January 23, 2012

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Secretary Salazar Department of the Interior 1849 C Street NW Washington, DC 20240

Dear President Obama and Secretary Salazar,

Decisions about resource extraction on the Outer Continental Shelf should be based on sound scientific information. Your administration first displayed a strong commitment to science during the President's inaugural address in 2009. This commitment was underscored by Secretary Salazar's announcement on March 31, 2010 when, as a part of a three-pronged approach to Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas development, he directed the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct an evaluation of science needs and gaps in the U.S. Arctic Ocean. The evaluation would help the Department of the Interior determine how best to "...conduct scientific analyses to gather the information we need to develop resources in the right places and the right ways."

The USGS completed its task in June 2011, releasing USGS Circular 1370: An Evaluation of the Science Needs to Inform Decisions on Outer Continental Shelf Energy Development in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, Alaska. The report is commendably objective and broad-ranging. We are grateful to the Secretary of the Interior for commissioning it and to the authors of and contributors to the report for their hard work. The report's 62 recommendations indicate many pressing needs including:

- further research on the physical and biological environment of the region,
- studies on specific aspects of the life history of important species,
- the development of a comprehensive monitoring program that can detect environmental change and identify the drivers of such change,
- the synthesis of existing information in order to answer key questions including the identification of ecologically significant areas,
- an assessment of cumulative impacts from multiple sources,
- greater inclusion of the traditional knowledge of Arctic residents,
- the creation of a data management system that provides timely sharing of information from all research activities, and
- a closer integration of scientific studies and findings with decisions being made about offshore industrial activity.

¹ Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey overview, from Office of the regional executive, 4210 University Drive, Anchorage, Alaska 99508

We, the undersigned 573 research scientists, call upon the Administration to follow through on its commitment to science by acting on the USGS recommendations. Doing so prior to authorizing new oil and gas activity in the Arctic Ocean will respect the national significance of the environment and cultures of U.S. Arctic waters and demonstrate the value that your Administration places on having a sound scientific basis for managing industrial development of the Outer Continental Shelf.

Sincerely,

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