

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2014

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met at 9:19 a.m., in room SD-124, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack Reed (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Reed, Feinstein, Leahy, Johnson, Tester, Udall, Merkley, Begich, Murkowski, Cochran, Alexander, Blunt, Hoeven, and Johanns.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

STATEMENT OF HON. SALLY JEWELL, SECRETARY

ACCOMPANIED BY:

HON. MIKE CONNOR, DEPUTY SECRETARY

HON. RHEA SUH, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, POLICY, MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

PAMELA K. HAZE, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUDGET, FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND ACQUISITION

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Senator REED. Let me call the hearing to order. We will follow the early bird rule in recognizing my colleagues who are here, and we will have 6-minute rounds. And I want to welcome the Secretary and her colleagues.

This is our first budget hearing of the year. It is a hearing to discuss the fiscal year 2015 budget of the Department of the Interior. I am very pleased to welcome Secretary Sally Jewell before the subcommittee this morning.

Madam Secretary, we have a lot of ground to cover with your budget request, and we are looking forward to hearing you articulate your priorities for the Department.

I would also like to recognize the Department's new Deputy Secretary, Mike Connor, who was unanimously confirmed by the Senate on February 27. Mr. Connor is a former commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation. He is also an alumnus of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. This is his first time testifying before the Interior subcommittee of the United States Senate in his new role.

And welcome, Mr. Connor.

Finally, I would like to recognize Ms. Rhea Suh, Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget; and Ms. Pam Haze, her deputy.

We are happy to have you here before us, and we value the day-to-day work that we do with you and your terrific budget staff very much.

Turning to the Department's budget request, the discretionary total funded by the subcommittee increases by about 1 percent over fiscal year 2014, for a total of \$10.6 billion. It is a relatively flat budget.

Including the administration's new disaster cap proposal for firefighting, however, the total budget increases by almost 4 percent for a total of \$10.8 billion.

I am hopeful that providing a new framework for firefighting funding will prevent the Department from running out of funds before the end of the fiscal year and having to borrow from other programs. I am also hopeful that it will prevent the subcommittee from being forced to make difficult cuts to other priorities to pay for emergency firefighting.

It is worth noting that in fiscal year 2014, we provided \$3.9 billion for firefighting, including \$600 million to pay for fire expenses from the prior year. We acted similarly in the fiscal year 2013 continuing resolution, where we provided more than \$400 million for the fire expenses from the previous year.

Congress was forced to pay for these additional costs with our regular discretionary appropriations because we did not have access to disaster funding. This means that, in the last 2 years, we have had to reallocate resources from other discretionary programs to pay for emergency firefighting activities.

Paying for firefighting has meant less for water and sewer projects, Land and Water Conservation Fund programs, resource conservation, improvements to energy permitting, and all the other activities we fund through this bill.

I am very pleased to see that the President has focused on this issue and has included a new budget framework to alleviate some of the difficulties we face.

I understand that this proposal would designate a portion of the fire funding to be disaster-related and, therefore, fall under the budgetary spending cap for disaster.

I am looking forward to hearing your testimony on how we can expect this new funding stream to work, Madam Secretary.

I am looking forward to discussion on the legislative strategy necessary to make disaster funding available to this subcommittee.

The budget also contains modest increases to fund fixed costs that Interior bureaus invest in science and research programs and fund tribal priorities. I am pleased that it provides \$40 million in discretionary funding to fund improvements in programs for national parks, as we gear up for the Park Service's centennial in 2016.

This amount includes a \$10 million request to reinvigorate the Centennial Challenge grant program and leverage non-Federal investments to improve park facilities and visitor services.

Finally, I am particularly pleased that your budget request contains a \$51 million request to fund youth education and employment programs to fund efforts to, in your words, Madam Secretary, play, learn, serve, and work. I know this initiative is personally important to you, Madam Secretary, and I look forward to hearing more from you about it this morning.

And before we get started, let me turn to my ranking member, Senator Murkowski, for her remarks.

Senator Murkowski.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Madam Secretary.

Good morning, and I, too, echo the chairman's comments in welcoming you to your new position, Mr. Connor. I know you have a lot of work to do there, and we appreciate that.

Ms. Suh, Ms. Haze, also welcome to the committee.

Fellow colleagues, I have asked the chairman for a bit of indulgence this morning in perhaps going a little bit longer in my opening statement than I otherwise would.

I have had an opportunity to speak with the Secretary about an issue that is very close and very personal to me; to the people of King Cove, many of whom I know you have had a chance to visit with yesterday and who are here today; but truly, to the people of Alaska.

And while I will direct most of my questions to the specifics within the budget, I wanted to take this opportunity as part of my opening statement to speak to an issue that has galvanized Alaskans, not just during this year with the recent decision made by the Secretary, but truly for the past several decades as the people of King Cove have sought an answer to their quest for a simple road to safety.

Secretary, I will never forget the telephone conversation that you and I had on December 23 when I was sitting in the parking lot of the Fred Meyer store, waiting to go in and get gift wrap and other sundry things for the Christmas holidays. And you told me at that time that you were rejecting the lifesaving gravel access road to King Cove.

I told you at that time and I have repeated, I cannot convey in words adequate to describe the frustration, the anger, the sadness with which I received that decision, how disheartened I knew the people of King Cove would be.

And adding insult to injury, the fact that it was delivered the day before Christmas Eve, what should have been a joyous holiday time for the people of this small community, a break from the political rhetoric that goes on, it ruined the holidays for, certainly, the people of King Cove, certainly put a damper on all that I was doing, knowing how the people were going to bear the weight of this decision.

I will never ever understand the timing of the decision, and I am still trying to reconcile the reasons behind your decision.

I know, as I mentioned, the folks that are here from King Cove that have traveled over 4,000 miles to be here, to try to speak with you after many attempts and opportunities to discuss this issue. I

am not certain that they feel any more convinced today than they have been about the prospects that they have as a people fighting for a small road up against an administration and a decision that seemingly makes no sense whatsoever.

For my colleagues here, and those in the audience that may be unfamiliar with the history of this issue, with the Omnibus Public Land bill of 2009, we authorized the Interior Department to transfer over 60,000 acres of State and private land to the Izembek Refuge.

And we did this in exchange for just over 200 acres. It was 206 acres of Federal land. This is a 300 to 1 exchange. A 300 to 1 exchange that had been negotiated with the folks from Fish and Wildlife, that had been negotiated with the native people of King Cove, with individuals from the State, with the delegation.

It was a pretty remarkable exchange. And this was all done to provide the 965 residents of the King Cove community a safe and reliable access to the all-weather airport in Cold Bay, the second longest runway in the State of Alaska, built after World War II. And the exchange was not only extraordinarily lopsided, but what the people of King Cove agreed to was that they would not use this road for commercial purposes, because there were some who suggested that the processing facility there might want this road to make money. They agreed that it would be used for noncommercial use.

So imagine, if you will, a 10-mile, one-lane, gravel, noncommercial-use road with barricades or cordons on either side, so that you cannot move off the road. Pretty specific road. That is it. It is not a major highway. We are not even going to pave it.

King Cove is a community with a clinic, no hospital, no doctor. Residents have to fly from Cold Bay more than 600 miles to get to Anchorage where a hospital that can handle critical medical procedures exists.

But the problem that we have in King Cove is that weather and very difficult geography doesn't allow for reliable access from the community of King Cove to Cold Bay, so that these flights are often canceled, weathered out, just don't happen.

Since the decision was made December 23, there have been seven emergency medevacs out of King Cove, including four that have been performed by the Coast Guard.

Just about a week and a half ago, there were two medevacs conducted in one day, a fisherman who had been crushed by a crab pot, crushed his pelvis and both legs. He was taken to the clinic there in King Cove, and while he was in the clinic, discovers that a 1-month-old infant who was there in respiratory distress and also needs to be medevaced out, that it is his son.

So we have a father and a son in the clinic, waiting for evacuation. Through the grace of God and the bravery, the bravery, of the Coast Guard and the other responders, that dad and his baby are doing fine.

The 63-year-old woman who was medevaced out by the Coast Guard on Valentine's Day, who was suffering heart conditions, is also doing fine.

But as the Coast Guard will describe, and as the video describes, the conditions that the Coast Guard responded to were truly, truly life-threatening.

Every Coast Guard flight risks the lives of at least four Coast Guard men and women, not to mention the patient that they are trying to evacuate.

In the situation of the father and his young son, they had to wait hours. Sometimes folks have to wait days to receive these emergency medical evacuations.

It is not without cost. It is not without risk. Each one of these Coast Guard evacuations costs a minimum of \$210,000 to go from Cold Bay to King Cove.

Those are taxpayer dollars. Those are Coast Guard men and women's lives at risk. And they take on the humanitarian issue and mission because that is who they are. But it is not the mission of the Coast Guard to provide for evacuation services to an airport for the residents of King Cove.

There is a safe and easy way to help our fellow citizens. And the only thing that is standing in the way is our own Federal Government's decision to place a higher value on the birds than it does on the health and safety of my State's citizens. And that is simply wrong.

Madam Secretary, your Department claims to honor the trust responsibility, and to improve the lives of our Alaskan natives, including the majority Aleut residents in King Cove. But the decision that you made in December flies in the face of this responsibility.

The notion from your Department that you must protect Alaska from Alaska natives, our first people, is insulting. And that is the way that Alaskans feel. We feel insulted that we cannot care for the land and the animals and the birds, and still provide for a safe, reliable access.

The people of King Cove have been living in this area for thousands of years. They rely on the birds. They rely on the wildlife. They have been stewards long before there was ever a refuge, long before there was ever a wilderness.

When you announced your decision in December, you recognized the need for reliable methods of emergency transport from King Cove. You reaffirmed the Department's commitment to "assist in identifying and evaluating options that would improve access to affordable transportation and health care."

But, Madam Secretary, we have seen none of this. I did not hear any clear direction from you yesterday when we met. I asked Assistant Secretary Suh during your confirmation hearing last month whether you could name an action, any one single action, that you or anyone at Interior has taken to protect the health and safety of King Cove residents since the road was rejected in December. I have seen nothing.

The passage of time on this issue has not lessened my passion to see justice for the people of King Cove.

I will not get over this issue. I am also unwilling to allow your Department to do nothing to help the Alaskans that it has promised to assist who, at this point, I believe we are seeing only further imperiled. Seven medevacs since the first of January.

I think my colleagues need to know, I think the administration needs to know, I think, Secretary Jewell, you know very clearly, I will do everything, everything in my power for as long as I am here, to enable the people of King Cove to receive proper emergency access that the rest of us take for granted.

If you are not going to reverse the decision that you announced on December 23, I believe that the least you can do is reopen the record of decision in order to reconsider the issue, because you need to know that I will not stand by and watch as more Alaskan lives are put at risk, put at risk, potentially, to die. I will not let this issue die.

When I spoke before the Alaska Legislature in February, I spoke with great passion about this issue. Alaskans are very passionate about this issue. And I said maybe I need to channel my inner Ted Stevens, and everybody laughed, because they knew what that meant.

When Ted was really agitated, and really going to let nothing stand in his way, he would wear his Hulk tie. Today, I have a Hulk scarf on, and I don't typically engage in much drama. I am not a message person. I am a person who wants to get something done.

But I need you to carry the message to this administration that this road is nonnegotiable, that the health and safety of the people of King Cove is nonnegotiable. And that I will do everything, everything within my power, to make sure that the needs of these people are taken care of and put first, put first, because that is my charge, to take care of the people of the State of Alaska, for whom I work.

Madam Secretary, as we discussed yesterday, it is important. It is important for you, it is important for me, and is important for my State, that we are able to work on issues together.

I am not an unreasonable woman, and I believe you want to do right as well, and you have an opportunity to demonstrate that. And I would hope, again, that you would look at the facts, you would listen to the people of King Cove, you would listen to Alaskans, and you would listen to your heart in doing the right thing.

I look forward to discussing some of the issues within your budget during our questions. But it was too important for the people that I represent that I take this time this morning to make very clear for the record, for my colleagues, for you, and for the administration, that we are not done with this issue.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the time.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Senator.

Do any of my colleagues have very brief opening comments? Your statements will be made part of the record, by unanimous consent.

If there are no opening statements, let me recognize Secretary Jewell.

Madam Secretary.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF HON. SALLY JEWELL

Secretary JEWELL. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murkowski, and members of the subcommittee. I really appreciate you being here, and willingness to talk through the budget of the Department of the Interior, and for the effective way in which you represent your constituents from your various States.

It has been a pleasure getting to know all of you in this almost 1 year that I have been in this position.

For Senator Murkowski and Senator Begich, I do appreciate the commitment that you have to the citizens of the State of Alaska, and I understand your advocacy.

I appreciated our meeting yesterday morning, Senator Murkowski, and Senator Begich, our meeting yesterday afternoon with the residents of King Cove. I, certainly, through the 300 or so meetings and consultations that my Department has had on the King Cove issue continue to be a listener and look at the facts throughout this whole process.

I appreciate the passion you have expressed, and I also appreciate the people who have traveled so many miles to be at this hearing today.

I have with me, as you recognized, my newly minted Deputy Secretary. We appreciate your support for Mike in this position.

One of the biggest issues that we face throughout the West is drought, severe drought. Mike is not only an expert in that, having been Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, but many other topics as well.

Rhea Suh, Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, the Department's Chief Financial Officer, has done a terrific job these last 5 years in very complicated times for budgets, ably assisted by Deputy Assistant Secretary Pam Haze and the crew.

I also want to recognize Rachael Taylor and Leif Fonnesbeck for your support of this committee and my team as we work together.

It has been about a year since I met with you. It was an interesting year, 2013, with the sequestration and the shutdown. I want to express my sincere appreciation for a budget for 2014 that brings clarity and certainty to my teammates, even if the numbers are tight.

Today, as we present our 2015 budget, I am going to share a few highlights and focus on areas of interest, I believe, to the subcommittee.

First, from a big picture standpoint, it is a solid budget. It is responsible. It makes smart decisions in Interior's missions. It is within the budget caps agreed to by the Bipartisan Budget Act.

WILDLAND FIRE

In total, including this subcommittee's oversight and some others, the budget is \$11.9 billion. As Senator Reed mentioned, it is an increase of \$275 million, or 2.4 percent, from 2014, but of that, \$240 million is for emergency fire suppression.

It is a new and prudent budget framework to ensure adequate funding to suppress severe catastrophic fires. I was just at the National Interagency Fire Center with Senator Merkley, Senator Wyden, Senators Crapo and Risch, to talk about this program.

What we are doing is proposing to change how fire suppression costs are budgeted to treat extreme fire seasons in the same way as other natural disasters. We believe it is prudent and logical to do that.

What is in the President's budget is very similar to what has been proposed by Senators Wyden and Crapo and in companion

legislation in the House to balance post-fire remediation, fuels removal, like hazardous fuels, and suppression on a year-in, year-out basis, so we are not raiding these funds. It is modeled on the Federal Emergency Management Disaster Relief Program.

There are no additions to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Relief program. It is all done within the disaster cap. We believe very strongly that it needs to go forward, and we will be working alongside you on the legislation to enable that.

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Next I want to say that presentation of a robust program for American Indians and Alaskan natives has been a key goal for me. This budget includes full funding for estimated contract support costs, something the tribes have said is critical to them, and enables them to operate their federally funded programs.

It also includes \$11.6 million for a new Tiwahe, or family-based initiative, to address the interrelated problems of poverty, housing, violence, and substance abuse faced by Indian communities, as we have seen in a number of places across the country.

This request is complemented by a proposal for education and economic development in Indian country as part of President Obama's Opportunity, Growth and Security Initiative.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Next I want to turn to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, as the President seeks to fulfill a historic commitment to America's natural and cultural heritage through full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, as originally envisioned when this legislation was enacted 49 years ago. It was generated to take revenues from offshore oil and gas production and mitigate those impacts through supporting things in every county across the country, like access for hunting and fishing, creating ball fields and other places for kids to play and learn, to acquire land to reduce fragmentation and facilitate efficient land management, to protect Civil War battlefields, and to put conservation easements in place to take care of important habitat for species, while keeping farms and ranches working.

NATIONAL PARKS CENTENNIAL

As Chairman Reed mentioned, in 2016, we celebrate the centennial of the National Park Service—obviously, a once in a lifetime event. This budget proposes a robust increase in multiple sources for the National Park system, \$40 million in current appropriations in 2015. \$10 million will be used to match private philanthropy, and there is a lot of private philanthropy interest in the parks. \$30 million to support the visitor experience and critical needs to repair assets in the parks.

We are also proposing a \$1.2 billion permanent investment over 3 years at \$400 million a year to support high-priority projects and further enhance the visitor experience, because we know a lot more traffic will be driven to the parks, both internationally and domestically, through the centennial.

OPPORTUNITY, GROWTH, AND SECURITY INITIATIVE

The President's Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative also adds additional money for the national parks to begin to address the issue of deferred maintenance on national parklands and other public lands.

YOUTH

As Chairman Reed mentioned, for the health of our economy and our public lands, it is also critical we work now to establish meaningful and deep connections between young people from every background to nature and the great outdoors. The President's budget proposes \$51 million across our bureaus to support partnership programs, hiring, and educational opportunities aimed at youth and veterans between the ages of 18 and 30.

It will also leverage private donations. I have been trying to raise private money to support this and support work with youth and veterans conservation corps, so we get young people connected to our public lands for the future.

ENERGY

On the topic of energy, the budget proposes the President's national energy initiatives continue to be an area of focus to generate jobs and help the Nation achieve greater energy self-reliance. We have made good progress.

In total, including all sources, the 2015 budget for energy programs is \$753.2 million, just under a \$41 million increase from 2014. It includes funding for both conventional and renewable energy development, basic science and applied research to understand the impacts of development on water, on habitat, on wildlife, and other natural resources.

LANDSCAPE LEVEL APPROACH

Across the Department, we are taking a landscape level approach to development. We are modernizing programs and practices. We are streamlining permitting, strengthening inspection and enforcement, and ensuring a fair return for the American public.

SCIENCE

Next, in the field of science, research and development, particularly conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey and other bureaus, is vital to help us understand and address important scientific questions. There is a \$60 million increase in the budget from 2014 to improve our knowledge about issues such as climate change, hydraulic fracturing, Asian carp, white nose syndrome in bats, and other issues.

As an example, Interior's climate science centers are developing regional drought impact scenarios. We are evaluating coastal flooding. We are studying the impacts on the Nation's wildlife and habitats, which will inform our land management decisions.

WATER

Last but certainly not least, and something that I am comforted having Mike Connor at my side over, is around water. We recognize the challenges of water supplies, especially during this time of extended drought in the West. I am very happy Mike was confirmed by you very recently as Deputy Secretary, because he has a very deep background on these issues.

The 2015 budget will increase our WaterSMART programs around conservation, helping people conserve by \$9.5 million. The Bureau of Reclamation, along with many partners, States, and stakeholders, is working on long-term solutions to address future water supply needs.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The President also announced a \$1 billion Climate Resilience Fund. The Fund would support research on the projected impacts of climate change, help communities become more resilient, and fund breakthrough technologies.

These efforts are specifically designed to address the challenges of changing climate on water resources.

PREPARED STATEMENT

So in closing, I look forward to working with you this budget season on these issues. I would be delighted to answer your questions. Thank you very much.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. SALLY JEWELL

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I am pleased to present the 2015 President's budget for the Department of the Interior.

This subcommittee remains an important partner in the accomplishment of Interior's mission and I appreciate our excellent working relationship, which allows us to resolve challenges and take advantage of opportunities. I appreciate the efforts of the subcommittee in the development of 2014 appropriations that alleviated the need for indiscriminate sequester of discretionary funds and minimized legislative riders.

This budget is balanced and responsible and supports Interior's pivotal role as a driver of jobs and economic activity in communities across the country. It enables us to carry out core mission responsibilities and commitments. This budget allows Interior to uphold trust responsibilities to American Indians and Alaska Natives, provides a new approach for responsibly budgeting for wildland fire suppression needs, invests in climate resilience, continues smart and balanced all-of-the-above energy development on and offshore, and bolsters our national parks and public lands in advance of the National Park Service's 100th anniversary in 2016.

Interior's programs and activities serve as economic engines in communities across the Nation, contributing an estimated \$371 billion to the economy in 2012 and supporting an estimated 2.3 million American jobs. Of this total, energy and mineral development on Interior-managed lands and offshore areas generated more than \$255 billion of this economic activity and supported 1.3 million jobs. Recreation and tourism on Interior lands contributed \$45 billion to the economies of local communities and supported nearly 372,000 jobs. Water supply, forage and timber activities, primarily on public lands in the West, contributed more than \$50 billion and supported 365,000 jobs.

The President's 2015 budget for the Department of the Interior totals \$11.9 billion, an increase of 2.4 percent from 2014, which includes a cap exemption for fire emergencies. Without this exemption, Interior's budget totals \$11.7 billion, a 0.3 percent increase, or nearly level with this year's funding.

This budget features three key legislative proposals: a new framework to fund wildland fire suppression requirements; additional investment in the infrastructure

and visitor experience at our National Parks and public lands; and full and permanent funding for the Land and Wildlife Conservation Fund (LWCF). Each of these proposals will significantly enhance our ability to conserve and manage the Nation's public lands.

The budget proposes to amend the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, to provide stable funding for fire suppression, while minimizing the adverse impacts of fire transfers on other Interior programs, and allowing Interior to reduce fire risk, manage landscapes more comprehensively, and increase the resiliency of public lands and the communities that border them. In this proposed new framework, \$268.6 million, or 70 percent of the 10-year average for suppression response is funded within the discretionary spending limits and \$240.4 million is available as an adjustment above those limits, if needed based on a challenging fire season. In addition, it does not increase overall discretionary spending, as it would reduce the ceiling for the existing disaster relief cap adjustment by an equivalent amount as is provided for wildfire suppression operations.

In advance of the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016, the 2015 budget proposes a comprehensive Centennial Initiative investment in the parks and public lands. The funding would provide targeted increases for a multi-year effort to recommit to the preservation of these special places, to invest wisely in the park system's most important assets, to use parks to enhance informal learning, engage volunteers, provide training opportunities to youth, and enhance the National Park Service's ability to leverage partnerships to accomplish its mission.

Finally, the President's budget continues to support full, permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, one of the Nation's most effective tools for expanding access for hunting and fishing, creating ballfields and other places for children to play and learn, protecting traditional uses such as working ranches and farms, acquiring inholdings to manage contiguous landscapes, and protecting Civil War battlefields. The 2015 budget proposes total funding of \$900 million for LWCF in Interior and the U.S. Forest Service. Within this total, \$350 million is requested as current funding and \$550 million as part of a permanent funding proposal. Starting in 2016, the proposal would provide \$900 million annually in permanent funding.

Complementing the 2015 budget request is \$346 million identified for Interior programs as part of the President's Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative to spur economic progress and promote opportunity. If approved, these investments will enable significant progress to address long-term needs in the areas of national parks and other public lands, research and development, infrastructure and permitting support, climate resiliency, and education and economic development in Indian Country.

The drought in California and other Western States underscores the importance of improving the resilience of communities to the effects of climate change. The President's Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative includes a \$1 billion government-wide Climate Resilience Fund to invest in developing more resilient communities, and finding solutions to climate challenges through technology development and applied research. This Fund includes about \$240 million for Interior programs that invest in research and development, assist Tribes and local communities in planning and preparing for extreme weather conditions and events, and support public land managers in landscape and watershed planning to increase resiliency and reduce risks.

2015 BUDGET

The 2015 budget request includes \$10.6 billion in current funding for programs under the jurisdiction of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies subcommittee. This is a \$104.9 million, or 1 percent, increase compared to 2014. Total funding for the Department includes \$1 billion requested for the Bureau of Reclamation and the Central Utah Completion Act, which are under the jurisdiction of the Energy and Water Development subcommittee.

In addition to the proposals already discussed, the 2015 request sustains support for essential requirements and allows for targeted increases above the 2014 enacted level. Within the overall increase for 2015, \$54.4 million covers fixed cost increases for such things as Federal pay and rent. Reflecting the need to prioritize budget resources, this request includes \$413.3 million in proposed program reductions to offset other programmatic requirements.

Interior programs continue to generate more revenue for the American people than the Department's annual current appropriation. In 2015, Interior will generate estimated receipts of nearly \$14.9 billion, a portion of which is shared with State and local governments to meet a variety of needs, including school funding, infra-

structure improvements, and water-conservation projects. Also included with this request are revenue and savings legislative proposals estimated to generate more than \$2.6 billion over the next decade.

Putting this budget in context, Interior's complex mission affects the lives of all Americans. Nearly every American lives within an hour's drive of lands or waters managed by the Interior Department. In 2012, there were 417 million visits to Interior-managed lands. The Department oversees the responsible development of over 20 percent of U.S. energy supplies, is the largest supplier and manager of water in the 17 western States, maintains relationships with 566 federally recognized Tribes, and provides services to more than 2 million American Indian and Alaska Native peoples.

CELEBRATING AND ENHANCING AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS

Throughout American history, the great outdoors have shaped the Nation's character and strengthened its economy. The 2015 budget requests the resources and authorities to care for our public lands and prepare for the future. The budget invests in efforts to upgrade and restore national parks and other public lands areas, while engaging thousands of Americans, including youth, and veterans. The budget strengthens the President's commitment to the America's Great Outdoors initiative with a request of \$5.1 billion in current funding for programs, including the operation of public land management units in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS) and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS); the Land and Water Conservation Fund; and grants and technical assistance to States and others. This is an increase of \$127.1 million compared to the 2014 enacted level.

Coupled with these efforts is a historic commitment to America's natural and cultural heritage through Land and Water Conservation Fund programs. The budget includes a 2015 combined request of \$672.3 million (\$246 million discretionary and \$426.3 million mandatory) for Interior's LWCF programs that conserve lands and support outdoor recreation. In current funding, the request for land acquisition is \$147.9 million, with \$39.5 million identified for Collaborative Landscape Planning projects. A total of \$98.1 million is requested in current funding for LWCF conservation grants, including \$48.1 million for LWCF stateside grants.

I could not highlight our stewardship efforts without discussing the upcoming centennial of the National Park Service in 2016. Overall, the Centennial Initiative—including mandatory, discretionary, and Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative resources—will allow NPS to ensure that 1,700 (or 20 percent) of the highest priority park assets are restored to good condition. The effort creates thousands of jobs over 3 years, provides over 10,000 work and training opportunities to young people, and engages more than 265,000 volunteers in support of public lands.

The request for the Centennial Initiative proposes a \$40 million increase in current appropriations in 2015, plus an additional \$400 million in permanent funding each year for 3 years. That funding includes \$100 million for a Centennial Challenge to match private philanthropy, \$200 million for National Park Service facilities improvements, and \$100 million for a Centennial Land Management Investment Fund to competitively allocate funds to meet land conservation and deferred maintenance needs among Interior's land-management agencies and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's U.S. Forest Service. The President's Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative identifies investments of \$100 million for National Park Service deferred maintenance and an additional \$100 million for the Centennial Land Management Investment Fund.

STRENGTHENING TRIBAL NATIONS

Sustaining the President's commitment to tribal sovereignty and self-determination and honoring Interior's trust responsibilities to the 566 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes and more than 2 million people served by these programs, the 2015 budget for Indian Affairs is \$2.6 billion, an increase of \$33.6 million above the 2014 enacted level. The budget invests in: advancing nation-to-nation relationships and tribal self-determination, supporting and protecting Indian families and communities, sustainable stewardship of energy and natural resources, and improving education in Indian Country.

Recognizing this commitment to tribal self-governance and self-determination, the budget fully funds contract support costs Tribes incur as managers of the programs serving Native Americans. The budget requests \$251 million, a \$4 million increase over the 2014 enacted level, to fully fund estimated contract support needs in 2015.

Supporting families and communities, the 2015 budget launches the Tiwahe Initiative, with an increase of \$11.6 million in social services and job training programs to address the interrelated problems of child and family welfare, poverty, violence

and substance abuse in tribal communities. Tiwahe is the Lakota word for “family.” Through this initiative, social services and job training programs will be integrated and expanded to provide culturally appropriate programs to assist and empower families and individuals through economic opportunity, health promotion, family stability, and strengthened communities.

Promoting public safety and tribal community resilience, the 2015 budget request includes resources to build on Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Law Enforcement’s recent successes in reducing violent crime. A pilot program will be implemented to lower repeat incarceration rates in tribally operated jails on three reservations—Red Lake in Minnesota, Ute Mountain in Colorado, and Duck Valley in Nevada—with a goal to materially lower repeat incarcerations. Through an Alternatives to Incarceration Strategy, this pilot will seek to address underlying causes of repeat offenses, such as substance abuse and lack of adequate access to social service support, through intergovernmental and inter-agency partnerships.

The 2015 budget request is complemented by a proposal in the President’s Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative to further invest in economic development and education to promote strong, resilient tribal economies and improve educational opportunities in Indian Country.

POWERING OUR FUTURE

As part of the President’s all-of-the-above energy strategy to expand safe and responsible domestic energy production, the 2015 budget provides \$753.2 million for conventional and renewable energy programs, an increase of \$40.7 million above the 2014 enacted level. The budget includes measures to encourage responsible, diligent development and a fair return for American taxpayers.

Funding for conventional energy and compliance activities totals \$658.4 million, an increase of \$37.5 million over the 2014 level. Spending from fees and permanent funding related to onshore oil and gas activities increase \$49.1 million from the 2014 level, primarily reflecting a proposal to expand onshore oil and gas inspection activities and to offset the Bureau of Land Management’s inspection program costs to the taxpayer with fees from industry, similar to what the offshore industry now pays.

The budget includes \$169.8 million for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and \$204.6 million for the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement to support domestic energy production, including new leasing, strong safety oversight of offshore operations, enhanced environmental enforcement functions, and expanded training and electronic inspection capabilities.

The 2015 budget includes \$94.8 million for renewable energy activities, a \$3.2 million increase over the 2014 level. This funding maintains the Department’s emphasis on strategic investments to advance clean energy and meet the President’s goal to approve 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy on public lands by 2020 (relative to 2009 levels).

ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

The 2015 budget supports a vision to inspire millions of young people to play, learn, serve and work outdoors by expanding volunteer and work opportunities for youth and veterans. The budget proposes \$50.6 million for Interior youth programs, a \$13.6 million or 37 percent increase from 2014.

A key component of the Department’s efforts will be partnering with youth organizations through the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps. The proposed funding includes an increase of \$8 million to expand opportunities for youth education and employment across the National Park Service; an additional \$2.5 million for the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Urban Wildlife Refuges Partnership; and a total of \$4.2 million in Indian Affairs for youth programs including \$2.5 million to engage youth in natural sciences. Support for the National Park Service Centennial will create thousands of jobs, and engage more than 10,000 youth in service and training opportunities and more than 265,000 volunteers.

ENSURING HEALTHY WATERSHEDS AND SUSTAINABLE, SECURE WATER SUPPLIES

The 2015 budget addresses the Nation’s water challenges through investments in water conservation, sustainability, and infrastructure critical to the arid western United States and its fragile ecosystems.

The budget includes \$66.5 million for WaterSMART programs in Reclamation and the U.S. Geological Survey, nearly a 17 percent increase from 2014, to assist communities in stretching water supplies and improving water management. In addition to \$1 billion requested for the Bureau of Reclamation within the jurisdiction of the Energy and Water Subcommittee, the budget also requests \$210.4 million for

the U.S. Geological Survey's water programs to provide scientific monitoring, research, and tools to support water management across the Nation. This funding supports the Department's goal to increase by 840,000 acre-feet the available water supply for agricultural, municipal, industrial, and environmental uses in the western United States through water conservation programs by the end of 2015.

Interior extends this commitment to Indian Country, honoring Indian water settlements with investments totaling \$171.9 million in Reclamation and Indian Affairs, for technical and legal support for water settlements. This includes \$147.6 million for implementation of authorized settlements to bring reliable and potable water to Indian communities, more than a 9 percent increase from 2014. Among the investments is \$81 million for the ongoing Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project, which, when completed, will have the capacity to deliver clean running water to a potential future population of approximately 250,000 people.

BUILDING A LANDSCAPE LEVEL UNDERSTANDING OF OUR RESOURCES

The 2015 budget fosters the sustainable stewardship of the Nation's lands and resources on a landscape level. Funding includes increases for scientific monitoring, research and tools to advance our understanding and ability to manage natural resources more effectively, while balancing important conservation goals and development objectives. Reflecting the President's ongoing commitment to scientific discovery and innovation to support decision making for critical societal needs and a robust economy, the budget proposes \$888.7 million for research and development activities across the Department, an increase of \$60.4 million over 2014. This funding will increase understanding of natural resources and the factors impacting water availability, ecosystem and species resiliency, sustainable energy and mineral development, climate resilience, and natural hazard mitigation, among others.

Complementing this budget request are two components of the President's Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative: an investment of \$140 million for Interior research and development as part of a Government-wide effort to jumpstart growth spurred by scientific discovery; and investments to address climate resilience to better prepare communities and infrastructure, and enable them to build greater resilience in the face of a changing climate.

In ecosystems across the Nation, Interior will continue to work with local communities to leverage its efforts to improve resiliency and achieve improved environmental and economic outcomes.

MAJOR CHANGES IN THE 2015 REQUEST

Bureau of Land Management.—The 2015 request is \$1.1 billion, a decrease of \$5.6 million from the 2014 enacted level. The 2015 request assumes the use of \$54.5 million in proposed offsetting fees, which when included provides an effective increase of \$48.9 million above 2014. The 2015 request includes \$954.1 million for the Management of Lands and Resources account, and \$25 million in current appropriations for Land Acquisition, including \$2 million to improve access to public lands for hunting, fishing, and other recreation. The budget proposes \$104 million for Oregon and California Grant Lands, which includes a \$4.2 million decrease in Western Oregon Resource Management Planning, reflecting expected completion of six revised plans in June 2015.

To advance America's Great Outdoors, the request includes \$3.5 million in program increases for recreation, cultural resources, and the National Landscape Conservation System to address the needs of recently designated units, implement travel management plans, improve visitor services, and address a backlog in cultural resources inventory and stabilization needs. The budget request also includes \$4.8 million for Youth programs, an increase of \$1.3 million from 2014, to put more young Americans to work protecting and restoring public lands and cultural and historical treasures.

The BLM continues to support the President's all-of-the-above energy strategy on the public lands including an initiative to encourage smart renewable energy development. The 2015 budget includes \$29.2 million, essentially level with 2014, for renewable energy to continue to aggressively support wind, solar, and geothermal energy development on BLM lands. Complementing this is a \$5 million increase in the Cadastral, Lands and Realty Management program for identification and designation of energy corridors in low conflict areas to site high voltage transmission lines, substations, and related infrastructure in an environmentally sensitive manner.

The 2015 request for Oil and Gas Management, including both direct and fee-funded appropriations, totals \$133.7 million, an increase of \$20.3 million in available program funding from 2014. In 2015, the budget proposes to shift the cost of oil and gas inspection and enforcement activity from current appropriations to in-

spection fees charged to industry. The proposed inspection fees will generate an estimated \$48 million, providing for a \$10 million increase in BLM's inspection and enforcement capability and allowing for a net reduction of \$38 million in requested BLM appropriations. The request for Oil and Gas programs includes increases of \$5.2 million for ongoing rulemaking efforts and to strengthen operations at BLM units and \$4.6 million for oversight and permitting to better keep pace with industry demand and fully implement leasing reforms.

In 2015, BLM will release six rapid eco-regional assessments, in addition to four planned for 2014. The BLM will conduct training on the use of the data from these assessments and will work with a number of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives to begin development of regional conservation strategies. The budget includes an increase of \$5 million for Resource Management Planning to implement BLM's enterprise geographic information system and address high priority planning. The 2015 budget maintains a \$15 million increase to implement sage grouse conservation and restoration measures to help avoid the need for a future listing of the species for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Other program increases include \$2.8 million in the Wild Horse and Burro program to implement recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences regarding population control; and \$2.8 million in Abandoned Mine Lands to implement remediation plan efforts at Red Devil Mine in Alaska. The request includes \$19 million for the Alaska Conveyance program. Although a decrease of \$3.1 million from 2014, this funding coupled with efficiencies from an improved cadastral method, plots a course to complete all surveys and land transfers in 10 years.

A proposed grazing administration fee will enhance BLM's capacity for processing grazing permits. A fee of \$1 per animal unit month, estimated to provide \$6.5 million in 2015, is proposed on a pilot basis. This additional revenue more than offsets a decrease of \$4.8 million in appropriated funds in Rangeland Management, equating to a \$1.7 million program increase to help address the grazing permit backlog.

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.—The 2015 operating request is \$169.8 million, including \$72.4 million in current appropriations and \$97.3 million in offsetting collections. This is a net increase of \$3.4 million in current appropriations above the 2014 enacted level.

The 2015 budget maintains a strong offshore renewable energy program at essentially the 2014 level of \$23.1 million for the total program. In 2013, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) held the first competitive Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) renewable energy lease sales, issued five other non-competitive commercial offshore wind energy leases, and approved the construction and operations plan for the Cape Wind project offshore Massachusetts.

Offshore conventional energy programs also remain essentially level with 2014, with a total of \$49.6 million in 2015. In 2013, BOEM held three sales generating over \$1.4 billion in high bids, and three additional lease sales are scheduled during calendar year 2014. The request of \$65.7 million for Environmental Programs includes an increase of \$2.5 million for work on a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the next Five-Year Program (2017–2022) for oil and gas leasing on the OCS.

Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement.—The 2015 budget request is \$204.6 million, including \$81 million in current appropriations and \$123.6 million in offsetting collections, an increase of \$2 million from 2014. The request for offsetting collections assumes \$65 million from offshore oil and gas inspection fees. The 2015 request allows Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) to continue to strengthen regulatory and oversight capability on the OCS and maintain capacity in regulatory, safety management, structural and technical support, and oil spill response prevention.

The budget includes \$189.7 million for Offshore Safety and Environmental Enforcement, an increase of \$2.4 million. The request includes a program increase of \$0.9 million to evaluate and test new technologies and update regulations to reflect improved safety and oversight protocols. Funding for Oil Spill Research is maintained at the 2014 level of \$14.9 million.

Office of Surface Mining.—The 2015 budget request for the Office of Surface Mining is \$144.8 million, a decrease of \$5.3 million from the 2014 enacted level. This includes a decrease of \$13.4 million in grants to States and Tribes to encourage these regulatory programs to recover a larger portion of their costs from fees charged to the coal industry, and an increase of \$4 million to provide additional technical support to State and tribal regulatory programs. The budget also includes an increase of \$1.9 million for applied science to advance reclamation technologies. This request proposes \$116.1 million for Regulation and Technology funding, \$28.7 million for Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund activities, and an additional \$1.9 million in offsetting collections from recovered costs for services.

U.S. Geological Survey.—The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) budget request is \$1.1 billion, \$41.3 million above the 2014 enacted level. The President's budget reflects the administration's commitment to investing in research and development to support sound decision making and sustainable stewardship of natural resources. This includes science, monitoring, and assessment activities critical to understanding and managing the ecological, mineral, energy, and water resources which underlie the prosperity and well-being of the Nation. The budget includes increases for priorities in ecosystem restoration, climate adaptation, invasive species, environmental health, and earth observations. Funding provides increased support to enhance sustainable energy development, address water resource challenges, increase landscape level understanding of the Nation's natural resources, and the Scientists for Tomorrow youth initiative.

To support sustainable management of water resources, the USGS budget includes increases totaling \$6.4 million for WaterSMART programs. This includes increases for State water grants, regional water availability models, and the integration and dissemination of data through online science platforms. The budget includes increases of \$2.4 million to support implementation of the National Groundwater Monitoring Network and \$1.2 million for the National Streamflow Information Program for streamgages to strengthen the Federal backbone at high priority sites sensitive to drought, flooding, and potential climate change effects.

To better understand and adapt to the potential impacts of a changing climate, the USGS budget invests in research, monitoring, and tools to support improved resilience of natural systems. The National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center and Department of the Interior (DOI) Climate Science Centers (CSC) are funded at \$35.3 million, an increase of \$11.6 million from 2014. This includes an increase of \$3 million for grants focused on applied science and information needed by resource managers for decision making at regional levels. An increase of \$2.3 million will enhance the leveraging of these investments with other Federal climate science activities and make the scientific information and products developed through these programs available to the public in a centralized, Web-accessed format. Program increases of \$2.5 million will support applied science and capacity-building for tribal climate adaptation needs in the CSC regions, and \$3 million will support additional research in drought impacts and adaptive management.

The USGS budget invests in providing critical data and tools to promote understanding and managing resources on a landscape scale. Program increases in the National Geospatial Program include \$5 million for the 3-Dimensional Elevation Program to collect Lidar data to enhance science and emergency response activities, resource and vulnerability assessments, ecosystem based management, and tools to inform policy and management. An increase of \$1.9 million is requested for modernization of The National Map, which provides critical data about the Earth, its complex processes, and natural resources. The 2015 budget includes a \$2 million increase for the Big Earth Data initiative to improve access to and use of data from satellite, airborne, terrestrial, and ocean-based Earth observing systems. These investments will provide benefits in natural resource management and hazard mitigation, by improving access to critical information.

To support the sustainable development of energy resources, the USGS budget includes \$40.7 million for conventional and renewable energy programs, \$8.1 million above the 2014 enacted level. A program increase of \$1.3 million will be used to study geothermal resources and build on ongoing work on wind energy impacts. The request includes \$18.6 million, \$8.3 million over 2014, to support research and development to better understand potential impacts of energy development involving hydraulic fracturing. Conducted through an interagency collaboration with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency, this work addresses issues such as water quality and quantity, ecosystem, community, and human health impacts, and induced seismicity. Funding for other conventional energy programs, including oil, gas, and coal assessments, totals \$15.6 million.

Supporting the sustainable management and restoration of ecosystems, the 2015 budget includes \$162 million for ecosystems science activities, \$9.2 million above the 2014 enacted level. Program increases include \$2 million for research on new methods to eradicate, control, and manage Asian carp in the Upper Mississippi River Basin and prevent entry into the Great Lakes. Increases of \$2.5 million are provided for ecosystem restoration work in the Chesapeake Bay, California Bay-Delta, Columbia River, Everglades, and Puget Sound. Another \$2 million will support the science and integration of ecosystems services frameworks into decision making and efforts to assess and sustain the Nation's environmental capital. Program increases totaling \$1.8 million will address native pollinators, brown treesnakes, and new and emerging invasive species of national concern.

Supporting understanding, preparedness, and mitigation of the impacts of natural hazards, the budget provides \$128.3 million for Natural Hazards activities, which is essentially level with 2014. This activity provides scientific information and tools to reduce potential fatalities, injuries, and economic loss from volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis and landslides, among others. The 2015 budget includes an increase of \$700,000 in Earthquake Hazards for induced seismicity studies related to hydraulic fracturing.

Fish and Wildlife Service.—The 2015 Fish and Wildlife Service budget includes \$1.5 billion in current appropriations, an increase of \$48.8 million above the 2014 level. This includes America's Great Outdoors related increases of \$71.7 million in the Resource Management account. Among the increases proposed are: \$6.6 million to address increased workload in planning and consultation for energy transmission and other projects, \$7.7 million for cooperative efforts to recover imperiled species, \$4 million to support conservation of the greater sage grouse across 11 western States, \$2 million to investigate crimes and enforce laws that govern the Nation's wildlife trade, and \$2.5 million to establish an Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership program. This effort will encourage city dwellers to enjoy the outdoors by creating stepping stones of engagement to connect them to the outdoors on refuges and partner lands, through experiences which build on one another.

Funding for FWS grant programs, with the exception of State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, remain level with 2014. In 2015, funding for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants totals \$50 million. The request also includes \$55 million for Land Acquisition and \$15.7 million for Construction. In addition to direct appropriations, an estimated \$1.3 billion will be available under permanent appropriations, most of which will be provided directly to States for fish and wildlife restoration and conservation.

The budget proposes \$16.7 million, an increase of \$2.5 million, for activities associated with energy development. Of this increase, \$1.4 million supports scientific research into the impacts of energy transmission and development infrastructure on wildlife and habitat. The research will identify potential impacts associated with the development of energy infrastructure and strategies to minimize the impacts on habitat and species. An increase of \$1.1 million for the Ecological Services Planning and Consultation program supports assessments of renewable energy projects proposed for development.

The budget request for the Resource Management account continues support for key programs with program increases of \$65.8 million above 2014. The request provides \$252.2 million in Ecological Services to conserve, protect, and enhance listed and at-risk species and their habitat, an increase of \$30.3 million. Within this request are increases of \$4 million to support conservation of the greater sage grouse across 11 western States and \$10.5 million to implement other species recovery actions.

The request includes funding within Law Enforcement and International Affairs to combat wildlife trafficking. The budget provides \$66.7 million for the law enforcement program to investigate wildlife crimes, enforce the laws governing the Nation's wildlife trade, and expand technical forensic expertise, with program increases of \$2 million over 2014.

The budget includes \$138.9 million for Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Conservation, a program increase of \$8.2 million. Within this request is \$48.6 million for operation of the National Fish Hatchery system to address top priorities, an increase of \$1.9 million for fish hatchery maintenance, and \$4.4 million to prevent the spread of Asian carp in the Missouri, Ohio, upper Mississippi Rivers, and other high priority watersheds.

Funding for Cooperative Landscape Conservation activity is \$17.7 million, an increase of \$3.2 million, and funding for Science Support is \$31.6 million, an increase of \$14.4 million. The budget supports applied science directed at high impact questions to mitigate threats to fish and wildlife resources, including \$2.5 million to address white nose syndrome in bats, and an increase of \$1 million to study biological carbon sequestration.

The 2015 budget proposes to eliminate the current funding contribution to the National Wildlife Refuge fund, a reduction of \$13.2 million below 2014. An estimated \$8 million in permanent receipts collected and allocated under the program would remain available to counties. The budget also proposes cancellation of \$1.4 million in prior year balances from the Landowner Incentive and Private Stewardship Grant programs, which have not received new budget authority in several years.

National Park Service.—The 2015 budget request for NPS of \$2.6 billion is \$55.1 million above the 2014 enacted level.

In 2015, a total of \$2.5 billion is requested for NPS as part of America's Great Outdoors. This includes \$2.3 billion for park operations, an increase of \$47.1 million over 2014. Within this increase is \$30 million to support the NPS Centennial Initia-

tive. The Centennial increase includes \$16 million for repair and rehabilitation projects to improve high priority projects throughout the parks, \$8 million in competitively managed funds to support enhanced visitor services in the areas of interpretation and education, law enforcement and protection, and facility operations, \$4 million for 21 CSC youth work opportunities to engage youth in service and conservation projects, and \$2 million to support expanded volunteer opportunities at the parks. Across these Centennial increases, the budget provides an \$8 million increase for youth engagement and employment opportunities, and continues the NPS' efforts to attract qualified veteran candidates to fill Federal positions. The request for Park Operations also includes increases of \$15.7 million for increased fixed costs and \$2 million to support new park units.

Also in preparation for the Centennial anniversary of the parks, the 2015 request includes \$10 million in a separate account for Centennial Challenge projects. This funding will provide a Federal match to leverage partner donations for signature projects and programs at the parks. This program will be instrumental in garnering partner support to prepare park sites across the country for the centennial and through the second century of the NPS.

The 2015 request for the Historic Preservation Fund is \$56.4 million, level with 2014. Of this total, \$46.9 million is requested for grants-in-aid to States and Territories, \$9 million for grants-in-aid to Tribes, and \$500,000 to be awarded competitively to address communities currently underrepresented on the National Register of Historic Places.

The budget includes \$52 million within the National Recreation and Preservation account, which includes \$10 million for the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program, essentially level with 2014, and \$1.2 million for American Battlefield Protection Program assistance grants, also level with 2014. The request includes a program reduction of \$9.1 million from Heritage Partnership programs to encourage self-sufficiency for these non-Federal organizations.

Programs funded out of the Land and Water Conservation Fund are a key component of America's Great Outdoors. The budget requests \$104 million for the Land Acquisition and State Assistance account, an increase of \$5.9 million. This includes \$48.1 million for the State Conservation Grants program, level with 2014, and \$55.9 million for NPS Federal land acquisition, a programmatic increase of \$5.8 million. Of this amount, \$13.2 million supports Collaborative Landscape projects in the California Southwest Desert and areas within the National Trails System.

Funding for Construction totals \$138.3 million, essentially level with 2014. Of this amount, the budget includes \$61.7 million for line-item construction projects, a \$1.1 million program increase compared to 2014. The request includes \$6.7 million to reconstruct the historic cave tour trails in Mammoth Cave National Park and \$3.9 million to stabilize and repair exterior walls of the historic Alcatraz prison cell house at Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Indian Affairs.—The 2015 budget includes \$2.6 billion for Indian Affairs programs, an increase of \$33.6 million from the 2014 enacted level. This includes an increase of \$33.8 million for Operation of Indian Programs; and level funding of \$35.7 million for Indian Land and Water Claim Settlements, \$109.9 million for Construction, and \$6.7 million for the Indian Guaranteed Loan program.

Within the Operation of Indian Programs, the budget includes full funding of \$251 million for Contract Support Costs and the Indian Self-Determination Fund, an increase of \$4 million from 2014. Consistent with the 2014 Operating Plan, the 2015 request provides full funding based on the most current estimated need. The availability of contract support cost funding is a key factor in tribal decisions to assume responsibility for operating Federal programs important to the furtherance of self-governance and self-determination. To further facilitate Tribal 638 Contracting, the budget includes an additional \$1.2 million to increase services from the Department's Office of Indirect Cost Negotiations which negotiates indirect cost rates with non-Federal entities, including tribal governments. Consistent with subcommittee direction and in collaboration with the Indian Health Service (IHS), the Department held its first formal consultation on March 11, 2014 with tribes to discuss long-term solutions to Contract Support Cost issues. The Department remains committed to working with IHS, tribes, and Congress to develop a long-term strategy for addressing this important issue.

The 2015 budget for Indian Affairs includes an increase of \$11.6 million for the Tiwahe or "family" Initiative. The initiative takes a comprehensive and integrated approach to address the interrelated problems of poverty, violence, and substance abuse in Indian communities. The initiative builds on and expands social service, Indian child and family welfare, and job training programs. In recognition that adequate housing is essential to building stronger families, the budget maintains the 2014 level for the Housing Improvement Program. The goal of the Tiwahe Initiative

is to empower American Indian individuals and families in health promotion and family stability, and to strengthen tribal communities as a whole. To better target funding and evaluate outcomes in meeting social service needs in Indian Country, the budget includes \$1 million as part of the initiative.

The budget provides strong support for the sustainable stewardship of land and resources in Indian Country, sustaining funding for trust land management and real estate services at 2014 levels and proposing program increases of \$3.6 million for the stewardship of natural resources. Funding supports the development of natural resource science, information, and tools for application in the development and management of energy and minerals, water, forestry, oceans, climate resilience, and endangered and invasive species. Demonstrating the administration's commitment to resolving tribal water rights and ensuring that tribes have access to meet their water needs, \$171.9 million is provided across the Department for implementation of, and technical and legal support for, Indian water rights settlements, an increase of \$13.8 million over 2014. A program increase of \$1 million is also provided in Indian Affairs for deferred maintenance on Indian irrigation projects to help address drought issues in Indian Country.

The budget supports improving educational outcomes in Indian Country, providing \$794.4 million for the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), an increase of \$5.6 million from 2014. The request includes an increase of \$500,000 for Johnson O'Malley Education Assistance Grants to support a new student count in 2015 and funding to address the projected increase in the number of eligible students. The budget includes \$1 million to support ongoing evaluation of the BIE school system to improve educational outcomes. Within education construction, an increase of \$2.3 million supports site development at the Beatrice Rafferty School for which design funding was provided in 2014. The budget also includes \$2.3 million in increases for BIE funded post-secondary programs including \$1.7 million for post-graduate opportunities in science fields, and \$250,000 for summer pre-law preparatory scholarships.

Departmental Offices and Department-Wide Programs.—The 2015 request for the Office of the Secretary is \$265.3 million, an increase of \$1.3 million from the 2014 enacted level. Of this, \$122.9 million is for the Office of Natural Resources Revenue programs, an increase of \$3.5 million, reflecting increases to strengthen production verification and meter inspections activities, including implementing an onshore production verification pilot and funding related data integration. Other changes include the proposed transfer of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board from the Office of the Secretary to the Bureau of Indian Affairs of \$1.3 million, a decrease of \$865,000 reflecting a shift from direct appropriations to fee for service for Indirect Cost Negotiations, and a program decrease of \$266,000 in Valuation Services.

The budget request for the Office of Insular Affairs is \$92.2 million, a decrease of \$10.2 million from the 2014 enacted level. The budget includes an increase of \$3 million to address urgent, immediate needs in the insular areas, and \$1.8 million to improve safety conditions in insular school facilities. A decrease of \$500,000 reflects completion of an aerial bait system for brown treesnake control. Compact Impact is funded at \$1.3 million, a decrease of \$1.7 million from 2014, and is supplemented by \$30 million annually in permanent Compact Impact funding. Funding of \$13.1 million for the Palau Compact Extension is not requested for 2015 as it is expected the Compact will be authorized and funded from permanent appropriations in 2014.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) request is \$50 million, a decrease of \$784,000 from 2014. The budget includes a decrease of \$2 million reflecting completion of an effort to reduce OIG's physical footprint. Increases of \$423,000 and \$355,000 are included to support the council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency and provide additional full-time equivalents (FTEs) for information security audits, respectively. The Office of the Solicitor request is \$65.8 million, equal to the 2014 enacted level.

The Office of the Special Trustee request is \$139 million, \$648,000 below the 2014 enacted level. The 2015 budget decreases Business Management funding by \$1.6 million reflecting \$922,000 in efficiencies from the transfer of some mailing and printing services to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, a reduction of \$500,000 in litigation support, and a decrease of \$200,000 in funding for the Office of Hearings and Appeals.

The 2015 request for the Department-Wide Wildland Fire Management program is \$794 million without the proposed fire cap adjustment, and \$1 billion including the adjustment. The request includes \$268.6 million for Suppression within the current budget cap, which is 70 percent of the 10-year suppression average spending. This base level funding ensures the cap adjustment of \$240.4 million would only be used for the most severe fires, since it is 1 percent of the fires that cause 30 percent

of the costs. The new budget framework for Wildland Fire Management eliminates the need for additional funds through the FLAME Act. The 2015 budget includes a program increase of \$34.1 million for Preparedness activities to enhance readiness capabilities. The budget includes \$146.3 million for Fuels Management activities, formerly known as Hazardous Fuels Management. This is equal to the 2014 enacted level with an increase of \$1.3 million for fixed costs. Complementing this request is \$30 million for Resilient Landscapes, a new component of the Wildland Fire Management program, to support treatments that improve the integrity and resilience of forests and rangelands. Resilient landscape projects will be leveraged with bureau efforts to reduce fire risk and improve overall resiliency. The budget request also includes a \$2 million increase for the Burned Area Rehabilitation program to address greater post-fire rehabilitation needs caused by the 2012 and 2013 fire seasons.

The 2015 request for the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Fund is \$7.8 million, a program increase of \$1.5 million. The increase includes \$1 million for a Department-wide onshore Oil Spill Preparedness Program, and additional resources for Restoration support. The budget includes \$10 million for the Central Hazardous Materials Fund, an increase of \$412,000 from 2014 to support additional cleanup work.

The Department's 2015 request for the Working Capital Fund appropriation is \$64.3 million, an increase of \$7.3 million from the 2014 enacted level. Within this request is \$53.9 million for the operation and maintenance of the Financial and Business Management System, an increase of \$1 million to continue support of the Department's Cultural and Scientific Collections Management initiative, a decrease of \$1 million from the Department's Service First initiative, and an increase of \$8.4 million to support Interior's Office Consolidation strategy in the DC metropolitan area.

MANDATORY PROPOSALS

The 2015 budget includes 15 legislative proposals affecting spending, revenue and available budget authority, which require action by the congressional authorizing committees. Revenue and savings proposals will generate more than \$2.6 billion over the next decade. The 2015 budget includes four spending proposals with an estimated \$9.9 billion in outlays over the next decade.

Land and Water Conservation Fund.—The 2015 budget proposes \$900 million in current and permanent funding in 2015, and proposes permanent authorization of \$900 million in mandatory funding for LWCF programs in the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture beginning in 2016. During a transition to permanent funding in 2015, the budget proposes \$900 million in total LWCF programs funding, comprised of \$550 million permanent and \$350 million current funding, shared by Interior and Agriculture.

Centennial Initiative.—The Centennial Initiative includes a legislative proposal to authorize \$1.2 billion in permanent funding over 3 years beginning in 2015 in the following areas: \$300 million (\$100 million a year for 3 years) for a National Park Service Centennial Challenge fund to leverage private donations; \$600 million (\$200 million a year for 3 years) for NPS deferred maintenance; and \$300 million (\$100 million a year for 3 years) for a multiagency Centennial Land Management Investment Fund to competitively award grants to Interior land management agencies and the U.S. Forest Service for deferred maintenance and conservation projects.

Payments in Lieu of Taxes.—The Agricultural Act of 2014 included a 1-year extension of permanent Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funding through 2014. The 2015 budget proposes to extend authorization of the program an additional year through 2015, while a sustainable long-term funding solution is developed for the PILT Program. The PILT payments help local governments carry out vital services, such as firefighting and police protection, construction of public schools and roads, and search and rescue operations. The cost of a 1-year extension is estimated to be \$442 million in 2015. The 2015 budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service includes a proposal to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools Program for a 5-year period, covering lands managed by the BLM.

Palau Compact.—On September 3, 2010, the United States and the Republic of Palau successfully concluded the review of the Compact of Free Association and signed a 15-year agreement that includes a package of assistance through 2024. The 2015 budget assumes authorization of permanent funding for the Compact occurs in 2014. The cost for this proposal is estimated at \$178.3 million for 2015 through 2024.

Federal Oil and Gas Reforms.—The budget includes a package of legislative reforms to bolster and backstop administrative actions being taken to reform the man-

agement of Interior's onshore and offshore oil and gas programs, with a key focus on improving the return to taxpayers from the sale of these Federal resources. Proposed statutory and administrative changes fall into three general categories: advancing royalty reforms, encouraging diligent development of oil and gas leases, and improving revenue collection processes. Collectively, these reforms will generate roughly \$2.5 billion in net revenue to the Treasury over 10 years, of which about \$1.7 billion would result from statutory changes. Many States will also benefit from higher Federal revenue sharing payments.

Return Coal Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Fees to Historic Levels.—The budget proposes legislation to modify the 2006 amendments to the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, which lowered the per-ton coal fee companies pay into the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Fund. The proposal would return the fee to 35 cents a ton, the same level companies paid prior to the 2006 fee reduction. The additional revenue, estimated at \$362 million over 10 years, will be used to reclaim high priority abandoned coal mines and reduce a portion of the estimated \$3.9 billion needed to address remaining dangerous coal AML sites nationwide.

Discontinue AML Payments to Certified States.—The budget proposes to discontinue unrestricted payments to States and Tribes certified for completing their coal reclamation work. This proposal terminates all such payments, with estimated savings of approximately \$295 million over the next 10 years.

Reclamation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines.—To address the legacy of abandoned hardrock mines across the United States and hold the hardrock mining industry accountable for past mining practices, the Department will propose legislation to create a parallel Abandoned Mine Lands Program for abandoned hardrock sites. A new AML fee on hardrock production on both public and private lands would generate an estimated \$1.8 billion to reclaim the highest priority hardrock abandoned sites on Federal, State, tribal, and private lands.

Reform Hardrock Mining on Federal Lands.—Interior will submit a legislative proposal to provide a fair return to the taxpayer from hardrock production on Federal lands. The legislative proposal will institute a leasing program under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 for certain hardrock minerals including gold, silver, lead, zinc, copper, uranium, and molybdenum, currently covered by the General Mining Law of 1872. The proposal is projected to generate net revenues to the U.S. Treasury of \$80 million over 10 years, with larger revenues estimated in following years.

Geothermal Energy Receipts.—The Department proposes to repeal section 224(b) of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The repeal of section 224(b) will permanently discontinue payments to counties and restore the disposition of Federal geothermal leasing revenues to the historical formula of 50 percent to the States and 50 percent to the Treasury. This results in estimated savings of \$4 million in 2015 and \$42 million over 10 years.

Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act.—The Department proposes to reauthorize this act to allow Federal lands identified as suitable for disposal in recent land use plans to be sold using this authority. The sales revenues would continue to fund the acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands and administrative costs associated with conducting the sales.

Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps.—Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, or Duck Stamps, are the annual Federal license required for hunting migratory waterfowl. The receipts generated from the sale of these \$15 stamps are used to acquire important migratory bird areas for migration, breeding, and wintering. The Department proposes legislation to increase these fees which have not increased since 1991, to \$25 per stamp per year beginning in 2015. This increase will add an estimated \$14 million for migratory bird conservation annually.

Bureau of Land Management Foundation.—The budget proposes legislation to establish a congressionally-chartered National BLM Foundation. This Foundation will provide an opportunity to leverage private funding to support public lands, achieve shared outcomes, and focus public support on the BLM mission.

Recreation Fee Program.—The Department of the Interior proposes to permanently authorize the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, which will expire in December 2015. The Department currently collects over \$200 million in recreation fees annually under this authority and uses them to enhance the visitor experience at Interior facilities.

FIRE SUPPRESSION AND THE DISCRETIONARY BUDGET CAP

The 2015 budget proposes to amend the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended, to establish a new framework for funding Fire Suppression Operations to provide stable funding for fire suppression while mini-

mizing the adverse impacts of fire transfers on the budgets of other programs, as well as reduce fire risk, manage landscapes more comprehensively, and increase the resiliency of public lands and the communities that border them. Under this new framework, the 2015 budget request covers 70 percent of the 10-year suppression average within the domestic discretionary caps and a portion is funded in a budget cap adjustment. Extreme fires requiring emergency response, fires threatening urban areas, or requirements of an abnormally high fire season, would be permitted to be funded through the adjustment to discretionary spending limits. The cap adjustment does not increase overall current spending, as it reduces the ceiling for the existing disaster relief cap adjustment.

OFFSETTING COLLECTIONS AND FEES

The budget includes the following proposals to collect or increase various fees, so industry shares some of the cost of Federal permitting and regulatory oversight.

New Fee for Onshore Oil and Gas Inspections.—Through appropriations language, the Department proposes to implement an inspection fee in 2015 for onshore oil and gas activities subject to inspection by BLM. The proposed fee is expected to generate \$48 million in 2015, \$10 million more than the corresponding \$38 million reduction in requested appropriations, thereby expanding the capacity of BLM's oil and gas inspection program. The fee is similar to one already in place for offshore operations and will support Federal efforts to increase production accountability, human safety, and environmental protection.

Grazing Administrative Fee.—The 2015 budget proposes a new grazing administrative fee of \$1 per animal unit month. The BLM proposes to implement this fee through appropriations language on a 3-year pilot basis. The provision will generate an estimated \$6.5 million in 2015 to assist BLM in processing grazing permits.

National Wildlife Refuge Damage Cost Recovery.—The budget proposes appropriations language to authorize the Fish and Wildlife Service to pursue and retain recoveries from responsible parties, to be used to restore or replace damaged National Wildlife Refuge resources.

Cost Recovery for Nontoxic Shot Approvals.—The budget proposes appropriations language to allow the Fish and Wildlife Service to retain and use fees collected for the review of nontoxic shot products. Nontoxic shot is a substitute for lead shot, banned for waterfowl hunting since 1991.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the President's 2015 budget request for the Department of the Interior. This budget is responsible, and proposes to maintain core capabilities with targeted investments to advance the stewardship of lands and resources, renewable energy, oil and gas development and reforms, water conservation, youth employment and engagement, and improvements in the quality of life in Indian communities. I thank you again for your continued support of the Department's mission. I look forward to answering questions about this budget. This concludes my written statement.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Madam Secretary.

We will do 6-minute rounds. We have votes at 11 o'clock. I assume we can get through one round, and if necessary, we will have a second round. I think we do have that time.

WILDLAND FIRE CAP ADJUSTMENT

Madam Secretary, can you walk us through the fire disaster proposal, how it will work? The reality is, that is a huge issue we confront every year in this bill. We have to pay for the emergency fires. Can you walk us through that? How much will you provide for fire suppression? How did you arrive at the funding level? And are you confident that it will be enough?

Secretary JEWELL. I will give a high-level overview, and I am going to turn to my colleague, Rhea Suh, who really worked very, very closely with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to craft this proposal in the President's budget alongside the companion legislation.

In a nutshell, 1 percent of the most catastrophic fires consume 30 percent of our fire suppression budget. The proposal for fire suppression in the budget is 70 percent, which are the year-in, year-out regular fires. That is in the budget. The worst 1 percent of fires beyond that 70 percent number is what we are proposing to take off-budget into the emergency disaster relief. The 70 percent number is based on a 10-year suppression average of fires.

What that enables us to do is consistently put money into hazardous fuels reduction and post-fire remediation so we don't end up in this negative spiral of robbing our accounts for hazardous fuel removal and post-fire remediation causing invasive species to come in, that causes worse fires in the future, so we have a downward spiral.

I am going to turn it to Rhea to provide any additional details.

Ms. SUH. Thank you very much, Madam Secretary. I will just add a few more comments here.

As you know, in the President's request, 70 percent of the 10-year average for fire is included in the discretionary part of the budget. The remaining 30 percent is included in the cap adjustment, which we are requesting.

The cap adjustment was based on the same type of analytical forecast that the Federal Land Assistance Management and Enhancement Act (FLAME) scientists prepare for this committee on an annual basis. That includes data about weather, climate, drought, and historical expenditures.

All combined, that is the amount of money we have put into the cap.

Again, just to echo the Secretary's comments, this is really only to treat those fires that are truly disasters as disasters, and to allow both Interior and the Forest Service to be able to access those emergency funds.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Madam Secretary, in order to implement this program, you have to get changes in the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act from the Budget Committee, I have been told, and also the FLAME Act from the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. And I just want your acknowledgment that you are aware of that and you are working on it; is that correct?

Secretary JEWELL. That is correct, Mr. Chairman. We very much modeled the President's request off of the bipartisan legislation that has been introduced in both houses. In the Senate, it is sponsored by Senator Wyden and Senator Crapo. That particular legislation specifically does amend the Budget Control Act.

We are having conversations with staff around amendments to FLAME that would potentially be able to more clearly articulate the triggers involved in accessing those emergency funds.

On both of those streams of work, we are very much aware and actively engaged with members in this house.

Senator REED. Thank you.

NATIONAL PARK CENTENNIAL

As we have all noted, this is the hundredth year centennial just almost upon us, 2016, for the national parks. But we also have the

National Heritage areas, and I note with some chagrin that the budget in this area has been decreased.

In order to make this a truly national celebration, I think every State should have a sort of vested interest in this.

HERITAGE AREAS

Can you comment on the role of these heritage areas as they connect to the parks and allow people to be outdoors? I think we shared the Blackstone Valley National Heritage together in kayaking, although I apologize the equipment did not come from REI, but forgive me.

Secretary JEWELL. Well, Senator, I did enjoy the kayaking, and the Blackstone River corridor as such a historic place is a great illustration of the potential of National Heritage areas. It is one that I have been working on personally for over 20 years.

The great thing about heritage areas is they engage the community in identifying areas of cultural, historic, and natural significance. In many cases, the local communities are who provide support for those initiatives.

Yes, the budget was cut. Part of that is in recognition of the need for us to work closely with the communities on getting local support for National Heritage areas. The budget is tighter than we would like it to be as it relates to national parks overall, and we had to make some tough choices.

We continue to work with you on heritage areas, and a path forward that engages private philanthropy and local community involvement to support these places, to earn the arrowhead logo but also the heritage status we believe is important to them.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

KING COVE ROAD

Secretary Jewell, just a question, one question on the King Cove road issue, when you issued your release in December, you stated that the Department's commitment to assist in identifying and evaluating options would improve access to affordable transportation and health care for the citizens of this remote Alaska community.

As I mentioned in my opening comments, I have not seen anything specific from you or from the Department in terms of what progress has been made in either identifying or evaluating options that would improve access.

Can you outline for me the specific areas that you would propose in terms of alternatives, alternatives that would be as reliable and safe as a road, and affordable? And if you can identify any specific funding proposals that are included in the President's budget that would allow for improvement of the situation in King Cove?

Secretary JEWELL. Thank you, Senator.

As we discussed yesterday, I very much appreciated the opportunity to meet with you, and to also meet with the residents of King Cove.

We need suggestions from the people who live in the area on what alternatives would be potentially viable to them, if a road

does not go through. It is very clear from my conversation in King Cove, as you and I made our visit there, and to Cold Bay, that the community feels very strongly that they want a road, as do you.

I continue to be open to all conversations about alternatives.

My team has had conversations with the Coast Guard about the 10 months of the year where they typically have a helicopter stationed in Cold Bay. I know they are very brave men and women that do this work, whether it is rescuing people on the high seas or facilitating humanitarian missions that you described earlier on land.

I also know there are many villages in Alaska that are a long way away from medical care, and this clearly is an example of that, being 600 miles from Anchorage.

We have had conversations with the Coast Guard. We will continue to do that. We have a conversation scheduled with the Corps of Engineers later on this week to better understand the alternatives they believe may be possible in that area, and I remain open to suggestions from the community, as we discussed yesterday afternoon, on areas they would like us to pursue that they believe would be viable for us to consider beyond the road, which clearly is your preferred alternative and that of the residents.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Well, as I mentioned yesterday, your search for viable alternatives is one that has been reviewed for decades now. And we are at this point where you have such unanimity in the community about the preferred alternative being the road because all other solutions have been tried and failed, or have been analyzed and determined too costly or not feasible given the situation.

And I appreciate that you are new to the issue of King Cove, but I hope you would also appreciate that to them, this has been almost a lifetime of struggling to get this short connector road, a reliable, safe and secure, and affordable alternative in order to gain access.

I would ask that you do more digging into the Coast Guard as a solution. I have talked not only to the admiral in the 17th District, Admiral Ostebo, but also to Admiral Zukunft, who will be taking over as commandant. And I think it is very, very clear that the Coast Guard not only does not view this as a mission, it is not a mission that they wish to take on.

In order to accommodate the people of King Cove on a somewhat reliable basis, they would require two additional helicopters at \$26.1 million apiece. You would have to have an additional 20 personnel in order to allow for a level of safety for the pilots and the maintenance crew. Just the per diem alone to house them in Cold Bay would be a half million dollars on annual basis. That is just for the per diem.

So, Madam Secretary, I encourage you to do your due diligence. But I will note that there has been nothing included in the President's budget for even the slightest alternative.

ARCTIC STRATEGY

Let me turn very quickly here, this is a question that I am asking all Cabinet members. The national strategy for the Arctic region came out. We have the implementation plan for the national

strategy, and within the implementation plan, the Department of the Interior has been designated as the lead agency in five different areas.

Can you tell me what funding is included in the President's budget for the five areas that the Department of the Interior is tapped to be the lead agency for? You are also the supporting agency for numerous other projects. So I am trying to divine how much attention the administration is actually placing on the Arctic implementation plan.

Secretary JEWELL. Senator, and I know we are out of time, so I will make the answer very brief. I do not have a crosscut on all of the Arctic programs. I will be happy to get that to you very quickly. It wasn't one of the numbers that I prepared in advance for this gathering.

But I will say the Arctic is very important to the United States of America, clearly very important to Alaska. We are very pleased to be involved with you and others in our Arctic strategy.

From a scientific research standpoint, from a defense standpoint, from an oil and gas development standpoint, and the geopolitical standpoint, we think it is very important that we be at the table. I know that the Arctic Council will be meeting in Canada this year, that the United States will be hosting the following year, and we intend to fully engage in Arctic strategy issues, and we will get back to you with specifics.

[The information follows:]

ARCTIC PROGRAMS

The Department of the Interior is committed to full participation in the implementation of the National Strategy for the Arctic. This commitment involves the breadth of Interior's bureaus and offices with equities in the Arctic region with support from a myriad of programs and activities. The Department does not have a dedicated budget for Arctic activities but instead is supporting implementation of the Strategy by leveraging a diverse set of programs with multiple authorities and funding sources. Thus, there is not crosscut that identifies discrete funding for the Arctic Strategy, instead the Department is tracking actions and outcomes that are supported by Interior in total.

Senator MURKOWSKI. If you can get me those, I would appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Senator Merkley.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you all for your presence and helping us understand this budget.

OREGON AND CALIFORNIA GRANT LANDS

One of the things that I wanted to address was the budget for the O&C lands that are in Oregon. We have millions of acres of second growth forest that needs to be thinned, needs to have hazardous fuel reduction work, restoration work, needs to be prepared for the work done for the various sales that would come out of it.

But the budget has been cut by \$10.5 million. So if we are going to go forward on resource management plans, which require significant additional resources, and if the budget is cut, and if the current projects in the forest are greatly underfunded as it is, doesn't

this mean just further lack of management and more problems for the O&C lands?

Secretary JEWELL. Thank you, Senator.

There are a number of things that are mixed in with the Oregon and California Railroad Revested Lands (O&C) budget. One of the things is that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) completed a resource management plan in prior years, so that will not be repeated, and part of the budget cut has to do with that.

I know we are working with your team in Oregon on a sustained yield level, and we have a plan in place to cut about 200 million board feet a year. Is that the right number? I think it is, 200 million board feet a year.

In this year it is going to be a little bit higher, because of some salvage logging that is going to be supported.

We know it is a very important program to Oregon. We know it is an important source of funding for schools in Oregon, as is the Secure Rural Schools. We will continue to support what we believe in the BLM to be a sustainable forest yield level of 200 million board feet.

With the resource management plan completion, we don't think we will need as much money as we had last year to do an equivalent job, and that is the basis of the budget.

Senator MERKLEY. OK, I will just leave that as a concern I have for that particular area and the challenges that are faced in managing it appropriately, because it is suffering from many decades of underinvestment as it is currently.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

I want to turn to the Land and Water Conservation Fund and specifically, there have been projects from all over the country that involve particularly sensitive pieces of land for acquisition. And now largely the funds go to what are referred to as collaborative landscape projects. There seems to be a lot of mystery as to how these are created and designated, kind of a black box.

Oregon doesn't have one. We keep inquiring how it could come to have one.

But what it means, essentially, is only a couple States really benefit from the mass majority of these funds. And yet, these funds were meant to enable sensitive projects to be acquired all over the Nation.

So could you just give us a little background on this collaborative landscape strategy, and why it makes sense to ignore most of the U.S. for just a couple projects?

Secretary JEWELL. Senator, for specifics, I will turn to Rhea, in terms of how the money is spent. Let me give you a high-level overview, because there are two places these landscape cooperative areas that you reference, that I have personally been to, one very recently is in Montana, the Crown of the Continent region around Glacier National Park.

This is one of the largest intact landscapes in the United States. Much of the land is managed by ranchers and they would like to keep those lands in working ranches. But they are highly developable otherwise, which would very much impact the ability of many migratory species, such as elk, grizzly bears, and others.

We work cooperatively with Canada, which has set a lot of land aside and taken some out of mining development, for example, and our private landowners in that region to really work collaboratively on putting those landscapes in conservation while maintaining them in ranching.

Similarly, in the headwaters in Everglades, it is another major area where we have done that. We have prioritized part of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) money, but by no means all of the LWCF money in those projects, because we know they are critical. If we don't focus, it is sort of a peanut butter spread, but we are not able to take care of some very, very threatened ecosystems throughout the country.

Longleaf pine in the Southeast is another area, but by no means does this limit our willingness or ability to invest in individual projects, which does continue.

Rhea, do you have any quick things, because I know time is short?

Ms. SUH. Sure. Thank you, Senator, for that question.

The collaborative projects, and the process we created several years ago now, are really designed to enable the Federal land management agencies to look across their jurisdictional boundaries and to identify national priorities that deserve the opportunity to work across those jurisdictions.

Every year we have a competitive process that is vetted at a very technical level by each of the real estate functions of the land management agencies, elevated to the bureau director level of the four land management agencies, and collectively adjudicated in a process that outlines priorities.

The priorities that show up in the budget are not necessarily all of the priorities we had, and the priority lists are much longer than the budgets we can actually afford.

I would like to say I think part of what the administration is asking for in the Land and Water Conservation Fund full funding proposal is an ability to get more landscapes, both collaborative and core, onto the list in any given year.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much. I will be following up about that process. I do feel like there are a lot of very sensitive landscapes that have fallen off the list in recent years.

WILDLAND FIRE CAP ADJUSTMENT

I am out of time, but just compliments on the fire suppression strategy of putting the big fires, essentially, into the emergency side. The Forest Service has been decimated by this continuous raiding of often fire prevention funds in order to fight fires, and thank you very much.

Senator REED. Senator Alexander.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thanks, Mr. Chairman, Senator Murkowski, for the hearing.

Welcome, Madam Secretary, to you and your team.

I listened carefully to Senator Murkowski's passionate comments. I have known her a long time. I don't think I have ever heard her quite so strong in her comments. And I saw the Senator from California come in. It reminded me of an episode we had in our subcommittee, of which she is the chairman, where the general of the

Army Corps of Engineers was trying to do the right thing, he thought, which was to close fishing below the dams on the Cumberland River. I thought that made no sense at all, because the dams aren't dangerous when the water is not coming through them, and the tracks aren't dangerous when the train is not coming. And he stuck to his guns, and we literally changed the law.

But what Senator Feinstein said to him at that time was: Senator Alexander is a reasonable member; I would suggest you work something out.

My thought is this, I have said in Tennessee, and I have said here, that I think you are one of the President's most able appointees. I think you will do a tremendous job as Interior Secretary. I know that Senator Murkowski is one of the most able and respected members of the United States Senate. And, except for this issue, the two of you would likely be close allies on a great many issues, so I hope you can work something out.

JOINT CURATORIAL FACILITY AT GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

I want to ask you in my time three or four pretty quick questions. One, I want to thank you for your visit to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and to you and your team for improving the joint curatorial collections that is half Federal dollars and half private funding. And I heard many good things about your visit. I thank you for that.

LAKE CUMBERLAND

Also, I know that Senator McConnell, Senator Paul, Chairman Rogers, and Senator Corker, and I, appreciate the work that Dan Ashe of Fish and Wildlife and you did in putting a priority on getting Lake Cumberland back up to its proper level of water in time for the houseboat season. That may not seem like an important issue to many people, but it is to Chairman Rogers and the people in that part of Kentucky, because the water has been down for a long time. And you got done in what looks like 35 or 45 days what could have taken 135, I think, something like that. And that is appreciated.

FISH HATCHERIES

Now a couple of other issues, we are working together, the States of Tennessee and Georgia, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and Fish and Wildlife, again, Mr. Ashe, to try to come up with a plan for saving the fish hatcheries in Tennessee, the two of them. And TVA stepped in to do what it could, and that kept the fish hatcheries open. And that same group is now meeting to find a way for a permanent solution.

This is important to the fishermen of Tennessee. It is important to the outdoors recreation of Tennessee, and to our tourism and jobs.

So my question for you is, will you agree not to close down the two fish hatcheries in Tennessee during fiscal year 2015 until you give this working group, including the two States, the TVA, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, a chance to come up with a solution

that would have Congress pay for through the appropriate agencies the fish that were for sports fishing. In other words, we would separate the mitigation fish and the sports fishing.

I would like to get a commitment not to close that down while we are trying to get a result.

Secretary JEWELL. Senator, thanks. I appreciate the importance of fish hatcheries on the sport fishery and on recreational fishing. And you know the challenges we have overall in the budget and the difficult decisions we have to make.

We will not be closing any fish hatcheries in 2014. I do appreciate the TVA and the Army Corps stepping up to support their obligations, in terms of mitigation from their activities in terms of support for some of these hatcheries, which are for the downstream cold water sport fishing, as opposed to hatcheries that are necessary to maintain the integrity of species.

Where we have people working together, cooperating on a long-term solution, is the kind of program we are very committed to supporting.

I don't want to commit on any specific hatchery. It is my team that is working on that list, and they are working very cooperatively in Tennessee with other players. I think that is going to bode well for the hatcheries where there is cooperation. We are encouraging people in other States that have high-priority hatcheries for them to work with local and State partners to find long-term funding solutions.

It feels a little like the base closure act when we talk about fish hatcheries.

Senator ALEXANDER. I am about out of time.

Secretary JEWELL. Oh, OK. Sorry. Go ahead.

Senator ALEXANDER. No, that is all right. But we understand what the Department's parameters are, and Mr. Ashe is working toward that, and we just want time to complete that. And the working group is pretty good because it has already had one success.

REIMBURSING STATES DURING SHUTDOWN

The other one, Senator Flake has a bill to reimburse the States, which in our case were the counties, for the money lost that they spent reimbursing during the Government shutdown.

My question is, will you support that legislation as it moves through Congress, to reimburse the State of Tennessee and the counties of Blount and Sevier for what they spent as a result of the Federal Government shutdown?

Secretary JEWELL. It is very clear the economic value of the national parks to local communities was evident during the shutdown. I will say I worked pretty much around the clock with very limited staff to facilitate the States' requests. We did some economic analysis, and it looks like close to a 10 to 1 return that the States got for that investment.

All unobligated funds were returned to the States. I did say at the time of these agreements that I couldn't obligate the Federal Treasury, and that it had to be congressional action, so I am supportive of the congressional action going forward. The decision will rest in your hands in terms of whether or not that happens.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

I will submit in writing, if I may, Mr. Chairman, a question about white nose syndrome in bats, which you referred to in your statement.

Thank you.

Senator REED. Thank you, Senator Alexander.

Senator Feinstein.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And, Madam Secretary, thank you very much.

CALIFORNIA DROUGHT

My statement and questions are going to be on drought and water in California.

As you know, the Governor has called a state of emergency with respect to the drought. The snowpack is at 24 percent as of March 23. Shasta, Lake Oroville, San Luis Reservoir are all below 50 percent capacity.

The California Farm Bureau estimates that a half-million acres are in the process of being fallowed, and that we will lose more than 100,000 head of cattle.

It looks like 10 or more communities are going to run out of drinking water in the next few months.

Now, a storm is approaching California right now, and this is the surge storm of the season. It is very important.

I have asked my staff to bring down a copy of a letter that you have received from water contractors, so that you might look at it, as of yesterday. And they would like you and Secretary Pritzker to be on a conference call at 4 p.m. this afternoon.

What is being asked, essentially—well, let me just give you a few data points. Salvage data from your agencies as of March 19 show no Delta smelt taken, 276 out of an allowed 24,237 winter run salmon taken, and 148 out of an allowed 3,000 steelhead taken.

WATER PUMPING

So I think this data supports the notion that more water pumping can occur without jeopardizing fish species.

And what I am essentially asking you to do is immediately consider emergency measures, which can increase pumping sufficiently to take advantage of this storm right now approaching our coast.

It is really very important. This may be the one chance we have to pick up some additional acre-feet of water. So I would like to ask that now, of both you and your distinguished Commissioner of Reclamation.

Secretary JEWELL. Who has become my distinguished Deputy Secretary.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Excuse me, distinguished Deputy Secretary.

Secretary JEWELL. I will take a very high level. I was shown the letter by Mike in the car on the way here, so I haven't had time to fully digest it.

[The letter follows:]

LETTER FROM THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER WATER AUTHORITY

SAN JOAQUIN
RIVER WATER AUTHORITY,
Los Banos, CA, March 25, 2014.

Re Request for Emergency Relief Due to Impending Storm Events.

Hon. SALLY JEWELL, *Secretary,*
Department of the Interior,
C Street NW, Washington, DC.

Hon. PENNY PRITZKER, *Secretary,*
Department of Commerce,
Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY JEWELL AND SECRETARY PRITZKER: We are writing to you under the most urgent circumstances. As you are well aware, California is plagued by one of the worst droughts in its history. Water year 2013–14 thus far has proven to be the second worst water year since recordkeeping began in 1850. While not quite as bad as 1977 standing alone, it comes on the heels of 2 prior years of extremely dry conditions. Yet, while the opportunities existed over the past 6 weeks to get more water to people and into storage south of the Delta, inaction has resulted in the loss of 225,000–450,000 acre-feet (af) of water supplies. Meanwhile, over 700,000 af flowed to the ocean. The situation for many in California is desperate.

Now is the time that action is needed. The State cannot afford to lose another round of water supplies due to less than full implementation of proactive measures that are available to the State and Federal agencies.

The Departments of Commerce and the Interior are in the unique position of having many of your stakeholders being those directly and profoundly impacted by this drought while at the same time having the ability to implement emergency measures that will provide a modicum of relief. The situation is as follows.

Regulations imposed on the State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP) (together “Projects”) through biological opinions issued by your Departments are having a real-time adverse impact on California’s water supply. With storms about to hit California, the Projects are collectively in the position of being able to capture significant amounts of water without adversely impacting listed fisheries.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has been working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and their State counterparts to examine opportunities to provide flexibility to meet crucial water supply needs in the urban and agricultural sectors. Despite efforts to date, the Silicon Valley, which Secretary Pritzker recently visited and pledged to partner with to promote greater benefits for our economy and our citizens, is only receiving 75,000 acre-feet of the over 200,000 acre-feet which it would be entitled under from State and Federal water sources. As a result, the local water district has requested its retail customers to reduce usage by 25 percent. Economic impacts of water rationing are severe. Similarly, in the agricultural sector, much of which is served by the Bureau of Reclamation, the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys are being devastated. Over 3 million acres of the Nation’s most productive farm lands are receiving a zero surface water allocation this year. Permanent crops such as trees and vines are literally being ripped out due to lack of water. Hundreds of thousands of acres of permanent and annual crops will go fallow. The loss of permanent crops takes 5–10 years to restore. Annual crops fill irreplaceable supply chains that provide about 50 percent of the Nation’s fruits and vegetables. Unemployment in the valleys will soar. Banks loans and insurance will become more expensive if the integrity of the water system is not maintained.

The Endangered Species Act provides NMFS and USFWS with the tools necessary to support the emergency response actions necessary to provide much-needed relief that California needs and avoid the imminent loss of hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of irreplaceable water.

Weather predictions indicate that another storm is heading to California today or Wednesday. We request that you allow for the maximum pumping of the flow that is going to develop from this storm based on the following conditions.

Currently, protected fisheries in the Delta have experienced historically low take at the State and Federal water pumps. The nominal take is consistent with the monitoring data that has consistently and clearly demonstrated a lack of presence of protected fish in the central and south Delta in 2014. Because of this, we believe that maximizing pumping for the limited time that uncontrolled Sacramento River flows are elevated due to the storm is unlikely to jeopardize listed species. However, to ensure adequate levels of protection, we propose that if take reaches the levels

of concern identified in the species specific incidental take statement, implementation of this emergency action be reassessed.

As we explain on the attached pages, a temporary adjustment to the Delta smelt and Chinook salmon biological opinions (BiOps) would allow pumping—subject to take of fisheries—up to the full 11,280 cubic feet per second (cfs).

Time is short. The storm is approaching and, practically speaking, we need a decision by close of business on Thursday, before Sacramento River flows arrive at the Delta. We therefore request that conference calls be set up for Wednesday and Thursday so that the situation may be addressed in real time with the most senior resource managers from both the State and Federal sectors as well as the water user and environmental communities.

Once this storm series passes, and thinking ahead to the rest of this water season, the State is installing salinity barriers in the Delta. Further, State and Federal water managers are confident that they can control salinity in the Delta with fairly minimal flow amounts this summer, generally around 2,500 cfs. Water managers are proposing a longer term action plan that is being finalized. Continued real-time management will allow for improvements of water supply and protection of the upstream and Delta ecosystems.

This letter is also being delivered to a number of other State and Federal officials that have a key role in California water decisions. We request that each of them become engaged in this rapid decisionmaking process and participate directly or through their delegates in these conference calls. However, we believe your direct leadership is necessary at this time and hope that you will participate personally. We have taken the liberty of setting up a conference line for the first call on Wednesday at 1 pm PDT (4 pm EDT). For convenience, we propose the same time be used for Thursday.

The opportunity presented by this storm is upon us. We cannot afford inaction by either State or Federal regulators or water managers. We need your authority to impress upon your Departments and others that this is truly an emergency situation that requires immediate action. Failure to take action becomes a decision in and of itself and we are not likely to have another opportunity this year to help relieve this dire situation.

Urgently and gratefully yours,

STEVE CHEDESTER, *Executive Director*,
San Joaquin River Exchange Con-
tractors Water Authority.

DANIEL G. NELSON, *Executive Director*,
San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water
Authority.

RONALD JACOBSMA, *General Manager*,
Friant Water Authority.

CHASE HURLEY, *General Manager*,
San Luis Canal Company.

RANDY HOUK, *General Manager*,
Columbia Canal Company.

CHRISTOPHER L. WHITE, *General
Manager*,
Central California Irrigation Dis-
trict.

JEFF BRYANT, *General Manager*,
Firebaugh Canal Water District.

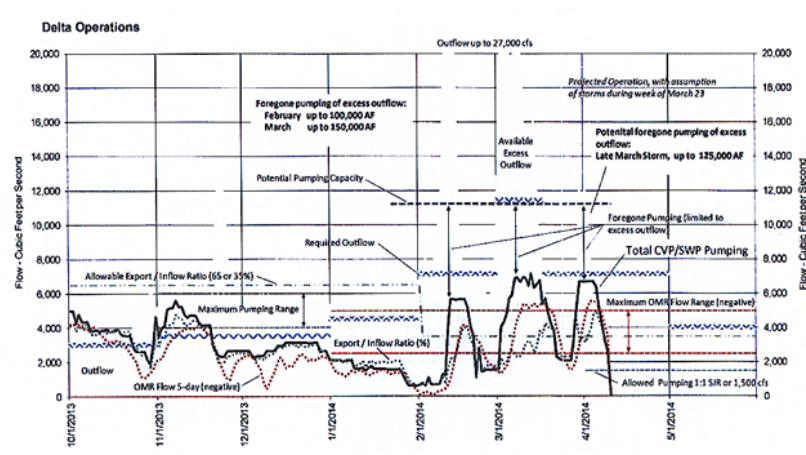
Enclosures.

FOREGONE PUMPING

Upcoming storms commencing March 23, 2014

Currently the Projects are operating to a combined 2,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) export level resulting in about 5,500 cfs Delta Outflow and an Old and Middle River reverse flow limitation (OMR) of about -1,600 cfs. The export/inflow (E/I) ratio is about 25 percent, and San Joaquin River stream flow is about 700 cfs. Storms to Northern California are forecast to begin Tuesday evening and will bring precipitation throughout the week and into the weekend. It is anticipated that these storms will result in unregulated runoff within the Sacramento Valley similar in response to the storms experienced earlier in the month, resulting in excess flow in the Delta which potentially is available for delivery and storage south of the Delta. Although there are uncertainties in the timing and magnitude of the storm events, the following provides an explanation of the constraints upon exports that will result in foregone pumping in the near future.

Without immediate relaxation of several pumping and outflow constraints the capture of a significant amount of the excess flow will be foregone, up to 125,000 acre-feet, similar to what has occurred during each of the storms of the last 2 months. The graphic below illustrates projected operations beginning today, through April 9. Of immediate issue are the OMR and E/I constraints. As inflow to the Delta increases due to the storms, pumping will increase. However, almost immediately pumping will be constrained by a maximum OMR flow of -5,000 cfs and a maximum E/I ratio of 35 percent. While available pumping capacity is about 11,280 cfs, the pumps will be running at only about 6,600 cfs, foregoing over 9,000 acre-feet of excess flow per day for several days. This effect is compounded by an outflow requirement of 7,100 cfs for X2 which limits the amount of excess outflow that can be pumped, but which however, under the dire drought circumstances has been reduced by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) this year with the concurrence of State and Federal fishery agencies. Notwithstanding the SWRCB order, separate, but of significant impact on water supplies, will be the effect of the Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) condition in the Biological Opinions regarding the San Joaquin River Inflow to Export Ratio that would be exercised beginning April 1 and continuing through May. This action requires exports to be no greater than the inflow entering the Delta from the San Joaquin River (1:1), currently about 700 cfs. This action would constrain exports even lower than the actions already constraining the exports to 6,600 cfs, resulting in an additional 11,000 acre-feet per day of foregone pumping.



Secretary JEWELL. I will say that the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service have exercised great flexibility so far this year in interpretation of their biological opinions to pump additional water, significantly more than last year.

I also know the balance with the State needs and the salinity needs of the Delta, it is not just Delta smelt and the salmonids that are impacted.

I am going to turn it to Mike to get into the specifics of this request and where we are with this incoming storm.

Mr. CONNOR. Thank you, Secretary Jewell.

Senator Feinstein, I can confirm that David Murillo, our regional director, will be participating in the call. We are still confirming availability of the key folks with Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) fisheries in the discussion today.

I would just note the discussion is really an ongoing discussion that has been going on over the last couple months. The precipita-

tion event we have now happening in California is the third, as you referenced.

We have taken significant measures and improved measures, quite frankly, improved our interpretation in our application of those biological opinions. As you remember in 2013 when we had similar events, and we can pump in the range of 5,000 to 6,000 cubic feet per second (CFS). In 2013, we were down around 2,000 to 2,500 CFS. That was the reference that a lot of people had to lost water.

This year, in both of the events, we have maximized our pumping under the biological opinions. When Secretary Jewell was up there about 10 days ago, we were at 5,800 CFS. We actually got up to about 7,000 CFS of pumping at the high points during that runoff period. We intend to do the same with this runoff period.

We are looking at some other additional measures we can take, and that is an ongoing discussion amongst the five agencies, the three Federal and two State agencies.

We will engage the water users in that as part of the discussion today and continue to try to maximize how to make use of the runoff that comes during these precipitation events.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Mike, this may be the last opportunity we have to get enough additional water to make the five points in the drought bill that Senator Boxer and I have introduced that we are now trying to put together 60 votes on, to produce an additional 300,000 to 600,000 acre feet.

So this storm is really important that we maximize the ability to save that water.

Mr. CONNOR. Yes, absolutely. I would note several of those measures that are in your legislation are measures that we have taken this year that have significantly helped us increase the pumping.

I think we can probably do more within the parameters of the biological opinions and the State permit we operate under. Those are the two constraints that we operate under, and we will do as much as we can.

Can we get up to the 11,500 CFS maximum capacity of the pumps? I don't know that we can get there, but we are, certainly, going to try to keep moving up.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Well, what I have to say, you know, I am a lifelong Californian, I have never seen the level of desperation that exists all down the center of our State.

And the unemployment rate is going up. The food lines are building. It is really a problem.

We flew over with the President for 100 miles and just saw the devastation of the absence of water in that valley.

So I know you are sincere. I know you want to do it. Please make that push now.

Thank you, Madam—Mr. President—Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED. You honor me.

Thank you, Madam Chairman, yourself.

Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Thank you very much, Chairman Reed.

OREGON MOUNTAINS-DESERT PEAKS NATIONAL MONUMENT

And, Secretary Jewell, let me thank you very much for your visit to southern New Mexico. I know that you spent a couple days there. You had the opportunity to get around and see the Oregon peaks and Oregon Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument and get the opportunity to get out and hike a little bit. And I hope that was fruitful for you.

And I think it really prepares us to move forward with legislation on the monument, so I appreciate that visit.

And it is always good to see Mike. Mike is a New Mexican, and we are very proud of you.

DROUGHT

And as you are well-aware, Mike, New Mexico is suffering the same kind of drought that has been talked about here. In some areas, 13 years that we have been in drought, and it is severely impacting farmers and ranchers and people that live off the land, our tribes. And I know that the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) has been working very diligently on that with all the groups have been involved.

It really hit me in a way when I was out near Tucumcari, and there is a project out there that has been organized in a way where the community is involved and the Bureau of Reclamation is involved. And since the Great Depression, when the project was built, they always had water for farmers and ranchers.

The last 2 years, not a single drop of water. And these are families with livestock and crops. They have to have water. If they can afford to haul water, they can do that, but it is obviously much more expensive.

So we are in that difficult situation, too. And I appreciate all your work on that.

SEQUESTRATION

Secretary Jewell, last year your Office of Natural Resource Revenue (ONRR) had determined that revenue paid to the States under the Mineral Leasing Act were subject to sequestration. You and I talked about that, and I asked you to reevaluate your position. And I really want to thank you for directing the ONRR to reverse its position and not sequester the funds.

This revenue is vital to States such as New Mexico. It funds necessary items such as public schools, community colleges, emergency response activities, and basic infrastructure projects. So it was critical that these funds not be impacted by sequestration. We appreciate your attention to that.

PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES

And I also would like to share my concerns regarding another form of critical support for local governments. That is the program Payment in Lieu of Taxes, or PILT. As you know, the PILT program provides critical funding to communities in New Mexico, like Cibola County, San Juan, Otero, Eddy counties, just to name a few of our 33 that get these funds.

And I am very concerned there might be a lapse. We have been able to work in the appropriations process to get a 1-year extension. But I am wondering if you could share with me your thoughts on how we can make sure we have the funds there and how we can get congressional-executive cooperation to see that we have PILT funding in 2014 and beyond.

Secretary JEWELL. Thank you, Senator. It was a pleasure to visit your State. It was the first time I have seen a tarantula on the trail, so that was interesting.

We are strong supporters of PILT as well as Secure Rural Schools. We recognize when Federal lands are in local communities, it takes them off the tax rolls, and that is the purpose of PILT.

There is, in the President's budget, a 1-year reauthorization. As you know, for 2014, it passed on the farm bill.

We would love to see a permanent fix. I think as we look at the authorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, potentially putting that together with PILT is an appropriate way of looking at a longer-term, permanent source of funding for both programs, which are so important for the reasons that I talked about in my opening statement, and in answers.

I am happy to work with you. I think that makes sense for a rational path forward.

Senator UDALL. And I was going to ask also about the Land and Water Conservation Fund, but you hit on both of those. And they are absolutely key programs to the West and very much appreciate your help there.

PILOT OFFICES

I wanted to also ask about the BLM pilot offices. As you know, the 2005 energy bill designated several pilot offices to receive extra resources to expedite permitting processing and conduct much-needed environmental oversight.

These offices, which include the Carlsbad and Farmington offices in New Mexico, are already understaffed and overworked. But the looming expiration of this program at the end of 2015 would further burden these offices.

Can you provide some insight into the importance of this pilot program as it relates to the responsible energy development in States like New Mexico? And how does the investment in energy development translate into revenue for the American taxpayer?

Secretary JEWELL. In a quick nutshell, because I know we are running out of time. The pilot offices were a great experiment, but they went along political lines, along State lines, and oil and gas exploration resources don't know political boundaries.

There is support in the 2015 budget for extension of the pilot office authority, but it also includes flexibility to be able to relocate the offices, to meet the demands of permitting.

We have had dramatic reductions in the amount of time taken to process authorizations for permits to drill. We have improved the inspections, because of the investment in these pilot offices.

We do find that there is sometimes a mismatch between where the pilot process is and where the demand has moved to because of the development. The offices have had a good return on invest-

ment, and we believe that is important to our strategy going forward, in addition to asking companies to pay for a portion of what it costs us, particularly in inspections and safety.

There are some revenue proposals in this budget that enable us to charge fees to industry to inspect, and that will also help us fund these offices in terms of supporting future development.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

Senator REED. Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Chairman Reed. I share the concerns about the PILT program.

LANDSAT

Secretary Jewell, I applaud you, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and, in particular, the Eros Data Center in South Dakota for the extraordinary success of the Landsat program. With last year's launch of Landsat 8 and the inevitable expiration of Landsat 7 in a few years, the continuity of this imagery into the future will become a critical question.

As such, Congress included language in the committee report to the fiscal year 2014 funding bill directing USGS and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to collaborate and develop a new path forward for the Landsat program.

Can you give me an update about the status of those discussions, and how the short timeline for needing to launch the Landsat 7 replacement is factoring into these plans?

Secretary JEWELL. Thank you very much, Senator, for the questions.

I did have an opportunity about 2 months ago to meet with NASA to talk about this program. It is very critical that we replace Landsat 7 before its batteries run out. It gives us, I think, an 8-day gap in data, which is very, very important.

Landsat 8 provides a lot of new information that helps us deal with things like evapotranspiration, which are very important to understanding the impacts of drought and water across a lot of the country, and many other things.

We are working closely with NASA on the potential of a clone to Landsat 8, and also an interim solution that gives us the data we need that NASA presented to us at our meeting.

We are very committed to a path forward. We appreciate the support in the legislation and will continue to work with Congress on making sure we don't have a data gap on this support program.

Senator JOHNSON. I appreciate your attendance at the Eros Data Center recently.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

The Land and Water Conservation Fund has supported several recent projects in South Dakota, including an expansion of Wind Cave National Park, protection of grasslands in the Prairie Pothole Region, and the acquisition of key portions of the new Good Earth State Park.

These projects have boosted tourism, protected our ranching heritage, and provided additional opportunities for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation.

The administration budget has identified four priority projects for land or easement acquisition in South Dakota in fiscal year 2015 as a part of the Grasslands/Prairie Potholes Cooperative Landscape Partnership.

However, much of the funding for these projects, and many others around the country, is proposed to come from a permanent funding mechanism that I support but does not yet exist. Should this funding mechanism not be enacted, what is your perspective on funding the projects on the list designated for permanent funding?

Secretary JEWELL. Thank you, Senator.

The proposal for 2015 has \$350 million in the current appropriations, and the balance, to the \$900 million would require a legislative approval. The legislative proposal also includes full and permanent funding at \$900 million in 2016 and beyond.

There is \$350 million in this proposal, in the budget proposal that you have before you.

There are many projects that exceed what we have in LWCF funding, and we prioritize them according to their ability to address the biggest challenges we have and the biggest opportunities we have. The number of willing sellers who want to sell us land relative to our ability to buy them, and there are a lot more people that want to sell us land than we have money for.

I know we have \$7 million for the Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area, \$3 million in the Tallgrass Prairie Wildlife Area, and \$574,000 for Wind Cave.

Rhea or Pam, do you know where those are within the \$350 million as opposed to the \$900 million. And where they stack up?

And if we don't know right away, Senator, we will get back to you with details on that.

[The information follows:]

LWCF PROJECTS IN SOUTH DAKOTA

The following projects are included in the \$350 million discretionary request.

FWS.—Dakota Tallgrass Prairie Wildlife Management Area, \$3,000,000; Dakota Grassland Conservation Area, \$7,000,000.

The following projects are included in the \$550 million mandatory request.

FWS.—Dakota Tallgrass Prairie Wildlife Management Area, \$3,887,000; Dakota Grassland Conservation Area, \$7,000,000.

NPS.—Wind Cave National Park, \$574,000.

Senator JOHNSON. Please do.

Secretary JEWELL. But the Prairie Pothole, the Nation's duck factory, it is really, really critical habitat and, as you know, disappearing very quickly from agricultural development, as well as other forms of development. It is very important to us.

Senator JOHNSON. In South Dakota, visitor spending in and around our six national park units totaled \$160 million in 2011, and it supported more than 2,500 jobs.

With the importance of the national park system to our national, State and local economies, we cannot continue to push deferred needs to the future without substantial risk.

MAINTENANCE BACKLOG

The administration has proposed a substantial investment in our parks in the fiscal year 2015 budget, but it is clearly only a down

payment, given the nearly \$11 billion maintenance backlog nationwide. With flat or declining budgets and the upcoming centennial of the park system, what approaches do you see to redeem our stewardship responsibilities and address this backlog in an efficient and effective way over the next decade?

Secretary JEWELL. Senator, thank you very much for the question. This is a topic I am passionate about, and something where we only have one shot at the centennial.

We know there will be increased visitation, and the National Park Foundation is working to raise awareness about the importance of national parks to all Americans and drive tourism, both domestically and abroad.

The parks have prioritized the assets they have that need the most maintenance that are likely going to see the most visitors. We have a \$40 million increase proposed in the budget. \$10 million of that is for a matching fund, because there is a lot of private philanthropic interest, and that will be one way forward, to raise private money because people do love their national parks and are willing to support them. The match will help leverage those dollars even further.

But it is just a down payment, as you point out. Even with the \$1.2 billion recommendation we have in the President's budget for mandatory funding for the national parks over 3 years, we are still not going to make a material difference in the maintenance backlog.

The National Park Centennial will give people an opportunity to recognize these special places, and we believe, as the public speaks in a democracy, we will have the opportunity for additional support.

I also just want to reference that in the Helium bill, Senator Murkowski was able to add additional \$50 million for maintenance of the national parks, and we appreciate those efforts. They all add up.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Senator.

We will begin a second round.

YOUTH

Madam Secretary, we have a common goal, which is to get young people involved in the outdoors through education. I have introduced, on several occasions, the No Child Left Inside Act. Your budget identifies almost \$51 million in funding for youth engagement programs. Actually, it is a 37 percent increase since fiscal year 2014.

Could you please walk us through the specifics on how you intend to use these funds, and how you measure success in this investment?

Secretary JEWELL. Thanks for the question.

We have a four-tiered plan, if you will. We have a generational transformation going on in the country right now. The millennial generation is already larger than the baby boom generation. They came of age during a tough economy. Many of them have been more disconnected to nature and the outdoors than before, and yet we really need them to be in the kinds of positions that are nec-

essary for the overall stewardship and development of our public lands.

Part of this program is to engage that generation, but it is also a continuum, recognizing that the best introduction to nature and the outdoors comes in the form of play for children. Part of this budget supports programs in our regions to partner with 50 cities on increasing opportunities for children to play on public lands.

Examples might be urban wildlife refuges, which are already incredible assets in urban areas. Some of the money will go to support connecting children to those places, and the next tier, which is learn.

We have a goal of getting 10 million children engaged in playing on public lands and 10 million children learning on public lands. This recognizes and supports the ongoing programs and emphasizes them further.

Then there are two more components, serve and work. Public service on public lands, volunteering on public lands, enables young people to never look at those lands in the same way. I make it a point of doing service projects regularly, to get out on the land, to work with my hands and to work with young people.

Those efforts oftentimes are led by young people working in Youth Conservation Corps, and there is nothing I like better than being told what to do by a twentysomething who is working on a Youth Conservation Corps, who can teach me the difference between poison ivy and English ivy as I remove it in Rock Creek Park, or things like that across the country.

We have a goal to engage by the end of this term a million hours of volunteer service on public lands—that is triple where we are right now—and a goal to create 100,000 jobs over 4 years on public lands through working collaboratively with Youth Conservation Corps.

We are very committed to this effort, and we will be building a new generation of young people that care and understand these resources and can learn from those who are already in these kinds of jobs.

Senator REED. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

HURRICANE SANDY FUNDING

Before I recognize Senator Begich for his first round, let me ask one more question, and that is, Hurricane Sandy was devastating to my region, and there is about \$100 million, which the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is helping to administer through your office, in terms of grants.

