior