



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240



JUN 20 2012

Mr. Jeff Ruch
Executive Director
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
2000 P Street NW, Suite 240
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. Ruch:

On behalf of the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), I am writing to provide you with a response to your April 6, 2011, petition for rulemaking governing drilling in National Wildlife Refuges. Significant personnel and administrative changes occurred since we received your letter, and we sincerely apologize for the tardiness of this response.

The USFWS believes promulgating regulations for administering private minerals on refuge lands is necessary to fully protect our resources, as well as create a reasonable and predictable regulatory environment for private industry. Currently we are working on a national assessment of oil and gas developments across the National Wildlife Refuge System, which we see as a key step in moving forward with the rulemaking process. We intend to conduct a thorough National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis of the proposed regulations, most likely resulting in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). These processes take a significant amount of time and resources, so we greatly appreciate your patience.

We want to assure you that we will be actively seeking public input into our rulemaking process from the beginning, and look forward to your organization's feedback as we move forward. We want to thank you for your organization's support and hope to foster an open dialogue with you in the future. If you have specific questions regarding these regulations, please contact our Refuge Energy Program Coordinator, Scott Covington, at (703) 358-2427 or scott_covington@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Acting

Jim Kurth
Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System