If you could get us up-to-date in terms of when do you anticipate these awards being made, and talk about the demands for these grants? And, indeed, what long-term goals are you trying to achieve through the grants?

Secretary JEWELL. Starting with the last question, we think that competitive grants that provide people with an opportunity to think how we can leverage these funds most effectively to achieve the objectives have just been very successful in other areas. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is administering them for us, and I appreciate the four letters you sent me on projects—I think it is four, maybe more—in your region.

We had 378 proposals submitted, totaling \$568 million for the \$100 million in grants. It includes 10 proposals exclusively for the State of Rhode Island for \$11.3 million. We have a panel of experts who are working through these proposals who really know these issues, and they expect to make a final decision by June of this year.

Senator REED. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

Senator BEGICH.

Senator BEGICH. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I am sorry, I had to step out there for a few minutes. But let me, if I can, I want to recap.

KING COVE ROAD

I know we had a meeting yesterday, and I want to thank you for that, Madam Secretary, joining myself and the King Cove community in having the discussion, which I think was scheduled for a half-hour and ended up a little over an hour. And I appreciate the time that you took there.

And I know the community laid out additional concerns, as well as some concerns with alternatives, and I want to walk through just a couple things, just to make sure to put it on the record for all of us.

In the meeting, we talked about the King Cove community coming back by April 15 with information or additional information that they would like to present to you in regards to potential options that may be out there and the problems with those options. And I want to make sure I put that on the record and confirm that is your understanding, that by April 15, they will be coming forward to you and to the delegation, but directly to your office, I think it was through Pat Pourchot, if I recall right, to give you kind of a list of concerns they would have with many of these alternatives that are being talked about or considered as an alternative to the road. Is that your understanding?

Secretary JEWELL. Yes.

Senator BEGICH. On top of that, there is a letter that they sent to you, I think it was early January, and they had not received a response yet in regards to their concerns with the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the actual elements of it. The commitment was, after that information was additionally given to your office after April 15, simultaneously, I should say, during that period of time, you will review with legal what your ability is to respond to that letter, how in depth or how minimal it will be, but you would not respond until this additional information comes in, so you might incorporate responses also to that. Is that your understanding?

Secretary JEWELL. It is my understanding they will be getting me additional information, and I need to consult with legal counsel. There are really complicated laws involved here that I am not familiar with. The timing of my response relative to the information I get is something I need to talk over with legal counsel. Because we met until late yesterday, I haven't had a chance to talk with them yet today on a path forward.

Senator BEGICH. No problem. But I want to make sure that, one way or another, it may be a very short letter, it may be a very long

letter, but there will be a response to the correspondence they sent in to you the beginning of January regarding the EIS.

You may not be able to go into detail on it, because legal may tell you not, but they may tell you, sure, go ahead and respond. But either way, after April 15, once additional information is provided, you will have some sort of response to the original letter and the additional information. It may be limited or it may expanded, depending on what legal tells you; is that correct?

Secretary JEWELL. Yes, I will provide a response in both cases. Senator BEGICH. OK.

And can I say that your conversation yesterday, that you were not closed to hear these issues with these alternatives that may be kicked around, but you wanted factual—for example, we talked about the weather conditions that would not allow some port activity because of the icing, and so forth. One of the concerns, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but you wanted to make sure that the data that comes from the King Cove community shows exactly why this would not work, which I agree with that. I mean, I would argue the King Cove community will give you plenty of information, why it ices up, why these conditions will just never allow this alternative.

But your understanding is that you want to see that in data form on some site. Is that fair? I am trying to summarize here in a public forum what we talked about.

Secretary JEWELL. There are lots of facts that were incorporated into the record of decision. I haven't read the detailed EIS. I read an awful lot of material.

There are legal parameters around records of decision that I don't fully understand. If there are additional facts and information, I am, certainly, willing to review those facts and information, particularly with regard to alternatives in supporting the residents of King Cove, and their needs for medical evacuation.

Senator BEGICH. OK. And I think it is fair to say that the delegation's view, the King Cove community view, is there is one alternate. It is the road. Is that a fair, from your viewpoint at this—

Secretary JEWELL. Yes, in all of my communications with the community, and I think it is probably fair to say in the 300 or so consultations that have happened over the years, the community has been consistent in only wanting to assess one alternative, which is a road.

Senator BEGICH. Let me, if I can because I will have more on that as we move down the process here, but I will have some additional stuff for you later, but let me ask you a couple quick things in regards to the budget.

SITE CONTAMINATION AT TRANSFERRED LANDS

I know I sent a letter in regard to contaminated lands that were transferred to the Alaska Native Corporation through the Alaska Native Lands Claims Settlement Act. This was an issue. I think there are 600 of these sites, or plus.

There were six recommendations made in 1998. We sent you a letter to ask your Department to review these recommendations and what action you would take or not take in regard to these con-

taminated lands. It is almost, as you know, over 15 years since these recommendations.

If you can give me a quick update on the status of responding to that letter in regard to those recommendations, for the record?

Secretary JEWELL. Are these regarding the legacy wells and the National Petroleum Reserve–Alaska?

Senator BEGICH. No. These are lands that were transferred to native corporations. Some were polluted lands. They were BLM lands. And they were other type of contaminations.

Secretary JEWELL. OK, I am sorry, I don't have information on that, so let me get back to you for the record on that.

[The information follows:]

SITE CONTAMINATION AT TRANSFERRED LANDS

Secretary Jewell responded to Senator Begich's letter (co-signed by Senator Murkowski and Representative Young) on January 10, 2014. Secretary Jewell's letter explained that, among other things, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is reviewing the sites listed in the 1998 BLM Report to Congress ("Hazardous Substance Contamination of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Lands in Alaska") to better determine if the lands were Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) conveyances. Since January, BLM–Alaska has organized a team to specifically focus on the contaminated lands conveyance issue in Alaska. This group is currently working to gather data and understand the scope of the issue. They are going through BLM's data to determine what contaminated lands may have been conveyed to whom, and whether potentially contaminated lands were contaminated prior to being conveyed or after, and by whom. A database of this information is being developed. BLM–Alaska is working cooperatively with the Alaska Native Village CEO Association on this issue and meeting regularly with them as it gathers information and compiles the inventory. The BLM's goal is to complete the inventory by August of this year.

Senator BEGICH. I would appreciate that. That would be very important.

Again, it is a direct letter that I wrote, but that would be very helpful.

CONTRACT SUPPORT COSTS

Also, I do want to say your comments in regard to the BIA and the Indian Health Service funding and full funding, one, BIA, I will say, has done a good job on this in the sense of, one, getting this cap resolved, but also moving forward on settling the past due.

Indian Health Services, they are not here today, because they are not part of this, has not done a very good job on this. But the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has done a good job, and I just want to give you credit on that, because these are monies owed. It is not a question of if they are owed, and the money is there, and Treasury has it in the legal fund in order to pay these. So I thank you for kind of aggressively moving.

We are not done with this issue, as you know, because we need to make sure it is not just a 1-year, 2-year off issue that we are fully funding. We need to make sure that this is 100 percent into the future, because these are contracted services that are being provided throughout the country for Indian Health Services or health care for first people in this country. So I want to just note that.

INDIAN AFFAIRS FUNDING

And last, Mr. Chairman, and if I can, one note I want to put on the record, and maybe a response of why this is, but out of all the different major areas over the last decade, the BIA has had the smallest increase compared to any other unit within the Department of the Interior. I think it has only been, of the six largest units, it is the smallest increase.

And we get this concern from our tribes on a very regular basis. Why are they—and I say “they” collectively—always on the backend in the increases that happened in the six largest areas in the Interior Department.

And again, if you can answer now, that is great. I know I am out of time, but if you want to respond in writing, that would be fantastic.

Secretary JEWELL. Do I have time for a quick response, Mr. Chairman?

Senator REED. Yes, ma'am.

Secretary JEWELL. OK, thanks.

CONTRACT SUPPORT COSTS

First on contract support costs, we fully support that. I have been asked by the White House to chair the White House Council on Native American Affairs. I can tell you from talking to my colleague, Kathleen Sebelius, and many other Cabinet secretaries, there is strong support for Indian country across the board. I think that forum gives us a chance to remind all of the bureaus and agencies about the role they play in upholding trust and treaty obligations to tribes.

In terms of the budget, there is an increase in budget for Indian Affairs and Indian Education. It is higher than some and lower than others in this budget. I also want to say there is another I think \$612 million across all of the bureaus to support programs in Indian country, whether it is the mineral development, because part of the BLM's responsibility is the mineral estate under tribal lands, or invasive species or fire. It is an important component of the fire budget as well.

It needs to be taken holistically, but I am very appreciative of the President's budget and its support for Indian country. It is never enough, just as we have a backlog on our facilities and national parks, and it feels like you don't catch up, but it is, certainly, a strong statement about the administration's support. I am behind that and will continue to push.

Senator BEGICH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will send you a document from our tribes in southeast that I want to share with you and BIA. And I think it would be very important to see the comparisons, and I will share that with you in a follow-up letter.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED. Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

KING COVE ROAD

And, Secretary, as you are evaluating the information that the community of King Cove will provide to you prior to the 15th of April, I want to make sure that you have a copy of the report that was conducted, I guess just completed the 24th of March, regarding the suitability of the landing craft as well as a letter from PeterPan Seafoods, in terms of a complete denial of any interest, recognizing that they would have no interest nor opportunity in a road, as well as information from Coast Guard that we are compiling. I think that that would be helpful for you.

And I just also wanted to note that you made a comment about the fact that there are many communities in Alaska that experience difficulties in gaining access to medical care. That is absolutely true. But the difference between so many of them and the situation in King Cove, is King Cove is the only community that has a viable alternative right in front of them, or maybe 10 miles away from them.

So I would hesitate to suggest that because other rural communities don't have good access, that that is somehow a reason to deny King Cove, because two wrongs don't make a right. I just wanted to add that.

ARCTIC OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF

I just wanted to ask very quickly, with my remaining time here, as we wrap up this hearing, about Arctic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). As you know, Shell canceled its exploratory drilling program up in the Chukchi for this summer, based in part on the Ninth Circuit decision that came out that determined the EIS for the lease sale was deficient, and also failure to provide regulatory certainty from the Department, as far as how to move forward in the Arctic.

So as I have talked with Shell, what they are hoping for, and what I am hoping to understand from you this morning, is how the Department intends to proceed with this. Will it be kind of a dual-track process where the Department will work to remediate the EIS that the Ninth Circuit struck down while at the same time committing to evaluate the exploration programs so that Shell can proceed with work in 2015, because the concern, of course, is that we just work on the legal track, but we are not working the regulatory track at the same time.

Can you tell me how that is going forward and when you might expect that the regulations for offshore exploration might be released?

Secretary JEWELL. Thank you. Just to be clear, Senator, the decision that Shell made to not go forward was not based, from their conversations with us, on regulatory uncertainty.

My colleague Brian Salerno, a former Coast Guard admiral who is running the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, has been working hand-in-glove with Shell, including looking at its subsea containment system and working closely with them on a plan to pursue their activities in the Arctic that we consider to be a good illustration of where the regulations will come out. We are not slowing down the process of their ability to drill based on waiting for the regulations to come out.

Senator MURKOWSKI. No, and I wasn't suggesting that you were slowing down.

Secretary JEWELL. OK.

Senator MURKOWSKI. What I know is not complete, is that these regulations have not been released, so as Shell is trying to determine how they do proceed, they need some certainty. So I am just curious as to how we are coming with the timing of that, and how that is tracking with dealing with the deficient lease sale.

Secretary JEWELL. They are in the process of writing up the regulations consistent with what Shell was already checking for, and we expect to have them published in the Federal Register this year, so there should not be difficulty, if there is a green light through the Ninth Circuit Court, and the supplemental EIS, for them to proceed, as long as the court is satisfied.

We understand the very limited drilling season. We understand the challenges of logistics and staging. We are working closely with the courts on what they expect of us, in terms of an update to the EIS. We are continuing to stay in close contact with Shell and Conoco Phillips on their interest in pursuing this.

I do not anticipate the regulations that are being formulated to have any impact at all on their ability to operate once the courts have agreed on a path forward.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Well, just know that we are monitoring very carefully in terms of when these regulations will come out. Initially, it was anticipated that they would be out well by this point in time. You have now indicated that they will be done sometime this year. Just for planning purposes, knowing what the rules of the road are is critically important.

BEAUFORT AND CHUKCHI LEASES

You mentioned the short drilling season that we have up North, another thing that we are facing is that many, if not all, as I understand, of the leases in the Beaufort and the Chukchi will expire before we can reasonably expect oil production to be brought on-line. And so while it may be a little premature at this point in time to talk about extension of those leases, I think it is something that the administration is going to have to look at in terms of its commitment to working with those who have leases in the Arctic, recognizing the challenges that we face with any kind of expiration opportunity up there, both on the environmental side, both on the regulatory side.

But if there is a true commitment from this administration to advance Arctic expiration offshore, I think that is going to be a situation that we will have to look at, because the timing is not coming together as one might hope in terms of the lifetime of the leases and the ability to advance with exploration and the production. So I just put that in front of you.

Secretary JEWELL. Senator, I know my colleagues at the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement are working closely with the operators there. The suspensions of leases are in active discussions. We understand that there are time delays. If an EIS isn't done right the first time, it throws you back and impacts the regulatory certainty for operators. It is unfortunate that occurred, but we are working actively

with the companies up there in what they desire and what we think is appropriate for the American people as well.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I appreciate that.

Mr. Chairman, I have a whole host of additional questions. As you well know, the Interior Department, the Secretary of Interior, have a great deal of influence in play in my State. I refer to the Department of the Interior and the Secretary's role as being effectively one as landlords, so we have pertinent issues as they relate to oil and gas development; legacy wells, as the Secretary mentioned; contaminated lands; national parks; Brooks Camp, what we are doing up there. So I will submit those in writing and look forward to responses.

But I thank the Secretary and the other members of the panel this morning.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Senator Murkowski.

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

The record will remain open until April 2 for additional statements or questions by any of my colleagues.

And I would ask you, Madam Secretary, to respond as quickly as possible. We thank you, Madam Secretary, for your testimony, and your colleagues. Thank you very much.

[The following questions were not asked at the hearing, but were submitted to the Department for response subsequent to the hearing:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACK REED

YOUTH AND VETERAN PROGRAMS

Question. Secretary Jewell, you recently committed to raise up to \$20 million in private funding for youth engagement programs to leverage the Department's contributions. How do you plan on accomplishing this? Does the Department have the authority to solicit and hold private funding for these programs? How do you plan on administering the private funds you raise?

Answer. The Take Pride in America Act authorizes the Secretary to carry out a number of activities, including: partnering with public and private organizations to promote participation in volunteer efforts through a public awareness campaign, soliciting and accepting donations in furtherance of the Take Pride in America Act, and accepting volunteer services from individuals and organizations. Interior's bureaus also have authority to accept volunteer services. Interior has partnered with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (Foundation) for the \$20 million fund-raising goal. Secretary Jewell and the Department will work to increase awareness of the opportunity to support youth and veteran engagement opportunities and inform prospective donors of the opportunity to make donations to the Foundation. The Foundation has established a separate fund (the Interior 21st Century Conservation Service Corps Account) to receive the funds, distribute those funds to non-profit corps partners and be responsible for annual reporting on the associated projects and results.

Question. Your budget also emphasizes making connections between veterans and land management agencies but doesn't provide many details on how you will accomplish that goal. How is the Department moving forward with veterans' programs? Are you partnering with the Veterans Administration or non-profit organizations?

Answer. Since 2010, the Department has been active in establishing long-term relationships with Federal agencies, schools, veterans' organizations and military organizations. The Department and our bureaus have entered into formal agreements with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Office of the Chief, Army Reserve. The Department was the first Federal agency to sign an agreement with the Office of the Chief, Army Reserve that focused on connecting reserve service members to employment opportunities; connecting military youth and families to America's great outdoors, history and culture; and expanding recreational opportunities for community-based wounded warrior programs. The Department also has partner-

ships with non-profit organizations such as Veterans Green Jobs and Mt. Adams Institute, to connect America's veterans to conservation and land management. These partnerships expand opportunities for veterans (and military families) to learn the importance of natural resource management and explore potential careers within land management agencies. Interior's work with these organizations is a critical aspect of our success in hiring veterans over the past 3 years, which reached 40 percent of our permanent hires in fiscal year 2013. Our goal is to continue building a talent pipeline of our Nation's veterans, by continuing and enhancing partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs, veteran service organizations and other non-profit organizations.

The President's fiscal year 2015 budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs also includes \$1 billion in mandatory funding to create the Veterans Job Corps program that would put thousands of veterans back to work over the next 5 years protecting and rebuilding America. The Department of Veterans Affairs proposal would authorize and provide funding to coordinate an interagency process and transfer up to \$1 billion in mandatory funding over 5 years to establish the Veterans Job Corps. Funding will enable veterans to leverage skills developed in the military in jobs on the country's public lands and in its communities, ranging from conservation and infrastructure projects to law enforcement and first responder jobs, such as park rangers, police officers, and firefighters.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CENTENNIAL

Question. The centennial of the National Park Service (NPS) in 2016 is deservedly a major focus of your budget request. Specifically, you have requested \$40 million for this proposal, including \$30 million in visitor service and facilities projects and \$10 million for Centennial Challenge grants to match Federal funding for infrastructure needs with contributions from non-Federal partners. How will these funds be allocated among park units? Where are your focus areas?

Answer. The President's request includes a discretionary increase of \$40 million to prepare for and celebrate the Centennial. This requested increase includes \$30 million for operations to support visitors during the 2016 Centennial celebrations and to provide a stronger foundation for visitor services and infrastructure investments in its second century of preserving the parks for ongoing usage and the future enjoyment of visitors. Of the \$30 million increase for operations, \$4 million would support 21st Century Conservation Service Corps youth work opportunities to educate and engage the next generation; \$2 million would support volunteer opportunities for young people to expand the capacity of the NPS to manage volunteers in parks; \$8 million in competitively managed funds would support enhanced visitor services in the areas of interpretation and education, law enforcement and protection, and facility operations; and \$16 million would support improvement in the condition of high priority park assets, such as visitor use facilities, historic structures, and trails. Across these centennial increases, the budget provides an \$8 million increase for youth engagement and employment opportunities, and continues the NPS' efforts to attract qualified veteran candidates to fill Federal positions.

The remaining \$10 million of the \$40 million discretionary request is for the Centennial Challenge program, which would leverage Federal funds with partner donations for signature projects and programs at national parks. Preference would be given to projects that have a clear and immediate visitor benefit as well as a higher partner match. The Challenge will require at least a one for one match from non-Federal entities, with some projects leveraging more. While many parks and partners have expressed interest, projects would not be selected until funds are appropriated.

In addition to this discretionary request, the President's budget also proposes \$400 million a year for 3 years for Centennial activities to be provided as mandatory funding through authorization legislation. This includes \$100 million a year for 3 years for Centennial Challenge projects and programs, \$200 million a year for 3 years for deferred maintenance projects, and \$100 million a year for 3 years for the multi-agency Centennial Land Management Investment Fund, which will provide an opportunity for all of Interior's public lands bureaus and the U.S. Forest Service to address conservation and infrastructure project needs.

Question. How will the Centennial Challenge grant proposal actually work? Do you already have partners who are looking to match their funds for specific projects?

Answer. Similar to the 2008 appropriation, once funding was known, an announcement would be made soliciting project ideas and partner matches. Preference would be given to projects that have a higher partner match, and clear visitor benefit. In order for a project to be chosen, a commitment letter from the partner is required as well as demonstrated park support. There is strong evidence of support

for partner matching projects; several partners have already indicated willingness to match Federal funds for projects. The NPS is aware of potential partners from both large and small parks as well as local and national organizations.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Question. It is clear that the Department has taken notice of Committee direction about the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and has assembled a more geographically diverse list of projects proposed for discretionary funding. Do you believe this budget balances the need to conserve smaller tracts in urban areas and larger landscapes?

Answer. The 2015 budget requests funding for a diverse portfolio of projects through the Land and Water Conservation Fund's many programs, and were thoughtfully designed to ensure we balance the conservation and recreational access needs of diverse communities and landscapes across the country. For example, the budget requests a total of \$100.1 million (\$48.1 million discretionary and \$52 million mandatory) for the NPS-administered State and Local Assistance Grant program, which will provide grants to States and localities to plan for, acquire, and develop facilities for close-to-home recreation in communities in every State and territory. The budget requests a total of \$100 million (\$50 million discretionary and \$50 million mandatory) for Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)-administered Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation grants, which will support State efforts to develop and implement plans for endangered species recovery and habitat conservation. These grants support small scale efforts in a wide variety of settings, including near developed communities and in rural areas.

Across the discretionary and mandatory requests, the budget includes funding for 125 unique bureau land acquisition projects in 36 States. This portfolio of projects reflects the reality that conservation and recreation needs vary widely across the Nation, and proposes funding strategies that are responsive to the unique needs of local communities and landscapes. The budget includes support for land acquisition projects that range from fee simple acquisition of a 5-acre inholding at Maine's Acadia National Park to the FWS easement acquisition of 30,000 acres—through conservation easement partnerships with multiple landowners—in the Dakota Grasslands of North Dakota and South Dakota.

Question. Diversity in the project lists is key to engendering support nationally for LWCF, particularly as it needs to be reauthorized next year. What is the Department's plan for reauthorization? When should we expect to see a full legislative proposal and a concerted effort to engage the authorizing committees?

Answer. The 2015 budget includes four mandatory spending proposals, of which one is mandatory funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We are currently working within the administration, including with the Department of Agriculture, to ensure the reauthorization proposal is comprehensive and relevant to 21st century conservation needs.

The administration anticipates working in collaboration with legislators and staff to develop a plan to authorize \$550 million in mandatory funding for 2015, and to reauthorize the program permanently with full mandatory funding beginning in 2016. The administration looks forward to working with Congress on the details of legislation that would advance our LWCF proposal.

Question. I am concerned about how Congress, and more specifically, the Appropriations Committee, will remain involved in this process if LWCF is switched to a mandatory program. The Committee has a longstanding role in determining how land acquisition funds are allocated and how priorities are set, and we value that role. How is the administration planning to continue to involve Congress in land acquisition decisions through your mandatory proposal? And specifically, what role do you foresee the Appropriations Committee playing if funds are made mandatory?

Answer. The administration anticipates close collaboration with Congress as we develop a plan for reauthorizing LWCF with mandatory funding. The administration recognizes and values the role the Committee has historically played providing oversight to ensure the wise expenditure of LWCF funds, and looks forward to working with Committee staff to develop procedures for implementation of a mandatory funding regime which provides appropriate avenues for continued congressional input and oversight.

Question. As you have traveled the country over the past year as Secretary of the Interior, including our trip to Rhode Island in May, I know you have seen the great diversity in our Federal lands and the great need to protect threatened lands for conservation. Those of us in the East are just as worried about protecting small inholdings in our urban centers as those in the West are in protecting our Nation's

most dramatic landscapes. What do you see as your mark on the Land and Water program?

Answer. One of my highest conservation priorities is securing reauthorization of the LWCF and ensuring the program is fully funded with mandatory funding. Authorizing permanent mandatory funding for the LWCF would realize the original intent of this law: to set aside a meaningful portion of the royalties that companies pay for developing America's offshore oil and gas reserves, and reinvest those funds in land and water conservation for the benefit of all Americans and future generations. Without mandatory funding, it appears likely we will continue to underinvest in land and water conservation programs as funding for these programs must compete directly with a wide range of other programs with varying objectives as part of the annual appropriations process. Mandatory funding will provide greater certainty this portion of our offshore royalties are used for their original intended purpose: to support the national endowment of lands and waters which provide our cities with clean drinking water, provide our children with safe places to play, and protect the way of life of our farmers, foresters and ranchers.

Each community's vision for conservation of their lands and waters will be unique to its community, but our cities, towns and rural areas across the country all share a common need for resources to invest in public open space and conservation. A fully funded LWCF will provide the resources we need to fund the full spectrum of conservation and recreational access projects that communities want to invest in. We can fund city parks so kids can get outside and play in their own neighborhoods, and we can fund landscape scale conservation, collaborating with private landowners on conservation easements that keep working lands in production while protecting habitat, wildlife migration corridors and clean drinking water.

Question. I am concerned that we continue to hear the unsupported, shopworn argument that securing more conservation land adds unduly to Federal land management and maintenance costs. Can you please provide the subcommittee with a fuller understanding of the ways that land conservation through LWCF improves management and reduces operating expenses for the Department? Can you highlight a few specific examples where LWCF spending has reduced operating and maintenance costs? What are the broader positive impacts of LWCF on agency budgets?

Answer. The Department of the Interior LWCF programs work in cooperation with local communities, rely on willing sellers, and maximize opportunities to partner with private landowners on conservation easements where conservation and management objectives can be achieved without fee simple acquisition. Proposed Federal land acquisition projects are developed with the support of local landowners, elected officials, and community groups.

Because there is a recognized need for funding to address maintenance needs on existing federally managed lands, the President's fiscal year 2015 budget proposes discretionary funding (a portion of the Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative) to address maintenance backlog needs for all natural resource agencies, and an additional \$200 million in mandatory funding for the National Park Service to help prepare for the National Park Service Centennial in 2016.

Acquisition of inholdings does not generally require additional operating costs as no new staff or equipment is required to manage new lands within existing boundaries. Occasionally, agencies may incur up front costs to remove existing improvements (fences, buildings, etc.) from an acquired property. By removing unwanted structures on newly acquired land, agencies avoid adding to ongoing operations and maintenance (O&M) requirements.

In fact, acquisition of inholdings can greatly simplify land management for Federal managers and neighboring landowners. Eliminating checkerboard ownership within Federal units simplifies nearly every aspect of land management:

- Wildland fire managers can apply appropriate fuels reduction, planned burns, and fire suppression treatments more easily across an unfragmented landscape; fire management is more challenging and costly when private inholdings and developed properties are intermixed with federally managed forests and public lands.
- Law enforcement and public safety personnel can more easily patrol and respond to emergencies when public ownership is consolidated. An unfragmented unit allows unified signage, road networks, and other infrastructure that will best enable safe public access and allow for the efficient movement of emergency personnel and vehicles to locations frequented by visitors.
- Recreation managers can more easily provide access for the public to enjoy their public lands. In some cases checkerboard ownership can cause confusion among the public about acceptable land uses, and can restrict the public's ability to access some areas of public land.

—Natural resource management is simplified in an unfragmented landscape. When checkerboard ownership is eliminated, biologists, geologists and other natural resource professionals can move freely across the land that they are responsible for surveying, and natural resource management actions can be applied more efficiently across a landscape in single ownership.

Examples of enhanced management resulting from land acquisition include:

St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge.—St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is an island off the panhandle coast of Florida in Apalachicola Bay, off the Gulf of Mexico. Acquisition of the 5-acre tract on the mainland of Apalachicola Bay provides permanent deep water mooring with launch site, secure parking and equipment storage. An important point is that dredging and channel maintenance are allowed in Apalachicola Bay. The lease at Indian Pass, the current deep water mooring and launch site, was ending and would not be renewed as the owners were looking to develop the mainland at the launch site. In addition, the upland portion of the leased Indian Pass site had been significantly reduced due to severe, continuing, and progressive erosion that the land owner failed to address.

As the refuge is only accessible by water, the new deep water mooring and launch site reduces staff travel time from the refuge office to transfer supplies and heavy equipment. Daily boat access for St. Vincent NWR staff is required 24/7 for all island management activities, such as sea turtle nest monitoring and protection, habitat management, prescribed burning, hunting and fishing management and protection, and response to visitor emergencies.

With the acquisition of the mainland deep water boat mooring and launch site, the Fish and Wildlife Service eliminates the annual \$12,000 lease and has significant savings in fuel for vehicles. Staff traveling to and from the work site and hauling equipment to Apalachicola Bay from the refuge office, had to travel 20 miles to Indian Pass, then travel by watercraft to St. Vincent Island. At the end of each day, traveling was reversed back to the refuge office. Adequate parking for heavy equipment and vehicles is available at the new site.

Prior to the acquisition of the deep water mooring and launch site, the Service conducted a critical review and analysis of deep water mooring and access options in the general vicinity of the refuge. Only two or three options were possible, with the acquisition of the acquired site being the most cost effective and safest for staff. The other sites involved longer nautical travel distances at nine miles, were more costly as public boat launch sites, and did not offer the security needed for refuge equipment.

Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge.—The Service acquired five tracts totaling 480 acres within the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. One tract contains prime river frontage along the Porcupine River with cliffs containing important nesting habitat for peregrine falcon. The other tracts contain frontage along Beaver Creek, Rock Slough, and the Black River. Most of these properties contain high quality wetland complexes and were isolated inholdings surrounded by Refuge land. Acquisition of these parcels greatly benefits Refuge wildlife management and provides a cost savings to the Government due to decreased fire management expenses.

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument.—The Bureau of Land Management purchased the 800-acre Alexander (a/k/a Yellow Jacket Canyon) parcel within Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (NM) with funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund on April 16, 2014. This purchase is completely surrounded by Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-owned land within the boundary of the Monument. Just northwest of Cortez, Colorado, the 173,000-acre Monument was established to protect cultural and natural resources on a landscape scale. These remarkable cultural resources have been a focal point of explorers and researchers for 130 years.

Approximately 45,000 visitors annually explore these ancient sites and camp, hike, horseback ride, mountain bike, use all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), hunt and view wildlife within the Monument. The Monument is important to Native Americans who maintain close ties to the sites occupied by their ancestors. The BLM estimates the Alexander/Yellow Jacket Canyon parcel may contain as many as 170 cultural sites associated with Yellow Jacket Pueblo, one of the largest and best studied Ancestral Puebloan sites in the Southwest. Purchase of this parcel also simplifies maintenance of the Monument as well as fire activities.

Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park.—The National Park Service acquired 41.55 acres at the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park in October 2013. It was the last privately owned parcel in the park and was slated for development through subdivision. Acquisition of this parcel allows the park to manage these lands in a way that preserves the battlefield resource of earthworks that marked both the Union and Confederate lines during the battle. The park contains

the best set of earthworks of any Civil War site, and these would have been bulldozed to make way for development of a suburban housing tract. Acquisition of this land directly contributes to the reason this unit was created. Additionally, this land has served as an unofficial access point for equestrian trails, and with the acquisition this access can be managed to conserve the resources (landscape, flora, water quality in the nearby stream). Making this access official has already saved law enforcement costs in both time and fuel as rangers can now easily access the formal park trails that are adjacent to this land and more effectively monitor looting and poaching activities which have been known to take place in this area.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DIANNE FEINSTEIN

Question. California is in one of the worst droughts in its history. With most of the rain season behind us, the State reported that much of California has received only about 50 percent of normal precipitation. The snowpack is at 24 percent of normal as of March 23. Shasta, Lake Oroville, and San Luis Reservoir are all below 50 percent of capacity. The California Farm Bureau estimates that 500,000 acres of farm land are being fallowed, and more than 100,000 heads of cattle could be lost. Ten or more communities could run out of drinking water within the next few months.

The Interior Department, specifically the Bureau of Reclamation and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, play crucial roles in managing and regulating water operations in California.

You have stated many times that you are looking to operate and manage the water system with flexibility. What specific steps have you taken to maximize operational flexibility?

Answer. Reclamation has been coordinating with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to make the best use of water available in the system for water supply while protecting the fishery. Much of this coordination has been in the Real Time Drought Operations Team (RTDOT). Actions have included modifying both Endangered Species Act (ESA) and water rights permit objectives to improve our operational flexibility and increase Delta exports. The Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP) have also shifted operations between the two projects to minimize impacts to the fish while exporting more water from the Delta and the CVP has delayed construction activities to accommodate operational flexibility.

Question. Do I have your personal commitment that you will be deeply involved in finding ways to maximize operational flexibility so that more water can be provided to California water users?

Answer. Yes, the drought will continue to be a high priority activity in the Department.

California is experiencing another storm this week. This is only the third sizable storm to arrive in California in over a year. A group of water contractors wrote Secretary Jewell and Secretary Pritzker yesterday, urging emergency action to allow for more water to be captured during this storm.

[The letter follows:]

LETTER FROM THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER WATER AUTHORITY

SAN JOAQUIN
RIVER WATER AUTHORITY,
Los Banos, CA, March 25, 2014.

Re Request for Emergency Relief Due to Impending Storm Events.

Hon. SALLY JEWELL, *Secretary,*
Department of the Interior,
C Street NW, Washington, DC.

Hon. PENNY PRITZKER, *Secretary,*
Department of Commerce,
Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY JEWELL AND SECRETARY PRITZKER: We are writing to you under the most urgent circumstances. As you are well aware, California is plagued by one of the worst droughts in its history. Water year 2013–14 thus far has proven to be the second worst water year since recordkeeping began in 1850. While not quite as bad as 1977 standing alone, it comes on the heels of 2 prior years of extremely dry

conditions. Yet, while the opportunities existed over the past 6 weeks to get more water to people and into storage south of the Delta, inaction has resulted in the loss of 225,000–450,000 acre-feet (af) of water supplies. Meanwhile, over 700,000 af flowed to the ocean. The situation for many in California is desperate.

Now is the time that action is needed. The State cannot afford to lose another round of water supplies due to less than full implementation of proactive measures that are available to the State and Federal agencies.

The Departments of Commerce and the Interior are in the unique position of having many of your stakeholders being those directly and profoundly impacted by this drought while at the same time having the ability to implement emergency measures that will provide a modicum of relief. The situation is as follows.

Regulations imposed on the State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP) (together “Projects”) through biological opinions issued by your Departments are having a real-time adverse impact on California’s water supply. With storms about to hit California, the Projects are collectively in the position of being able to capture significant amounts of water without adversely impacting listed fisheries.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has been working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and their State counterparts to examine opportunities to provide flexibility to meet crucial water supply needs in the urban and agricultural sectors. Despite efforts to date, the Silicon Valley, which Secretary Pritzker recently visited and pledged to partner with to promote greater benefits for our economy and our citizens, is only receiving 75,000 acre-feet of the over 200,000 acre-feet which it would be entitled under from State and Federal water sources. As a result, the local water district has requested its retail customers to reduce usage by 25 percent. Economic impacts of water rationing are severe. Similarly, in the agricultural sector, much of which is served by the Bureau of Reclamation, the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys are being devastated. Over 3 million acres of the Nation’s most productive farm lands are receiving a zero surface water allocation this year. Permanent crops such as trees and vines are literally being ripped out due to lack of water. Hundreds of thousands of acres of permanent and annual crops will go fallow. The loss of permanent crops takes 5–10 years to restore. Annual crops fill irreplaceable supply chains that provide about 50 percent of the Nation’s fruits and vegetables. Unemployment in the valleys will soar. Banks loans and insurance will become more expensive if the integrity of the water system is not maintained.

The Endangered Species Act provides NMFS and USFWS with the tools necessary to support the emergency response actions necessary to provide much-needed relief that California needs and avoid the imminent loss of hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of irreplaceable water.

Weather predictions indicate that another storm is heading to California today or Wednesday. We request that you allow for the maximum pumping of the flow that is going to develop from this storm based on the following conditions.

Currently, protected fisheries in the Delta have experienced historically low take at the State and Federal water pumps. The nominal take is consistent with the monitoring data that has consistently and clearly demonstrated a lack of presence of protected fish in the central and south Delta in 2014. Because of this, we believe that maximizing pumping for the limited time that uncontrolled Sacramento River flows are elevated due to the storm is unlikely to jeopardize listed species. However, to ensure adequate levels of protection, we propose that if take reaches the levels of concern identified in the species specific incidental take statement, implementation of this emergency action be reassessed.

As we explain on the attached pages, a temporary adjustment to the Delta smelt and Chinook salmon biological opinions (BiOps) would allow pumping—subject to take of fisheries—up to the full 11,280 cubic feet per second (cfs).

Time is short. The storm is approaching and, practically speaking, we need a decision by close of business on Thursday, before Sacramento River flows arrive at the Delta. We therefore request that conference calls be set up for Wednesday and Thursday so that the situation may be addressed in real time with the most senior resource managers from both the State and Federal sectors as well as the water user and environmental communities.

Once this storm series passes, and thinking ahead to the rest of this water season, the State is installing salinity barriers in the Delta. Further, State and Federal water managers are confident that they can control salinity in the Delta with fairly minimal flow amounts this summer, generally around 2,500 cfs. Water managers are proposing a longer term action plan that is being finalized. Continued real-time management will allow for improvements of water supply and protection of the upstream and Delta ecosystems.

This letter is also being delivered to a number of other State and Federal officials that have a key role in California water decisions. We request that each of them become engaged in this rapid decisionmaking process and participate directly or through their delegates in these conference calls. However, we believe your direct leadership is necessary at this time and hope that you will participate personally. We have taken the liberty of setting up a conference line for the first call on Wednesday at 1 pm PDT (4 pm EDT). For convenience, we propose the same time be used for Thursday.

The opportunity presented by this storm is upon us. We cannot afford inaction by either State or Federal regulators or water managers. We need your authority to impress upon your Departments and others that this is truly an emergency situation that requires immediate action. Failure to take action becomes a decision in and of itself and we are not likely to have another opportunity this year to help relieve this dire situation.

Urgently and gratefully yours,

STEVE CHEDESTER, *Executive Director*,
San Joaquin River Exchange Con-
tractors Water Authority.

DANIEL G. NELSON, *Executive Director*,
San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water
Authority.

RONALD JACOBSMA, *General Manager*,
Friant Water Authority.

CHASE HURLEY, *General Manager*,
San Luis Canal Company.

RANDY HOUK, *General Manager*,
Columbia Canal Company.

CHRISTOPHER L. WHITE, *General
Manager*,
Central California Irrigation Dis-
trict.

JEFF BRYANT, *General Manager*,
Firebaugh Canal Water District.

Enclosures.

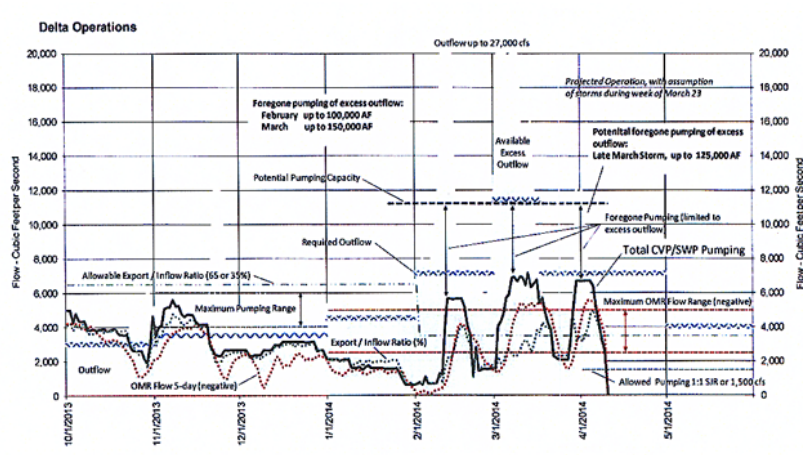
FOREGONE PUMPING

Upcoming storms commencing March 23, 2014

Currently the Projects are operating to a combined 2,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) export level resulting in about 5,500 cfs Delta Outflow and an Old and Middle River reverse flow limitation (OMR) of about -1,600 cfs. The export/inflow (E/I) ratio is about 25 percent, and San Joaquin River stream flow is about 700 cfs. Storms to Northern California are forecast to begin Tuesday evening and will bring precipitation throughout the week and into the weekend. It is anticipated that these storms will result in unregulated runoff within the Sacramento Valley similar in response to the storms experienced earlier in the month, resulting in excess flow in the Delta which potentially is available for delivery and storage south of the Delta. Although there are uncertainties in the timing and magnitude of the storm events, the following provides an explanation of the constraints upon exports that will result in foregone pumping in the near future.

Without immediate relaxation of several pumping and outflow constraints the capture of a significant amount of the excess flow will be foregone, up to 125,000 acre-feet, similar to what has occurred during each of the storms of the last 2 months. The graphic below illustrates projected operations beginning today, through April 9. Of immediate issue are the OMR and E/I constraints. As inflow to the Delta increases due to the storms, pumping will increase. However, almost immediately pumping will be constrained by a maximum OMR flow of -5,000 cfs and a maximum E/I ratio of 35 percent. While available pumping capacity is about 11,280 cfs, the pumps will be running at only about 6,600 cfs, foregoing over 9,000 acre-feet of excess flow per day for several days. This effect is compounded by an outflow requirement of 7,100 cfs for X2 which limits the amount of excess outflow that can be pumped, but which however, under the dire drought circumstances has been reduced by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) this year with the concurrence of State and Federal fishery agencies. Notwithstanding the SWRCB order, separate, but of significant impact on water supplies, will be the effect of the Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) condition in the Biological Opinions regarding the San Joaquin River Inflow to Export Ratio that would be exercised beginning April 1 and continuing through May. This action requires exports to be no greater

than the inflow entering the Delta from the San Joaquin River (1:1), currently about 700 cfs. This action would constrain exports even lower than the actions already constraining the exports to 6,600 cfs, resulting in an additional 11,000 acre-feet per day of foregone pumping.



Question. What is Reclamation doing in response to this storm so that the maximum amount of water can be captured before it flows out to the ocean?

Answer. Our response has been primarily through the RTDOT. The agencies evaluate both the water supply that can be captured as well as the biological effects of the actions.

Question. What are the pros and cons of invoking emergency consultation with the fish agencies to allow for even higher levels of water pumping?

Answer. Emergency consultation allows for immediate action if there is an imminent threat of loss of life or property. However, a traditional consultation must ultimately be completed and mitigation actions implemented. Potential benefits are quick action, as in the case of a flood when an emergency flood wall must be constructed. If however the impacts of the action are extensive, extensive mitigation could be required.

Salvage data from the agencies as of March 19, 2014 show that no Delta smelt has been taken; 276 out of an allowed 24,237 winter run salmon have been taken; and 148 out of an allowed 3,000 steelhead have been taken.

Question. Does the data support the notion that more water pumping can occur without jeopardizing fish species?

Answer. Take limits associated with the Incidental Take Statement in a biological opinion (BiOp) identify the amount of take that can occur while operating consistent with the BiOp and implementing the reasonable and prudent actions in a jeopardy BiOp. Jeopardy considerations include not only take at the pumps but also access to quality spawning and rearing habitat including in-stream temperatures and flows to improve out-migration of smolts. Through the RTDOT process, the project operators and regulatory agencies are doing all that is possible to improve exports while protecting the species.

Question. What other emergency measures can be implemented within your discretion to maximize water supplies without jeopardizing endangered species? And are you prepared to implement those measures immediately?

Answer. Reclamation and DWR continue to work in collaboration with the regulatory agencies (NMFS, FWS, DFW, SWRCB) through the RTDOT process to ensure that exports are maximized while protecting species of concern. The RTDOT participants are willing to implement measures that improve exports while protecting species.

Question. How will the need for carryover storage affect the water projects' ability to export more water as opposed to storing it?

Answer. There will be some tradeoff between releasing water from storage for water supply and retaining some in storage to maintain operations in a continuing drought.

Question. How much carryover storage is needed going into the 2015 water year?

Answer. We are planning the operations to satisfy the regulatory objectives in 2014 and maintain a carryover storage that should carry us through a dry 2015 in the event that the drought might continue. We are assuming that if the drought continues there will be extraordinary operations similar to what we are experiencing in 2014.

Question. California must expand water storage to capture water from the wet years for the dry years, so that we have a better chance of getting through conditions such as the ones we are experiencing now.

However, Reclamation's feasibility studies for new storage projects have been going on for over a decade and have cost over \$91 million with no results yet.

Meanwhile, California is likely to vote on a water bond this year that could make up to \$3 billion available starting mid-2015 for storage projects that have completed feasibility studies and favorable benefit-to-cost ratios.

What will it take to get all storage studies completed by the end of 2015?

Answer. Reclamation has completed public review and comment on draft Feasibility Reports for expanding Shasta Lake and increasing storage in the Upper San Joaquin River basin. The draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Shasta was released for public review and comment last summer, and the draft for Upper San Joaquin is due out this summer. Both studies to support Federal decision-making are on track to be completed by the end of 2015, with Shasta completed by the end of 2014.

All four storage studies have been affected by a significant reduction of non-Federal funding and ability to participate. As a result, while the Draft EIS for both Shasta and Upper San Joaquin meet the requirements for an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), the State is unable to release a Draft EIR for these two projects at this time. In addition, the North-of-the-Delta Offstream Storage Investigation (NODOS) and continued study of Los Vaqueros Expansion (LVE275) are delayed due to a lack of non-Federal cost share. In the past, the State has provided an estimated 90 percent and 50 percent of the funding for these studies respectively. These two projects would require significant non-Federal funding and resources.

Question. Do you see any obstacle that would delay the completion timeframe beyond 2015?

Answer. Endangered Species Act consultations may continue beyond 2015 for Upper San Joaquin. The lack of non-Federal cost sharing presents significant obstacles to completing NODOS and LVE275.

Question. What are those obstacles, and what can be done to mitigate or remove them?

Answer. Non-Federal cost sharing partnerships could mitigate the obstacles, particularly when cost shares are provided via in-kind services. Many potential cost share partners are contributing significant funding to other projects, have been impacted by the State economy, and are fully engaged in drought activities. Reclamation will continue to seek non-Federal cost sharing opportunities.

We clearly need some leadership and accountability at the top level of the Department to get these feasibility studies done.

The initial and partial construction cost estimate for expanding San Luis Reservoir is \$360 million; about two-thirds are for seismic repairs that must be done regardless of whether storage is expanded. Therefore for an incremental cost of approximately \$120 million, the project could yield additional average annual Delta exports of 43,000 acre feet.

We clearly need some leadership and accountability at the top level of the Department to get these feasibility studies done.

Question. Can you commit to completing all the studies by the end of 2015 so the projects could potentially be eligible for State funding if worthy?

Answer. As described above, Reclamation can commit to completing the studies for Shasta and Upper San Joaquin by the end of 2015. Also noted in previous responses is the lack of non-Federal cost share for NODOS and LVE275.

Question. Can you please share with me your overall schedule for completing the San Luis feasibility study?

Answer. A detailed schedule is still being completed and a non-Federal cost-share agreement is still being negotiated, but it is reasonable to assume the studies could be completed as early as December 2017. Data and analysis to support the Safety of Dams risk reduction will be analyzed this summer, including an evaluation of the strength of the dam and potential response to seismic activity. This information is also required for reservoir expansion alternatives.

Question. As you may know, the proposed Cadiz water project in the Eastern Mojave Desert has been a longtime concern for me because of its potential impact on the Mojave National Preserve, pristine public lands that surround it and the plant and wildlife that depend on rare desert water supplies. The project proposes to ex-

tract between 50,000–75,000 acre feet of water from the desert aquifer for sale to municipal water users in Southern California. However, independent studies estimate a recharge rate between 2,000 and 10,000 acre feet per year.

The Cadiz project had hoped to use the Arizona & California Railroad's Right-of-Way to construct a 43-mile-long pipeline connecting their project site with the Colorado River Aqueduct. However, based on a November 4, 2011 opinion from the Interior Department's Solicitors office (known as the M Opinion) which stipulates that railroad companies lack authority to permit activities along their right-of-way unless the projects directly benefit railroad operations, it is my understanding that the Bureau of Land Management thus far denied Cadiz permission to use the right-of-way.

Can you provide me with an update of the status of this project?

Answer. The BLM's evaluation of the project is on hold and is awaiting publication of additional guidance by BLM on the implementation of the M Opinion.

Question. It is my understanding that the BLM is currently developing guidelines for implementing the M Opinion. What is the status of those guidelines?

Answer. The guidelines for implementing the M Opinion have been drafted and the BLM is coordinating within the Department to finalize the guidelines.

Question. Once those guidelines are completed, does the BLM intend to issue a decision on whether the Cadiz project's proposed pipeline is within the scope of the Arizona & California Railroad's Right-of-Way?

Answer. Once the guidance is issued the BLM California will complete its evaluation of the proposed Cadiz project and determine if the activity derives from or furthers a railroad purpose. Once the evaluation has been completed, the BLM will notify the party undertaking the activity of its determination of whether additional approvals are required from the BLM prior to undertaking the project.

Question. There are an estimated 500,000 abandoned mine lands throughout the United States, many on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service and the National Park Service. According to the Mine Safety and Health Administration, every year about 20 to 30 people die in accidents that occur in abandoned mines across the United States.

This has been an enduring concern for me, given that California is home to roughly 50,000 abandoned mines. That is why I pushed for language that was included in the fiscal year 2014 Omnibus Appropriations bill to prioritize the closure of abandoned mines which present the greatest threat to public safety, in particular those mines with dangerous vertical shafts that pose risks to unsuspecting visitors.

I understand that the President's budget proposes creating a Hardrock Mining and Abandoned Mine Cleanup program, which would fund abandoned mine cleanup by rescinding a 2006 reduction in fees paid by coal mines. While this is estimated to generate an additional \$53 million in 2014, this proposal has been made in previous budgets but has failed to gain traction in Congress.

Can you tell me how many abandoned mines were closed by the Department of Interior last year? How many of these were in California?

Answer. The BLM closed 4,947 abandoned mine land features in fiscal year 2013; 99 of those sites were in California. There were no known abandoned mine land closures completed on National Park Service (NPS) lands in 2013. It should be noted that a single mine may have numerous features.

Question. How is Interior prioritizing closure of abandon mines?

Answer. The BLM uses a comprehensive approach to determine which sites are addressed first based on the readiness of Federal and State partnerships and risks to public health, safety, and the environment. High priority sites include physical safety sites such as mine shafts and adits that are in close proximity to populated places such as residences, schools, and recreational areas. Sites impacting water quality are a similarly high priority because mine waste or tailings may threaten human health and the environment.

Priorities are established annually with project funding distributed to State offices on a competitive basis. The Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Program priorities are documented in the AML Program strategic plan, including State office Annual Work Plans. Typically, the AML Program strives to complete ongoing projects before undertaking new projects. Where appropriate, temporary mitigation measures, such as posting appropriate signage and using fencing, may be used until permanent or long-term remediation actions can be completed. In some cases, an imminent risk to public safety may require the BLM to take urgent action in order to address conditions at a site not previously identified or prioritized as a high risk site.

The NPS completed an on-site AML inventory in 2013 where inspectors rated each AML feature for degree of hazard, accessibility (likelihood of visitation), resource significance (both natural and cultural), and resource impacts. Features with a likelihood of serious injury or death were ranked high.

Question. Can Interior please provide me an inventory of the abandoned mines on Federal lands in California, and estimated cost and schedule to close them?

Answer. The BLM Abandoned Mine Site and Cleanup Module database identified 1,672 AML sites containing 5,643 physical safety features in California. The average cost to mitigate each physical safety hazard feature is \$19,400. It would cost approximately \$110 million to close all identified physical safety features in the State. The 2015 budget request continues the legislative proposal to create an Abandoned Mine Lands Program for abandoned hardrock sites that will be financed through the imposition of a new AML fee on hardrock production on both public and private lands. These fees would provide resources to allow the BLM to more aggressively address the highest priority abandoned sites on Federal, State, tribal, and private lands nationwide.

The NPS has 27,900 features at 1,211 sites in 13 NPS units in California. Of those, 793 features have been mitigated and 2,298 features at 632 sites remain at an estimated cost of \$32 million for mitigation. Shovel-ready projects in California (those where National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning and compliance are complete) are estimated at \$9.9 million. There is no schedule for this work at this time.

Question. The National Park Service recently released its final environmental impact statement (FEIS) relating to the Merced Wild and Scenic River Plan. The plan is the third in the last decade and was necessary to comply with the Ninth Circuit's 2008 opinion requiring the Park Service to protect the river's "outstanding remarkable values."

Responding to over 30,000 public comments, the Final EIS attempts to balance resource protection and visitor access in Yosemite Valley. I appreciate the National Park Service's efforts to develop a plan that complies with the requirements of the Wild and Scenic River Act but also protects much loved recreation activities, historic structures and visitor service facilities in Yosemite Valley.

I am glad to see that the new plan will allow continued bike, river rafts and horse rentals and winter ice skating and retain the historic Sugar Pine stone bridge and the Ahwahnee and Yosemite Lodge swimming pools. I applaud the Park Service's efforts to resolve this dispute, but would like to know more about the budget assumptions and schedule to implement the plan while meeting other obligations at Yosemite National Park.

Given the estimated \$210 million cost to implement the FEIS, can you explain the National Park Service's funding expectations and schedule to implement the changes proposed in the Merced River FEIS?

Answer. Potential funding to implement the plan will be derived from three primary sources: (1) Recreation fee program (entrance and camping fees); (2) concessions franchise fees; and (3) other Federal sources such as Federal lands transportation programs.

Both recreation fee revenue and concession franchise fees are annual revenue sources collected by the park. Over the course of the next 20 years, assuming reauthorization of recreation fee authority, the park anticipates that both of these fund sources (currently the park collects approximately \$18 million in fees annually) will be available to implement the changes proposed. Based on projected revenues, the park is confident there will be financial resources to implement a myriad of projects within the next 15–20 years for all three plans mentioned.

During the first 5 to 10 years of implementation, the focus will be to improve the transportation system to alleviate traffic congestion and to conduct ecological restoration of high use areas to better accommodate visitor use. Projects include adding and modifying parking, realigning failing intersections and restoring eroded riverbanks. Concurrent to the improvements to transportation/parking, the park will work towards creating additional camping opportunities and replacing tent cabins with hard sided lodging.

