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February 22, 2018

Mary L. Kendall
Deputy Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Deputy Inspector General Kendall:

The Fundamental Science Practices of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) are in place to safeguard unpublished USGS data, information and associated scientific materials. These guidelines are designed to ensure the integrity of the agency's scientific research and protect scientists from any pressure to release data in advance of its release to the public. This process ensures that unbiased, reliable USGS data and information are released to the whole public and avoids any unfair advantage, or perceived advantage, to the benefit of any interest or particular group, corporation, individual, or other entity.

On December 15, 2017, a request was made by Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt to the USGS to disclose information from the first National Petroleum Reserve report, an energy assessment of the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska, containing sensitive information on oil deposits, to Secretary Ryan Zinke prior to its publication on December 22, 2017.

In contradiction of the USGS fundamental science policy, USGS granted Deputy Secretary Bernhardt's request, and proffered the information to the Secretary of Interior several days in advance of the information's public release. As a result, Associate Director for Energy and Minerals Murray Hitzman tendered his resignation on December 17, 2017.

I request that you review this action and determine whether there were any violations of policy by Department of Interior leadership in requesting and obtaining this information in advance of

its public release. This includes a determination of any ethical violations, as well as a review of how this action may jeopardize the scientific integrity and objectivity of USGS.

Congress and the American people deserve a full explanation of how, why, and at whose direction the Trump administration disregarded the fundamental science practices that have been adhered to in prior administrations and that citizens count on. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Betty McCollum". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Betty McCollum

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies