FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 10, 2009

Contact:
Richard Charter, 707 875-2345, 707 875-3482
Erin McCallum, 202-772-3217

Interior department delays offshore drilling plans
Secretary Salazar announces plans to review resources

WASHINGTON, DC –Interior Secretary Ken Salazar has announced that he will delay for at least 180 days the Bush administration's previously announced plans to open additional U.S. waters to offshore oil drilling. The Department of the Interior plans to spend the extra time gathering information on offshore resources – including renewable resources such as wind, wave and tidal energy.

Below is a statement by Richard Charter, energy consultant for Defenders of Wildlife:

"We're encouraged that the Department of the Interior plans to delay new offshore oil development to gather additional information, and to listen to state governors, members of Congress and members of the public. We will provide comments to the Department explaining that the Bush administration's plan was the worst five-year offshore drilling plan we've ever seen and should be permanently shelved, not just delayed for 180 days. We will also work to convince Secretary Salazar that reexamining drilling in the Gulf of Mexico - where a carefully negotiated compromise was crafted to safeguard Florida's coast – is a bad idea.

"The Obama administration has unfortunately inherited a scandal-plagued Minerals Management Service focused primarily on turning America's long-protected coastal national treasures over to the petroleum lobby. We are hopeful that, after hearing from the public, Secretary Salazar will act to protect our coastal economies and the healthy marine environment on which they depend."

###

Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. With more than 1 million members and activists, Defenders of Wildlife is a leading advocate for innovative solutions to safeguard our wildlife heritage for generations to come. For more information, visit HYPERLINK "http://www.defenders.org/" \o "http://www.defenders.org/" *www.defenders.org.*