Question. The new location of some facilities was not identified in the FEIS, such as the new bike racks, river rafting facilities and maintenance buildings. When and how will the location of the facilities be chosen and how will the public have an opportunity to engage in that process?

Answer. The locations of minor facilities, such as bicycle rental stands and raft rental operations, will be located outside of the quarter-mile river corridor boundary, yet remain within the primary visitor services nodes. The park does not anticipate further environmental review and public involvement for these actions. The minor shift of the location of these facilities outside the corridor is an operational decision that will be determined after the 2016 concessions contract is awarded. The cost is expected to be minimal.

Question. How will other Yosemite obligations be affected (deferred maintenance—\$500 million, implementation of the Mariposa Grove Plan—\$36 million and

the draft Tuolumne River Plan—\$64.5 million) while implementing the Merced River plan?

Answer. Implementation of both river plans will be completed simultaneously over a 15–20 year period. The Mariposa Grove project will be completed in the next few years, and relies heavily on financial support from the nonprofit Yosemite Conservancy, supplemented with other revenues from recreation fees and transportation funds. As noted above, project revenue will allow the park to make a substantial investment in major actions called for in the plans, as well as continue to address a significant number of deferred maintenance needs. For example, by implementing some of the major transportation improvement components such as road realignments and expanded day use parking lots, much of the deferred maintenance for these areas will be addressed. In addition, the park will continue to prioritize cyclic maintenance, operational funding, and repair and rehabilitation funding to strategically reduce deferred maintenance priorities.

Question. How do you intend to prioritize the needs identified in these plans?

Answer. As noted above, the first priority for plan implementation will be to alleviate traffic congestion and to restore riverbanks and meadows. Once these steps are accomplished, current levels of visitation can be managed more successfully. Concurrently, other priorities will be implemented to enhance the visitor experience by providing additional campsites and increasing the availability of year-round visitor accommodations.

Priority projects seek to accomplish four major goals:

- Correct identified impacts to river resources to ensure continued protection;
- Alleviate crowding and congestion and provide for easy access to key park facilities and shuttles;
- Enhance camping opportunities and winter lodging; and
- Replace temporary non-code compliant employee housing.

Question. Can you explain what the cumulative impact of all these plans is expected to be on the current visitor experience?

Answer. All of the plans address long standing issues with visitor use and user capacity management in the most heavily visited destinations within the park, most notably by calling for actions that will improve the efficiency of the transportation system. Key actions such as relocating and retrofitting day use parking areas, adding campsites, and increasing the amount of year-round lodging in Yosemite Valley, will improve access and the overall quality of the visitor experience. In addition, the wide array of recreational opportunities available throughout the park will be maintained and boating opportunities will be expanded. Once implemented, the plans will provide for a higher quality visitor experience by improving access to the most popular areas in Yosemite and by providing lasting protection for the natural features within those areas. Overall, the park expects implementation to improve the visitor experience.

Question. I applaud the National Wildlife Trafficking Strategy that your Department put forward as part of the President's Taskforce on Wildlife Trafficking.

Wildlife crimes are a global threat to conservation and put iconic species like African elephants and rhinoceroses at risk of extinction. What is equally disturbing is that wildlife crimes are also driving and funding transnational criminal networks and global terrorism.

It is clear to me that the current criminal penalties for these crimes are too weak and that congressional action is needed to address the wildlife poaching crisis.

This is why I am drafting legislation to make wildlife trafficking crimes a predicate offense under Federal racketeering and money laundering statutes, as well as under the Travel Act. Law enforcement already uses these laws to crack down on other major crimes like drug trafficking.

Secretary Jewell, how important will these strengthened tools be in helping your Department end the practice of wildlife trafficking?

Answer. Strengthening enforcement tools for those that enforce our wildlife trafficking laws is extremely important. Doing so would rightly elevate the stature of wildlife crimes within the U.S.'s judicial system to be on par with other serious crimes. Some judicial districts and U.S. Attorneys' Offices are reluctant to act upon wildlife crimes, such as cited in the Lacey Act, Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act because they view them as less serious, especially when they are legislatively structured as weaker and sometimes even "petty" offenses that have weak penalties and cannot serve as predicates for laws that thwart organized crime. This ill informed view has often frustrated us at Interior because our agents have long known that wildlife trafficking violations are not isolated infractions worthy of a misdemeanor.

Wildlife crimes are serious crimes that have insidious effects upon society. In addition to destabilizing the ecology that human communities depend upon, wildlife

that is poached from iconic national parks and world heritage sites robs the surrounding communities of steady income, encourages corruption, and facilitates other crimes. More recently, we are even told of links to terrorism. Additionally, many lives are being lost in the war that is being waged to extract rare wildlife for consumption. Scores of park rangers have been murdered in recent years across Africa and Asia in their noble and nearly futile attempts to protect their wildlife from international crime syndicates. What used to be viewed as mere subsistence poaching has morphed into activity by highly motivated and ruthless criminal organizations that willfully murder park rangers on the lands they protect in order to slaughter and extract wildlife. Wildlife trafficking crimes are intrinsically organized trans-border crimes that undermine the general rule of law and the integrity of communities and rob them of their ability to manage and benefit from their natural resources. Our judicial system responds to the priorities set by the legislative system. Strengthening our wildlife trafficking laws would send a clear signal throughout the justice system from officers in the field to judges on the bench that these laws matter.

Question. What other resources would be useful to the Department in addressing this issue?

Answer. The United States is among the world's largest consumers of wildlife, both legal and illegal. As with any black market trade, it is difficult to determine the exact market value or rank the U.S. role in comparison to other nations. However, we remain a significant market for wildlife and wildlife products, including elephant ivory.

On February 25, 2014, the Service issued a Director's Order to help protect populations of elephants and other endangered or threatened species that are subject to illegal trade. Poaching and illegal trade have been decimating African elephant and rhinoceros populations in recent years. The changes in the Director's Order are among a set of administrative actions specifically called for under the National Strategy on Combating Wildlife Trafficking, which was issued by President Obama on February 11, 2014.

The most significant gaps in the regulatory regime in place before the National Strategy was announced was the continued allowance of some commercial imports and the largely unregulated domestic trade of African elephant ivory. The administrative actions we are taking or have taken include listing the Southern White Rhino under the Endangered Species Act based on similarity of appearance to other listed endangered rhino species, implementing a prohibition on all commercial imports of African elephant ivory regardless of age, implementing a prohibition on the sale of African elephant ivory across State lines, and implementing stricter controls over sale of elephant ivory within the United States, including within States.

The fiscal year 2015 President's budget requests the subcommittee's support of a \$3 million increase for its Law Enforcement and International Affairs programs as part of the administration's new National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking. The funding will be used to combat expanding illegal wildlife trafficking and support conservation efforts on the ground in Africa and across the globe. The budget includes important funding to expand wildlife forensic research to produce key advancements needed to pinpoint the origin of illegal wildlife products which is critical information necessary to prosecute criminal activity.

We believe that these actions will dramatically reduce the U.S. role in the illegal ivory trade and position the Nation to encourage other major ivory consuming countries to take similar actions. In addition, we continue to evaluate whether there are additional tools that could be used to combat wildlife trafficking.

Question. Secretary Jewell, you are no doubt familiar with the March 17 earthquake that struck the Los Angeles area. It is my understanding that this 4.4 magnitude earthquake is one of the strongest earthquakes to hit Southern California in recent years.

I firmly believe that it is a matter of when, and not if, our next significant earthquake event will occur.

In fact, the Southern California Earthquake Center estimates that California has a 99.7 percent chance of having a magnitude 6.7 or larger earthquake within the next 30 years. The chance of having a catastrophic earthquake with a magnitude greater than 7.5 during this period is nearly 50 percent.

Given the millions of lives and billions of dollars at risk of the next major earthquake, can you give me an update on the status of developing an earthquake early warning system for the West Coast?

Answer. Since 2003, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has funded university research on earthquake early warning (EEW), and has invested approximately \$10 million in research, system development and seismic network modernization in California and elsewhere so that the networks are capable of generating earthquake

early warnings. In addition, in January 2012, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation awarded \$6 million over 3 years to the University of California–Berkeley, Caltech, and the University of Washington to perform further research leading to a prototype EEW capability for the U.S. West Coast. As a result of these efforts, in January 2012, the ShakeAlert earthquake early warning system began sending test notifications to a small number of test users, which include California emergency response organizations, utilities, rail operators and a number of private companies.

Before public warnings can be issued routinely, the current ShakeAlert test system must meet quality, speed and reliability standards. Those standards include having enough sensors to ensure coverage near earthquake sources. Currently there are not enough sensors in the Advanced National Seismic System (ANSS) network to provide fast and reliable alerts uniformly across the U.S. West Coast. Although the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay areas have better sensor coverage than other parts of the State, it is estimated that several hundred additional stations will be needed to cover all of the earthquake source regions.

Question. What funding and assistance will your Department provide towards completing this critical project?

Answer. In 2014, Congress appropriated an additional \$850,000 for earthquake early warning development, which was added to a base funding amount of \$600,000. As part of the 2015 President's budget justification, the Department's request for fiscal year 2015 maintains these amounts.

Question. Secretary Jewell, I continue to be concerned about the management and well being of the wild horse populations on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

It is my understanding that there are now nearly 50,000 horses in long- and short-term holding facilities, and that the population of horses that remain in the wild is expected to surpass 60,000 during the next fiscal year.

It is my understanding that last year, the holding costs for horses was \$46 million, more than half of the Wild Horse and Burro programs' annual budget.

This practice of placing horses into costly holding facilities is not sustainable. Long-term solutions for managing the wild horse population in a humane and efficient manner are desperately needed.

Secretary Jewell, how do you plan to ensure that BLM is on the right fiscal path in reducing the number of animals in holding facilities and meeting its goals with on-the-range management techniques?

Answer. For the BLM to sustainably manage wild horses and burros, two things are absolutely essential: forging a path forward to slow population growth and finding homes for families that are already off the range. To immediately address these issues, the BLM is implementing key recommendations from the June 2013 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report:

—*Population Growth Suppression.*—Population growth suppression methods that are effective on western herds are needed to curb herd growth and reduce the need for removals. In April 2014, the BLM and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) initiated a second pasture research trial to evaluate the effectiveness of new formulations of the SpayVac vaccine, which is currently the most promising contraceptive vaccine available. The BLM has also issued a Request for Applications (RFA) for grant funding to support research projects developing techniques and protocols for contraception or the spaying/neutering of on-range male and female wild horses and burros. The RFA closes in May 2014.

—*Population Estimation.*—The BLM has entered into a new Interagency Agreement with the USGS to acquire the technical expertise and assistance necessary to implement NAS-endorsed population survey (census) methods. In 2014, the BLM will survey one-third of its Herd Management Areas using the NAS-endorsed methods to help account for undetected animals. Accurate population data is critical for effective land use planning and herd management.

The BLM is also collaborating with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to explore the feasibility of launching a prize challenge to inspire a scientific solution to wild horse and burro population management challenges. Through continued collaboration with stakeholders and an emphasis in developing effective population growth suppression methods built on the best available science, the BLM remains committed to reforming the Wild Horse and Burro Program and maintaining rangeland health on public lands.

A key component to ensuring long-term program sustainability by reducing the number of animals in holding facilities. Toward that goal, the BLM is implementing the following actions to curb off-range holding costs and reduce holding facility levels.

- Adoption Reforms.*—The BLM is entering into new partnership agreements to increase the number of trained animals available for adoption. The BLM has finalized a new agreement with the Humane Society of the United States, and also launched the Wild Horse and Burro Inmate Training Initiative to increase the number of inmate training programs. The BLM is also in discussions with the Defense Services Cooperation Agency and Heifer International to explore the possibility of providing animals for humanitarian purposes in developing nations.
- Lower Cost Holding Facilities.*—The BLM continues to seek lower cost holding facilities and is currently reviewing three new ecosanctuary proposals. The BLM will also be issuing a new Request for Proposals for lower cost long-term holding contracts.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TIM JOHNSON

Question. According to the President's June 26, 2013, Executive Order, the White House Council on Native American Affairs was established to ensure that the Federal Government engages in a true and lasting government-to-government relationship with federally recognized tribes in a more coordinated and effective manner, including by better carrying out its trust responsibility. It states that this policy is established as a means of promoting and sustaining prosperous and resilient tribal communities, which includes promoting infrastructure to drive economic growth and security and to support special efforts to confront historic health disparities and chronic diseases.

The Executive Order also states that the Council shall work across executive departments to improve the quality of life for Native Americans, and make recommendations to the President concerning policy priorities, including improving the effectiveness of Federal investments in Native American communities.

The Mni Wiconi Project Act of 1988 was enacted to ensure a safe and adequate water supply for the residents of the Pine Ridge, Rosebud and Lower Brule Indian Reservations. The Project delivers clean drinking water to the Reservations and the neighboring non-Indian communities. It is a significant Federal investment intended to improve the quality of life on the Reservations. The act clearly states that the United States has a trust responsibility to ensure that adequate and safe water supplies are available to meet the economic, environmental, water supply and public health needs of the Reservations. As you know, the health disparities between Native Americans and non-Indians are vast, with the Native Americans suffering from high rates of illness and low life expectancy especially on reservations such as those named above where poverty is rampant and access to healthcare is difficult.

The Mni Wiconi Project is nearly complete, but remaining pieces still must be built on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations to ensure the intended beneficiaries are served. Further, the existing community systems that are intended to become a part of the Project need to be upgraded and transferred into the Project. Also, the Project needs sufficient operation, maintenance and replacement funds to ensure the Project can function as intended especially given the United States' substantial investment in the Project to date.

The Cheyenne River Sioux Indian Reservation also has vast water infrastructure needs. The Federal Government, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development, has invested more than \$65 million in the Mni Wasté water system in recent years. This funding will replace and upgrade the core components of the water system, addressing an acute water shortage that threatens public health and safety and inhibits economic growth. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and surrounding communities also face longer term concerns about the state of water distribution infrastructure, however. The cost of major upgrades and an expansion of the distribution system to serve the approximately 7,000-acre service area in Dewey, Ziebach, Perkins and Meade counties could reach several hundred million dollars.

It is clear to me that addressing infrastructure needs of this magnitude on Indian reservations will require substantial engagement and investment from a number of different Federal agencies.

What will you do as Chairwoman of the White House Native American Affairs Council to ensure that these critical water infrastructure projects, which are intended to meet basic human needs on Indian reservations, are adequately considered and furthered by the Council?

Answer. The United States has a unique legal relationship with Indian tribal governments as set forth in the Constitution of the United States, treaties, statutes, Executive Orders, and court decisions. The Federal Government has enacted numer-

ous statutes and promulgated numerous regulations that establish and define a trust relationship with Indian tribes. Moreover, the administration recognizes that federally recognized Indian tribes are sovereign, self-governing political entities that enjoy a government-to-government relationship with the United States Government, as expressly recognized in the U.S. Constitution. The President is a strong supporter of the principle of tribal self-determination and he is committed to working toward fully enabling tribal self-governance.

In my capacity as Chairwoman of the White House Native American Affairs Council, I will advise the President about the full range of issues affecting our Native American communities throughout the country, especially those issues addressing their health and safety. Critical water infrastructure leading to access to adequate potable water is an area on which I and my staff within the Department of the Interior have spent considerable time, especially given their importance. I am fully engaged in improving the circumstances of Native Americans and their access to clean water, though developing or improving water infrastructure projects, such as rural water projects with tribal components, and by coordinating the use of limited Federal resources by multiple Federal, State and local agencies.

The Department of the Interior supports the goal of interagency cooperation and efforts to engage other agencies to participate in the Mni Wiconi Project utilizing their existing authorities. An interagency agreement, as proposed by the Bureau of Reclamation during the August 8, 2012 Joint Consultation Meeting With Federal Agencies, has the potential to achieve this objective. The draft agreement discussed at that meeting provides that the agencies will meet quarterly during the first year to evaluate and prioritize potential system improvements. The agencies then would develop a schedule to fund and implement these improvements. By coordinating this effort, the agencies, utilizing existing authorities, could leverage multiple funding sources, and make more effective use of available Federal funds to accomplish the system improvements.

This proposed interagency agreement and effort also meets the intent of the Memorandum of Understanding Among the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of the Interior, and the Environmental Protection Agency To Better Coordinate the Federal Government Efforts in Providing Infrastructure and Promoting Sustainable Practices To Support the Provision of Safe Drinking Water and Basic Sanitation in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities signed in March 2013.

Also within my Department, and in cooperation with the Office of Management and Budget, I have charged senior staff with coordinating and improving the planning for future and current operations of Indian water settlements. Staffs from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Reclamation, the Office of Special Trustee, the Secretary's Indian Water Rights Settlement Office, and my immediate office are meeting to develop strategies to ensure the continuation of positive collaboration with tribal nations in successful resolving complex, contentious and longstanding litigation over water rights.

The administration will continue to commit significant Federal resources to improving the lives of Native Americans, and the availability of potable water is at the top of my agenda.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI

WILDFIRE CAP ADJUSTMENT EMERGENCY PROPOSAL

Question. For more than a decade, this subcommittee has provided the Forest Service and Department of the Interior with 100 percent of the funds requested to fight fires. That amount has been equal to the 10-year average. This has been an agreement between the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the subcommittee. As the cost and severity of fires have increased, the agencies have run out of money mid-year and had to borrow money from other programs to pay for fire suppression. Fire borrowing has caused this subcommittee to appropriate additional funding the following year to back pay the borrowed accounts from the previous year. This has taken over \$1 billion out of programs across the bill over the last 2 years. We can all agree that this is an inefficient and problematic way to budget. I appreciate the proposal to create a wildfire cap adjustment to end fire borrowing, but there are many questions that remain unanswered.

Under the new proposal, the Department of the Interior (DOI) and Forest Service would only need to request 70 percent of the 10-year average and any amounts

above that would be eligible for disaster cap funding. Can you tell me why the administration chose the 70 percent level?

Answer. In the proposed new budget framework, the administration wanted to limit the use of the cap adjustment to just extraordinary fire costs. The 70 percent level is representative of the amount of funding historically needed for wildfires which occur in the expected seasonal activity level. The other 30 percent, which would be covered in the cap adjustment, represents the level of funding historically necessary to cover the wildfires that are above expected seasonal activity. More to the point, roughly 99 percent of fires comprise 70 percent of the costs in an average year, and thus requesting funding for 70 percent of the 10-year average within the discretionary budget caps is essentially funding all but extraordinary fires that carry outsized costs.

The Department of the Interior and Forest Service derived the 70 percent figure by analyzing their total number of fires for the years 2008 through 2011 and categorizing them according to each fire's total cost. Specifically, Interior's universe of fires was grouped into total fire cost categories of \$500,000 or less; \$500,000 to \$1 million; greater than \$1 million; greater than \$5 million; and greater than \$10 million. The Forest Service's (FS's) universe of fires was grouped into total fire cost categories of less than \$2 million; \$2 million to \$3 million; \$3 million to \$5 million; \$5 million to \$10 million; \$10 million to \$15 million; \$15 million to \$20 million; \$20 million to \$30 million; \$30 million to \$50 million; and over \$50 million. The total number of Interior fires for the years 2008 thru 2011 was 42,719 fires. The number of fires less than \$1 million in cost was 42,449 or 99 percent of the fires. The total number of Forest Service fires for the years 2008 through 2011 was 28,642. The number of fires less than \$10 million was 28,596 or 99 percent of those fires.

The total cost of Interior fires for the years 2008 to 2011 was \$1,247,755,482 (in fiscal year 2013 dollars). The total cost of fires which were \$1 million or less per fire was \$784,791,923 (in fiscal year 2013 dollars) in those same years, or 63 percent of the costs. The total cost of Forest Service fires for the years 2008 to 2011 was \$5,127,000,000 (in fiscal year 2013 dollars). The total cost of fires which were \$10 million or less per fire was \$3,836,000 (in fiscal year 2013 dollars) in those same years, or 75 percent.

The averages when both Interior's and Forest Service's data were combined resulted in a percentage split of approximately 70/30. In other words, for the two agencies combined, 99 percent of fires consumed 70 percent of total suppression costs, while 1 percent of fires consumed 30 percent of total suppression costs.

Question. For fiscal year 2014, the amount appropriated for fire suppression at DOI which was equal to the 10-year average was close to \$400 million. Isn't it the case that under your new proposal you would have only had to request 70 percent of \$400 million thereby freeing up funds (roughly \$100 million) to be used elsewhere in your budget? In fact, you have touted that these funds can now be used for fire prevention activity.

Answer. The new budget framework for suppression costs aims to stop the crippling fire transfers and create a more responsible way to budget for suppression operations that allows for improved agency planning and management. The budget includes increases of \$34.1 million in Preparedness, \$2 million in Burned Area Rehabilitation, \$4.2 million for fixed costs increases, and \$30 million to establish a new Resilient Landscapes program. It also funds the hazardous fuels reduction program at approximately the 2014 enacted level.

Question. Have you considered continuing to use the 10-year average as the benchmark and only amounts above that level would be eligible for disaster funds?

Answer. As reflected in its proposed new budget framework, the administration believes it is prudent to budget for wildfire suppression costs similarly to how the Federal Government budgets for other natural disasters. This means funding the more predictable suppression costs within the domestic budget caps and funding the unpredictable and extraordinary suppression costs through the cap adjustment. As explained in the response to the question above, the 10-year average includes the costs of all wildfires. This includes those wildfires that are above an expected seasonal activity level. The administration determined that funding 70 percent of the 10-year average within the discretionary budget caps is essentially funding all but extraordinary fires that carry outsized costs.

The underlying premise of the new budget framework for suppression costs is to stop the crippling fire transfers and create a more responsible way to budget for suppression operations that allows for improved agency planning and management. The proposed 2015 framework also allows for significant investments in other components of the Wildland Fire Management program which, over the long term, will help control suppression costs. Limiting the budget cap adjustment to only costs ex-

ceeding the 10-year average would undermine both of these attributes of the 2015 President's budget proposal.

Currently, the administration has not sent up any specific language on this issue but has instead been working with Senators Wyden and Crapo and Congressman Simpson on their companion bills.

Question. Does the administration plan to send up a specific proposal of its own?

Answer. The Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Forest Service, in conjunction with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), are meeting with appropriations and authorizing committees about the proposal. The administration has also offered technical assistance in drafting authorizing language.

S. 1875, the Wildfire Disaster Fund Act of 2013, which would enact the proposed wildfire cap adjustment, has been referred to the Budget Committee, but last year the administration asked that we carry it in the Omnibus Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2014.

Question. If the Budget Committee does not take action on this bill—which appears unlikely with Chairman Ryan's objection—would the administration request we do it as part of the Interior appropriations bill?

Answer. The administration has been working closely with the committees of jurisdiction including the House and Senate Budget Committees. An amendment to the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (BBEDCA) is needed to authorize the cap adjustment and this authorization must be enacted prior to enactment of any bill containing the appropriation of wildfire suppression cap adjustment funding. Thus, the amendment could be included in authorizing legislation or in an appropriations bill that advances ahead of the bill containing that appropriation.

Question. If we were to do it on the fiscal year 2015 Interior bill, what would be the scoring impact?

Answer. Although the language to amend BBEDCA to authorize the cap adjustment does not itself score, it must be enacted in advance of an Interior bill that contains an appropriation for wildfire suppression cap adjustment funding. This is because the language establishing the cap adjustment must already be in law prior to the consideration of the funding for the cap adjustment in order to permit the Budget Committees to increase the 302(b) allocation by the amount of such funding. If the amendment is included in the same bill that contains that appropriation, the Budget Committees will instead count the cap adjustment funding against the Interior subcommittee's 302(b) allocation for purposes of congressional enforcement.

Question. Can you explain whether we could utilize the funding cap adjustment in 2015?

Answer. Yes, as long as the amendment to BBEDCA authorizing the cap adjustment is enacted prior to the consideration of any bill containing the appropriation of wildfire suppression cap adjustment funding, the cap adjustment can be utilized in fiscal year 2015.

Currently, CBO scores the Interior bill with the full outlays associated with the 10-year average. With your proposal, you would only be requesting 70 percent of the 10-year average.

Question. Would CBO continue to score the bill with 100 percent of the outlays for the 10-year average, or how would this change under your proposal?

Answer. Once the cap adjustment for wildland fire is enacted, we expect that CBO would continue to score budget authority and outlays to the Interior bill based on the total amount for that purpose provided in the legislation. However, only 70 percent of the 10-year average would be counted for purposes of enforcing the 302(b) allocation. The Budget Committee would permit an increase in the 302(b) allocation for the remaining funding provided for wildfire suppression as part of the cap adjustment, subject to the terms of the cap adjustment.

CONTRACT SUPPORT COSTS

Question. In fiscal year 2014, the administration proposed capping the amounts available to tribes for contract support costs, in what I believe was an effort to circumvent the tribes' victory in the Ramah case decided by the Supreme Court. Thankfully, my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and in the House and Senate determined this was not the right approach. Since then, the administration has announced it will pay full contract support costs for the current fiscal year and has also requested the full amount in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Indian Health Service budgets for fiscal year 2015. For BIA, this is \$251 million. I have a few questions about this that go to how your budget is formulated so I'll ask Ms. Suh.

How are these estimates for contract support costs estimated for your budget submission?

Answer. Indian Affairs used a number of factors to estimate the Contract Support Cost (CSC) amount that is requested in the President's budget request. The factors included prior year CSC Shortfall reports, estimating the CSC need based on the amount of funding requested in the Operation of Indian Programs account, and estimating the potential change in the cost associated with administering new and expanded self-determination or self-governance compacts for tribes or tribal organizations. After this analysis, Indian Affairs estimates the total CSC need for fiscal year 2015 at \$251 million (\$246 million for Contract Support Cost and \$5 million for the Indian Self-Determination Fund). This is similar to the methodology used to develop the CSC amount included in the Indian Affairs 2014 Operating Plan which was \$247 million (\$242 million for Contract Support Cost and \$5 million for the Indian Self-Determination Fund).

Question. For years, we've had shortfall reports which have come in after the fact and indicated that a sufficient amount was not appropriated in a particular year for contract support costs. How, if at all, has the process been improved to more accurately estimate the need in the upcoming year for contract support costs?

Answer. The methodology for estimating the CSC shortfall amount and total CSC funding need has been refined over the years. With each subsequent year, with an additional year of data and greater experience, Indian Affairs has aspired to become more accurate in estimating these costs. In recent years, one refinement has been greater emphasis on basing the CSC estimate on the amount of funding in the Operation of Indian Programs account, which is a major driver of CSC.

Question. Isn't it also the case that the need for contract support costs may change based on how Congress treats your budget? For example, if you get an increase in several program lines, that will also increase the need for the contract support costs that go to the tribes to deliver the programs.

