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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 11, 2010

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MMS split doesn't solve past problems on Arctic drilling decisions

Statement from Kristen Miller, Government Affairs Director:

“We sincerely hope that Sec. Salazar’s announcement will begin a new era at the Minerals Management Service where the oil industry will no longer have undue influence over oil and gas development decisions in our nation’s offshore areas. For many years now, MMS has been plagued with controversy – MMS’s Alaska regional office in particular was singled out in a recent Government Accountability Office report that found that, among other things, key industry-generated reports were kept from MMS employees charged with examining the likely environmental impacts of Arctic oil and gas activities. In Alaska, it is obvious that the relationship between industry and MMS has been much too cozy.

Actions taken by MMS Alaska’s office are clouded by controversy and must be suspended and reevaluated before risky development scenarios are allowed to move forward. Fixing the agency for the future doesn’t change what happened in the past. First and most immediately, MMS must halt Shell Oil’s plans for exploratory drilling in the Arctic’s Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, due to begin in less than 60 days. We are hopeful that with the new effort toward balanced oversight announced by Secretary Salazar today any future decisions about development in the Arctic will be careful and reasoned, taking into account sound science and the traditional knowledge of the Inupiat people who know more about the Arctic Ocean than anyone else.”

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