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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6175

BETTINA POIRIER, MAJORITY STAFF DIRECTOR  
RUTH VAN MARK, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

August 9, 2011

The Honorable Mary L. Kendall  
Acting Inspector General  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C St. NW  
Mailstop 4428  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Kendall:

I am writing to request that you clarify the purpose of your office's ongoing investigation into the conduct of Dr. Charles Monnett, a wildlife biologist with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE).

Your investigation was brought to my attention following numerous press accounts and blog postings. From my reading, it appears that the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), a group defending whistleblowers, has made the investigation public by releasing transcripts of interviews with Dr. Monnett conducted by your office.

I am aware that BOEMRE has placed Dr. Monnett on paid administrative leave as of July 18th, 2011. My staff has contacted BOEMRE and confirmed that, as stated in recent press accounts, BOEMRE made this decision due to concerns over procurement issues surrounding a research project on "Populations and Sources of Recruitment in Polar Bears"—but the details were not forthcoming.

Over the past two weeks, there has been plenty of speculation – but few confirmed facts – concerning your investigation. PEER believes the investigation is a “witch hunt”: in a July 28, 2011 press release PEER states, “One of the country’s top Arctic scientists is being hounded in a political attempt to impugn his observations on polar bears’ vulnerability to retreating sea ice...” The transcripts released by PEER have led many to speculate that your investigation involves scientific integrity issues with Dr. Monnet’s 2006 paper on polar bears.

As Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW), I am committed to ensuring that scientific integrity is upheld in the federal decision-making processes. In this particular case, Dr. Monnett’s polar bear research has been

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cited in testimony of witnesses before the EPW Committee and by former Vice President Al Gore to advocate for global warming legislation. Further, Dr. Monnett's work was the basis of the 2008 Fish and Wildlife Service decision to list the polar bear as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. As a result, Critical Habitat for the polar bear was designated, which added additional layers of onerous regulations to oil and gas development in 187,000 square miles of land in Alaska.

With Dr. Monnett's research being the foundation of critical ESA decisions connected to global warming, accusations against his work could be serious and have far reaching consequences. I am therefore requesting an explanation as soon as possible of how you became involved in this matter and I ask that you clarify the scope of your investigation.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call or e-mail J.W. Hackett at (202) 224-4764 or [jonathan\\_hackett@epw.senate.gov](mailto:jonathan_hackett@epw.senate.gov).

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe  
Ranking Member

Committee on Environment & Public Works