

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 3, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We write to express our concerns regarding the administration of two climate change adaptation programs within the Department of the Interior (Interior). One of the programs, Climate Science Centers (CSCs), is led by the U.S. Geological Survey. The second program, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), is principally managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As you are aware, CSCs and LCCs were established by Secretarial Order Number 3289, issued on September 14, 2009 by former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar. The CSCs and LCCs are charged with furthering the Department's directive to "coordinate an effective response" to address the impact climate change will have on land, water, fish, wildlife, and cultural resources managed by the Department.<sup>1</sup>

Despite a significant federal investment of at least \$149 million,<sup>2</sup> their effectiveness, management, and levels of oversight remain serious concerns to the Committee. Since their inception, the CSCs and LCCs have lacked necessary internal controls, failed to develop effective communication policies, and have put taxpayer dollars at risk by acting in contravention of guidelines issued by Interior and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

For example, a 2013 program audit conducted by the Department of the Interior Office of Inspector General (OIG) discovered that LCCs did not comply with federal guidelines in 36 out of 38 financial awards examined during the audit. The LCCs either failed to post notice of funding opportunities altogether or posted funding opportunities for insufficient duration that it

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<sup>1</sup> Dep't of the Interior Secretarial Order No. 3289 (2009), available at <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/migrated/whatwedo/climate/cop15/upload/SecOrder3289.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> See *infra* note 5 at 3. For Fiscal Years 2013-2015, the CSCs and LCCs received a total of \$149,406,822.

effectively foreclosed competition for the funding award.<sup>3</sup> OIG also identified instances where the Southern Rockies LCC provided federal awards on a non-competitive basis despite not posting a sole-source justification and listing the awards as competitive on Grants.gov. Moreover, the recipients for these noncompetitive awards included those who hold positions on the LCC's steering committee.<sup>4</sup>

Most recently OIG issued a program evaluation in which it found that taxpayer dollars are further imperiled due to the fact that the "CSCs and LCCs had no formal process to coordinate the prevention of duplication in research grants . . . ."<sup>5</sup> In its review, OIG found that the CSCs and LCCs lacked a written policy for coordination, and that the LCCs failed to adequately keep track of their projects in a centralized database that could be utilized and accessed program-wide.<sup>6</sup> In addition, by failing to post project data to Climate.Data.Gov, as required under Executive Order Nos. 13653 and 13642, the CSCs and LCCs have further frustrated federal efforts to increase transparency, reduce duplication of efforts, and reduce the potential for wasted taxpayer dollars.<sup>7</sup>

In order to assist the Committee in evaluating the effectiveness of these two programs, please produce the following documents and information as soon as possible, but no later than May 17, 2017:

1. Documents sufficient to show the metrics used by Interior to track the effectiveness of CSC and LCC programs;
2. Documents sufficient to show how Interior determines the level of federal funding individual CSCs and LCCs receive in a given fiscal year;
3. Documents sufficient to show Interior's requirement and verification processes to ensure that CSCs and LCCs have written protocols to facilitate better coordination within their individual programs and with each other;
4. Documents sufficient to show annual training requirements of LCC and CSC Coordinators, Science Coordinators, and Grant Officers; and
5. An explanation of whether Interior will require LCCs to adopt a single, uniform project tracking database that can be accessed by other programs within the Department, including the CSCs. If Interior will not require such a database, please provide an explanation of how duplication concerns will be resolved.

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<sup>3</sup> OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, U.S. DEP'T OF THE INTERIOR'S CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRAM: LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVES 5 - 7 (2013), available at <https://www.doioig.gov/sites/doioig.gov/files/ER-IN-MOA-0015-2011Public1.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>5</sup> OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, U.S. DEP'T OF THE INTERIOR'S CLIMATE EFFECTS PROGRAM COORDINATION 1 (2017), available at [https://www.doioig.gov/sites/doioig.gov/files/ClimateEffectsPrograms\\_042017\\_Public.pdf](https://www.doioig.gov/sites/doioig.gov/files/ClimateEffectsPrograms_042017_Public.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 6-9.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 11-12.

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Please deliver your response to Room 1324 of the Longworth House Office Building. The Committee prefers, if possible, to receive your response in electronic format. An attachment contains additional instructions for responding to the Committee's request. Please contact Christopher Santini or Christen Harsha of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee staff at (202) 225-7107 with any questions about this request. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Rob Bishop  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources



Raúl R. Labrador  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Oversight and  
Investigations

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources  
The Honorable A. Donald McEachin, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Oversight and  
Investigations