United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

AUG 07 2009

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARIES AND BUREAU HEADS

FROM: Deputy Secretary

SUBJECT: Freedom of Information Act Policy Guidance

I want to draw your attention to Secretary Salazar's message of July 2, 2009, to all Department of the Interior employees clarifying how the Department will implement the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The Secretary's memorandum reflects the Administration's strong commitment to accountability and transparency and builds on the direction provided in President Obama's FOIA memorandum of January 21, 2009, and the new FOIA response guidelines issued by the Attorney General on March 19, 2009. It is vitally important that you commit to responding to FOIA requests as outlined by the Secretary. As the Secretary's memo states,

> *"The President's memorandum and the Attorney General's guidelines do not change the requirements of the statute, but rather how we think about the FOIA. The Attorney General emphasizes that agencies should adopt a presumption in favor of disclosure when making FOIA decisions. The Department will only withhold information when we reasonably can foresee that its release would harm an interest protected by a FOIA exemption (e.g., our national security or the privacy interests of individuals) or when disclosure is prohibited by statute. The President's and Attorney General's messages extend beyond the boundaries of the FOIA. They call upon agencies to aggressively increase proactive disclosures of information that is of interest to the public, thus vastly increasing information that is available on the internet. Our goal is to increase transparency."*

I encourage you to read the President's January 21, 2009, memorandum, the Attorney General's March 19, 2009, guidelines, and the Secretary's memorandum to employees as you develop your processes for responding to FOIA requests in as proactive a manner as possible.

If you have further questions regarding these memoranda or the Department's FOIA policy, please contact Ms. Alexandra Mallus, the Department's FOIA Officer, at (202) 208-5342.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

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