*Budget Deal Prohibits Funding for Implementation of BLM Initiative to Preserve Wilderness*

*Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today criticized a rider attached to the final budget deal struck by the President and congressional leaders late last week, which would prohibit the use of federal funds for implementation of the President's Wild Lands policy. The policy, which was announced last year by Interior Secretary Salazar in Secretarial Order 3310, reinstates common-sense procedures and guidelines for inventorying lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management for wilderness characteristics. It also provides a means by which to keep the wild lands in tact so that Congress can decide what to designate as wilderness through legislation.*

"It is extremely disappointing that the 2011 budget deal includes a provision that will harm our nation's ability to conserve wild lands for future generations. Every presidential administration from Ford to Clinton exercised the authority granted by the Federal land Policy & Management Act of 1976 to inventory and protect lands with wilderness characteristics. Instead of returning to that wise policy, the Interior Department is being forced to go back to the policy of the Bush administration, which prioritized the big oil industry over the hunters, fishermen and recreational enthusiasts who deserve to enjoy the great wild lands that are owned by the American people and should be preserved for future generations."