Answer. Yes, the total CSC funding need can vary based on the final appropriated amounts that Congress enacts. If Congress increases funding for program lines that call for CSC, the CSC need will rise. If Congress reduces program lines that call for CSC, the CSC need will also decrease.

GREATER MOOSE'S TOOTH—NATIONAL PETROLEUM RESERVE—ALASKA

Question. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is working to finalize the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Greater Moose's Tooth development project. This EIS tiers off the National Petroleum Reserve—Alaska (NPRA) Final Integrated Activity Plan and EIS, and the Alpine Satellite Development Plan Final EIS. GMT-1, as it's referred to, will allow for the first oil production from the NPRA, which the administration has specifically stated is part of its all-of-the-above energy strategy. As with all development projects in Alaska, construction timelines are tight, and several permits must be in place before the project may move forward. Simply put, GMT-1 cannot move forward until the EIS is finalized, as subsequent permits will be based on this document.

The public comment period on the Supplemental EIS is 60 days and does not close until April 22.

Given that this is a Supplemental EIS and tiers off two other Final EISs, do you agree that 60 days is sufficient for public comment?

Answer. The public comment period was not extended and the BLM expects to have ongoing public engagement.

Question. After the public comment period closes, how much time (weeks, months?) does the Department expect to need to finalize the document?

Answer. Public comments received will be reviewed and considered as the BLM prepares the Final Supplemental EIS.

Question. When do you expect the Final EIS to be released?

Answer. The BLM is working diligently to complete the Final Supplemental EIS; however, it is important to note this is a complex undertaking. The project continues to move forward as planned and will be released upon consideration of public comments and preparation of the Record of Decision.

Question. Does the Department have adequate resources to make sure this project moves forward this year?

Answer. The BLM has an interdisciplinary team focused on completing the requirements to move this project forward.

OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT ON PUBLIC LANDS

Question. Domestic oil and gas development plays a critical role in our Nation's economic and national security. We see daily evidence of this as we continue to

watch events unfold in Ukraine. Unfortunately, rather than encouraging onshore development, Federal policies make public lands less attractive to investment when compared to State and private lands. This results in important resources, revenues, and jobs left in the ground. I think it is unfortunate that resource rich States and our Nation are not able to take advantage of the myriad benefits responsible domestic development provides.

For perspective, for every dollar invested in onshore oil and gas development on public lands, \$88 in revenue is generated. In 2012 this resulted in \$3.5 billion in onshore lease and royalty revenues to American taxpayers.

I was dismayed to see the Department's proposals for oil and gas development, which focus on increased fees, higher royalty rates, and shorter lease terms. Especially since activities designed to improve permitting, such as continued funding for pilot offices, were not prioritized and the leasing reforms put in place have primarily served to give anti-development interests another bite at the apple when it comes to litigation. Contrast this with the budget's request for renewable energy which is designed to "continue to aggressively facilitate and support solar, wind, and geothermal energy development." I support responsible renewable energy development on public lands, but I do not support favoring it over traditional energy development.

Do you know how much revenue is generated by the renewable energy industry on public lands compared to the onshore program on public lands?

Answer. Total revenues from solar, wind, and geothermal authorizations and leases on public land were approximately \$25 million in fiscal year 2012 and \$25.5 million in fiscal year 2013. Revenues will increase substantially as construction is completed on many projects and these facilities enter operation and begin to deliver energy to the electric grid. Until recently, there were no commercial scale solar energy facilities operating on public lands managed by the Department.

The total revenues from the onshore oil and gas program were approximately \$2.9 billion in fiscal year 2012 and \$3 billion in fiscal year 2013 from oil and gas royalties, rents, and bonus bids.

Question. Do you believe we should also aggressively facilitate oil and gas development on public lands? Why or why not?

Answer. Promoting the efficient, safe, and responsible development of public land energy resources is a critical part of the administration's broad all-of-the-above energy strategy. The BLM actively facilitates oil and gas development on public lands as a critical contributor to both the national economy and energy portfolio, while also continuing to meet various Federal environmental requirements, such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA). Following these mandates, the BLM supports vital oil and gas development activities which help our Nation achieve a more secure energy future.

Question. Do you believe the budget proposal increases or decreases competitiveness of public lands?

Answer. Federal oil and gas production is an important component in fulfilling our Nation's energy needs and the Department has an obligation to the public to ensure a fair return on that production. The Department deems the proposed changes necessary to ensure this fair return, and we do not believe they will make Federal lands less competitive compared to the States. Onshore Federal oil and gas royalty rates, which are currently 12.5 percent, are lower than most States' royalty rates.

The administration believes that American taxpayers should get a fair return on the development of energy resources on their public lands. We feel industry should pay the cost of inspecting and monitoring oil and gas activities, as is the case for other industries, including offshore oil and gas. This is consistent with the principle that the users of the public lands should pay for the cost of both authorizing and oversight activities.

The Department's intent behind the proposed fee on non-producing leases is to encourage more timely development of Federal lands. The fee will provide an incentive for oil and gas companies to either put their leases into production or relinquish them so the Department can re-lease those tracts to companies who want to develop them. Many States also have similar fees (e.g., escalating rental rates) to encourage development. Therefore, the Department does not believe the proposed changes will make Federal lands less competitive compared to the States.

The President's 2015 budget request also includes a more than 20 percent funding increase to strengthen the BLM's Onshore Oil and Gas Program and supports continued implementation of leasing reforms, enhanced oversight, and a strengthened inspections process. Leasing reforms launched in 2010 have cut the rate of protests from nearly 50 percent in fiscal year 2009 to approximately 18 percent in fiscal year

2013, leading to reduced costs and greater certainty for lessees. It is also important to note the BLM issued 1,468 leases in fiscal year 2013.

Question. Given the constraints of our current budget, does the Department consider the impact to investment that increased fees and duplicative regulations have on generating revenue for taxpayers when making funding request decisions?

Answer. The Department has not proposed duplicative or unnecessary regulations. Moreover, we believe that the modest fees proposed on oil and gas operations in the 2015 budget request will have a negligible impact on other revenue generation while providing important resources to fund the programs that support responsible oil and gas development on Federal lands.

The BLM's 2015 budget request for authority to collect inspection and enforcement fees aligns onshore oil and gas inspections and enforcement with the authority the Congress has enacted annually since 2010 for oil and gas inspection and enforcement on the outer continental shelf. The Department estimates the fees will generate \$48 million which will allow for a \$38 million decrease in net BLM appropriations while still providing for an increase of \$10 million for BLM to expand and strengthen onshore oil and gas inspection and oversight.

The additional funding provided by the fee authority is necessary to improve the BLM's capacity for production accountability, safety, and environmental protection. The BLM will use the funds to expand capacity to correct deficiencies identified by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in a February 2011 report, designating Federal management of oil and gas resources as high risk. Funds from the fees will be used to increase inspections of Federal and tribal high risk oil and gas cases and complete more environmental inspections to ensure environmental requirements are being met in all phases of development. Expanding BLM's capacity to conduct production accountability inspections will better ensure American taxpayers are properly compensated for the value of oil and gas resources developed on the public lands.

The proposed inspection fees would also enable the BLM to be more responsive to market demand. This funding will be used to hire new inspectors and improve the tools and systems necessary to implement the risk-based inspection program.

NPRA LAND PLANNING/OTHER LAND PLAN COSTS

Question. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service more than 3 years ago began work on a new land management plan for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The preliminary plan seemed to propose that most of the 19 million-plus-acre refuge, including all of the 1.5 million acres of the Arctic coastal plain that the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) predicts contains between 6.7 billion and 16 billion barrels of oil—America's largest on shore petroleum resource—would be proposed for wilderness, rather than just the 8 million acres already placed in wilderness by the Alaska lands act in 1980. In 2013, however, efforts to finish the land management plan seemed to have gone into suspended animation, which means the area is being managed as if the new land plan is already in effect.

Where is the planning process at present and when is a final NPRA revised land plan likely to be unveiled?

Answer. The BLM released the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) Final Integrated Activity Plan (IAP)/EIS on December 19, 2012. On February 20, 2013, the Record of Decision for the Final IAP/EIS was released and superseded previous land use plans in the management of the 23-million-acre reserve.

As for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a draft revised Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (CCP/EIS) for public comment on August 15, 2011. The CCP/EIS proposed six alternatives ranging from recommending Wilderness designation for the Brooks Range, the Coastal Plain, and the Porcupine Plateau and Wild River designation for the Atigun, Hulahula, Kongakut, and Marsh Fork Canning rivers to recommending current management practices remain unchanged. A preferred alternative was not identified. Over 612,000 public comments were received on the draft. These included communications by mail, e-mails, faxes, Web site submissions, and statements at public meetings. The Department is considering the comments received and continues to prepare a final CCP/EIS.

Question. Also, can you supply for the record what both the Fish and Wildlife Service and the BLM are planning to spend in fiscal year 2015 on updating land management plans in Alaska overall?

Answer. The BLM funding allocation for updating land management plans in Alaska in fiscal year 2015 is \$2.1 million and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) estimates that it will spend \$300,000 in fiscal year 2015 for updating Comprehen-

sive Conservation Plans on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska. The FWS will also provide section 7 consultations to Federal agencies in Alaska in 2015, though the cost of these consultations is not tracked by agency.

Question. There are at least three other plans throughout western and central Alaska in varying stages of updating/completion, some before their normal planning windows. I'm curious about what they are costing the Department.

Answer. Following is a funding schedule for the Eastern Interior RMP, the Bering Sea/Western Interior Resource Management Plan (RMP), the Central Yukon RMP, and the NPR-A.

[Dollars in thousands]

Plan name	Fiscal year—							Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 ¹	
Eastern Interior RMP	\$763	\$608	\$44	\$150	\$300	\$70	\$50	\$1,985
Bering Sea/Western Interior RMP .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	659	825	948	2,432
Central Yukon RMP .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	561	675	1,020	2,256
NPR-A .....	.....	195	940	977	500	.....	.....	2,612

¹ Anticipated. Actual allocation may vary based on needs, scheduling, and competing priorities.

LEGACY WELL CLEANUP

Question. Madam Secretary, we have spoken often about the need for the Department to speed up the cleanup of 136 abandoned oil and gas exploration wells in northern Alaska, wells drilled by the Government in both the 1940s and late 1980s and early 1990s. You had about \$1 million in your budget last year for such cleanups. Fortunately, in the Helium bill last fall we were able to increase your cleanup funding by \$50 million so that the Department will be able to tackle the worst of the wells in coming years and gain efficiencies by being able to reduce mobilization costs and improve coordination of the cleanup efforts. But that \$50 million will not solve all of the problems.

Will the Department change its priorities and increase its regular budgetary funding to tackle environmental cleanups of abandoned Federal wells on an annual basis, since their cleanup truly is a Federal responsibility, so that we aren't back in the same position in 6 years of having insufficient funding to clean up environmental problems on Federal lands?

Answer. The Department appreciates your role in the passage of the Helium Stewardship Act of 2013, which allows BLM to continue to provide stability to the helium market and support 21st century jobs and industry. The bill also provides a major funding source to address the worst abandoned oil and gas exploration wells. This funding will significantly increase the speed of remediation efforts at those high priority wells.

When Congress transferred administration of the Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 4 in 1976 (legislatively renamed the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska or NPR-A), the Department inherited a massive legacy of federally drilled oil and gas exploration wells. Some of these wells have never been properly plugged and closed and the workload was well beyond the scope of the DOI environmental cleanup budget. To date, nearly \$90 million has been spent cataloging, monitoring and remediating these legacy wells.

The BLM will continue to coordinate efforts with the State of Alaska and the North Slope Borough in addressing well plugging and cleanup activities so these wells can be closed in a manner consistent with State and Federal law. Although it is premature to discuss budget priorities for the years 2020 and beyond, the BLM will keep the subcommittee fully informed of its progress over time with the objective of ensuring no surprises as we work through this legacy workload.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE

Question. The Department's budget contains a proposal in support of the Park Service Centennial in 2016. We all support the National Parks and recognize the importance of this event. The most significant feature of this proposal is the request for \$300 million in each of the next 3 years in mandatory funding, \$100 million to be matched by private partners, for what your budget describes as signature projects and \$200 million for deferred maintenance projects. The budget also indicates that you plan to send up a legislative proposal for this initiative later this year.

Can you explain to me what you mean by signature projects? In other words, what are the criteria for qualifying for a project with these funds?

Answer. The minimum eligibility requirement for a project is that they have a one to one partner match to Federal funds. Preference will be given to projects with a higher partner match, a clear and immediate visitor benefit, and an ability to be obligated in a timely manner. The visitor benefit may include projects such as educational programing, providing increased visitor access, or rehabilitating a visitor use asset. All parks and partners are eligible.

Question. Will these projects also address the backlog or will they be for new construction? My concern is that many folks who may give private donations may be interested in new facilities rather than fixing up many existing sites.

Answer. These projects would support both infrastructure and non-infrastructure needs. There is evidence of strong partner support for projects other than new construction. For example, the Yosemite Conservancy is interested in repairing water lines to save the habitat of the giant sequoias, and the Gettysburg Foundation is interested in rehabilitating the Little Round Top visitor use area. These projects would be in addition to the deferred maintenance projects funded through the \$200 million proposal, which will have specific performance measures to track the restoration of the highest priority park assets to good condition.

Question. Will more rural States with less philanthropic resources be at a disadvantage in competing for funds against wealthier areas?

Answer. Our partners are very diverse, and their ability to raise funds varies widely, but we feel we will be able to match our myriad Centennial efforts to an appropriate partner—or partners—as 2016 approaches and the Centennial Initiative gains momentum. Our experience with managing the Centennial Challenge program from fiscal year 2008 to fiscal year 2010 does not indicate that rural States would be at a disadvantage. For example, successful projects were at rural parks such as Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, Mesa Verde National Park, Redwood National Park, and Andersonville National Historic Site. Many parks in rural States have well established friends groups.

Question. While I support efforts to address the backlog which \$200 million of this proposal does, what offsets will be used to pay for this new mandatory funding?

Answer. The administration looks forward to working with Congress on the details of legislation that would advance the Centennial proposal, including the necessary offsets for this new spending. That includes revenue generating proposals in DOI's 2015 budget that are estimated to result in savings to the Treasury of more than \$2.6 billion over 10 years. While the fiscal climate requires prudence, national parks have a proven track record as economic engines. For example, the recently released, peer reviewed National Park Visitor Spending Effects report found that national parks across the country continued to be important economic engines, generating \$26.75 billion in economic activity and supporting 243,000 jobs. In terms of leveraging Federal funds, for every dollar invested by taxpayers, \$10 is returned to the American economy.

Question. As an appropriator, it always gives me pause when we move portions of an agency's budget offline. What role will this Committee have in overseeing how these funds are expended?

Answer. The administration recognizes the help the Appropriations Committee has provided in addressing deferred maintenance in national parks, so we would want a legislative proposal to provide for appropriate oversight by this Committee. There are a number of options, such as consultations on criteria to be used and notifications now included in annual congressional justifications on the planned allocation of Recreation Fee permanent appropriations.

KATMAI/BROOKS CAMP BRIDGE

Question. Madam Secretary, your budget request includes \$4.4 million for the first phase of a \$7.5 million project to replace the existing floating bridge at Brooks Camp in Katmai National Park with an elevated bridge and walkway. This new bridge will be a minimum of 10 feet above the ground. The purpose is to minimize human-bear interactions which frequently cause lengthy delays for workers and visitors getting back and forth across the Brooks River.

While these objectives may be worthwhile, I'm troubled by the fact that this bridge is part of what I view as an outdated Development Concept Plan (DCP) completed in 1996 that also calls for moving the entire existing Brooks lodge to the other side of the river. I completely disagree with that not only because it would be totally cost prohibitive, but also because of the historic significance of this facility. It was created by one of Alaska's aviation pioneers who built this camp before Katmai National Park was established. I don't want to see the construction of this bridge if it is part of an effort by the Park Service to move Brooks lodge.

Is it still the DOI's position that the Brooks lodge facility must be moved to the other side of the Brooks River?

Answer. The National Park Service (NPS) does not plan to move the historic Brooks lodge facility. Once the bridge is finished, the NPS will complete the supporting infrastructure at the Valley Road Administrative Area and move the majority of NPS housing to the south side. This combined effort will significantly reduce development on the north side, mitigating impact to cultural resources and bear use areas. It will greatly improve the visitor experience. The lodge, campground, cultural exhibits, and limited concessioner housing will remain on the north side.

Question. Would the Department agree to go back and re-do the existing DCP so that it reflects the latest science and budget realities that we are operating under?

Answer. The 2013 Brooks River Visitor Access EIS amended the 1996 Development Concept Plan (DCP) by retaining existing floatplane access on Naknek Lake and Lake Brooks, and approving an elevated bridge and boardwalk system across Brooks River. It improves visitor safety by reducing the risk of bear interactions and provides for permanent, reliable access across the river.

The NPS utilized scientific expertise in formulating the 2013 plan (Amended EIS). For instance, NPS convened a panel of State, Federal, and university brown bear experts to advise the planning team during project scoping. Other special studies of cultural resources, river hydrology, geotechnology, and bear movements informed the plan. The plan was vetted through full public involvement, including project scoping and meetings conducted in Anchorage, King Salmon, and Brooks Camp.

RED DEVIL MINE/NATIVE LAND CONTAMINATION

Question. First, I want to thank the Secretary for proposing to include \$2.7 million to speed remediation of mine waste at the old Red Devil Mine site in Southwest Alaska—a situation that has been under consideration between Interior and the State of Alaska for more than a decade. However, Red Devil also brings up the broader issue of environmental pollution and contamination on lands already conveyed to Alaska Natives under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Currently, there are more than 650 such sites on Native lands—lands contaminated prior to conveyance—where the Federal Government is statutorily responsible for the cleanup. In 1988, the Department studied the subject and proposed a six-point effort to speed up cleanup of such contamination but nothing happened. Last fall, I wrote and asked you about the Department's plans for cleanup. In January, you promised the Department would update its contaminated lands survey—and I understand you have assigned staff to update that survey.

My question is how quickly might the updated survey be finished and more importantly, how quickly will the Department devote actual funding and resources to clean up contamination caused by Federal agencies?

Answer. The Department shares your concern that contaminated lands may have been conveyed to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations. As I stated in my January 2014 letter, the Department is committed to determining what sites identified were conveyed under ANCSA in order to continue follow up on the six recommendations. The BLM is working cooperatively with the Alaska Native Village CEO Association on this issue and meeting regularly with them to gather information and complete the inventory. The BLM's goal is to complete the inventory by late summer this year.

Since January 2014, the BLM-Alaska has designated a full-time project manager to focus specifically on the contaminated lands. The project manager's group is reviewing the BLM's data to determine what contaminated lands may have been conveyed. A database of this information is being developed, which will allow us to prioritize future actions. Once the inventory is completed, the Department will be better able to assess the resources appropriate to remediate the contaminated lands.

ALASKA VOLCANO OBSERVATORY FUNDING

Question. The United States Geological Survey operates the Alaska Volcano Observatory, a joint entity with the University of Alaska. USGS operates five such observatories in the western United States. The observatory maintains a series of seismic monitors on volcanoes in Alaska, largely on the Alaska Peninsula and the Aleutian Chain, near the air corridor for flights to America from Asia. Ash from eruptions is particularly dangerous to such flights as shown by the near crash of a jumbo jet years ago.

According to USGS's own count, many of the seismic monitors need to upgrade to digital technology, as well as the replacement of antennas and batteries since the stations are rapidly going off line. Not only is this causing a real health and safety issue not just for Alaskans, but international passengers on trans-Pacific flights.

Your budget contains several increases, such as a \$17.1 million increase just for climate change research, while it appears to contain roughly flat funding for the Natural Hazards Program, even though tracking and predicting earthquake and volcanic eruptions would seem to be one of the Department's most important health and safety responsibilities. Your budget seems to call for increases of just \$314,000 for the Earthquakes Program—a sore subject in this the 50th anniversary year of the strongest earthquake in North American history—the Good Friday quake in Alaska in 1964—and just \$187,000 for the Volcano Program, even though the estimate just to maintain just the Alaska seismic monitoring network will cost millions additionally a year for maintenance to keep the network from collapsing.

I'm afraid we're going to reach a point in the very near future where we simply don't have enough information available to predict and monitor the volcanic activity in Alaska, which could have catastrophic consequences. The fiscal year 2014 Conference Report contained language noting these challenges and concerns.

What is USGS doing to make sure that these monitoring systems don't collapse in the near future, as is predicted?

Answer. The fiscal year 2014 Omnibus Appropriations report provides \$400,000 toward rapid response to ash forming eruptions and network restoration activities. As proposed in the 2015 President's budget request, these funds will be applied toward installation of monitoring instrumentation at other U.S. volcanoes prone to ash-forming eruptions in Washington and Oregon. Restoration of existing Alaskan volcano networks is a long-term project with anticipated duration of 3 to 4 years at the current funding level.

The Alaska Volcano Observatory (AVO) received an additional \$119,000 in 2014 to support maintenance work on geophysical monitoring networks on Alaska volcanoes. Of this amount, the USGS will spend \$73,000 on equipment and maintenance costs for ailing monitoring networks and \$46,000 for helicopter support will be routed to the Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys through a cooperative agreement to support maintenance of monitoring networks. The high priority targets for AVO maintenance work in the summer of 2014 will be the repair of instruments on Shishaldin, Westdahl, and Fisher volcanoes on Unimak Island, where all seismic instruments are operating at an impaired level. Shishaldin is experiencing an ongoing low level effusive eruption and seismic instruments are critically needed. Additionally, AVO plans network maintenance on the Katmai volcanoes of Spurr, Redoubt, Augustine, Akutan, Makushin, and Okmok in 2014, where seismic instruments are also operating at an impaired level. No maintenance is planned in 2014 for Aniakchak or Four Peaked volcanoes where networks have recently failed. AVO hopes to re-engineer these networks so they will be more robust and cost effective to operate and plans to make repairs/upgrades in 2015 pending availability of funds.

AVO is also partnering with a National Science Foundation (NSF) funded archeology project through the University of Kansas and Whitman College to place two new monitoring stations on Cleveland volcano. Cleveland volcano has been the most consistently active volcano in Alaska over the past 5 to 10 years and is currently not monitored with ground based instrumentation. This maintenance will lower the hazard risk posed to NSF-funded researchers and accompanying USGS scientists and provide the means to detect and warn of future eruptions of Cleveland much more rapidly than is currently possible. This partnership significantly lowers the logistical costs on placing monitoring instrumentation on this very active and very remote Aleutian volcano. Future commitments by the NSF GeoPrisms initiative suggest that cost effective ship and helicopter access for maintenance work will continue for at least several more years.

Question. Could you provide this subcommittee with the current gaps in the monitoring infrastructure at the Alaska Volcano Observatory and the estimated costs to maintain a sufficient monitoring system?

Answer. Currently AVO seismic networks on Aniakchak, Little Sitkin, Four Peaked, Wrangell, and Semisopochnoi volcanoes are not operational and seismic networks on Gareloi, Westdahl, Fisher, Shishaldin, Dutton, Peulik, Katmai, and Pavlof volcanoes are operating at an impaired level. To repair and consistently maintain these networks AVO would need an additional \$2.5 million a year for an annual budget of \$6.5 million to \$7 million. AVO currently has no ground-based monitoring at several moderate to high threat volcanoes including Kiska, Kasatochi, Seguam, Amukta, Yunaska, Carlisle, Cleveland, Herbert, Kagamil, Vsevidof, and Chiginagak and these volcanoes represent significant gaps in our ability to address volcanic hazards in Alaska and on North Pacific air routes.

The Volcano Hazards Program (VHP) has to balance the high threat volcanoes in Alaska needing instrumentation with the Very High Threat volcanoes in the conterminous United States whose monitoring networks are inadequate for the

threat they pose—most notably Glacier Peak, Washington (virtually no instrumentation); Baker, Washington; Mt. Hood, Oregon; Lassen Peak, California; and Mt. Shasta, California.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Question. Your fiscal year 2015 proposal asks for \$550 million in mandatory spending for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program. The administration has been making similar requests to use mandatory funds for LWCF over the last several years and Congress has not enacted any of them. Your budget documents indicate that in fiscal year 2016, the administration will propose the fully authorized level of \$900 million for LWCF, paid for entirely through mandatory appropriations. I wholly disagree with this. In a time of tight budgets and overwhelming debt, why should Congress, and especially this subcommittee support putting this program on auto pilot? LWCF has received roughly \$300 million over the last few budget cycles in discretionary funds.

Why should this program be placed above other critical priorities in the Interior bill like Indian schools and healthcare and receive guaranteed full funding?

Answer. The Department of the Interior is entrusted with overseeing Federal lands for the benefit of current and future generations. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is an innovative program that has, for nearly 50 years, used revenues from offshore oil and gas development to enhance parks and open spaces in every county across the country. The LWCF Act has been one of our Nation's most effective tools for protecting our Nation's cultural resources, protecting important habitat, expanding access for hunting and fishing, creating ballfields and other places for kids to play and learn, and protecting Civil War battlefields.

Congress passed the LWCF Act and established \$900 million as its authorized funding level to ensure balance between the depletion of one national resource—our offshore oil and gas reserves—and the permanent conservation of our lands and waters. Authorizing mandatory funding for the LWCF would realize the original intent of this law: to set aside a meaningful portion of the royalties that companies pay for developing America's offshore oil and gas reserves, and reinvest those funds in land and water conservation for the benefit of all Americans and future generations. Mandatory funding will not remove all congressional discretion over the use of the funds, but will provide greater certainty that this portion of our offshore royalties are used for their intended purpose: to support the national endowment of lands and waters which provide our cities with clean drinking water, provide our children with safe places to play, and protect the way of life of our farmers, foresters and ranchers.

Wisely utilizing the revenues that are deposited into the LWCF account has been a high priority for the Department across many administrations, regardless of political affiliation. However, it is one of many priorities that must be balanced. The administration is also committed to ensuring that Native American youth who attend Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools benefit from academically rigorous, culturally appropriate education that will prepare Indian students to be successful citizens and future leaders in their communities and help build safer, stronger, healthier, and more prosperous Indian communities and economies. Improving education and literacy in tribal nations is essential to vitalizing community life, stimulating economic development, increasing employment opportunities, and improving standards of living for future generations of Native Americans. A thriving educational system for American Indian students is a critical component of the broader initiative to strengthen tribal communities.

Indian Affairs owns or provides funding for a significant inventory of buildings and other facilities across the Nation, including education facilities in Indian country. Currently, Indian Affairs provides funds for facility programs for 183 academic and resident-only campuses. From 2002 through 2014, over \$2 billion, including \$300 million of funding made available in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, has been provided for construction, improvement, and repair projects that have reduced the number of schools in poor condition from more than 120 of the 183 schools to 63 today. Appropriations for education construction over the last 15 years has funded 42 complete school replacements and 62 major renovations, which are either completed, funded or under construction. The budget supports progress in completing the 2004 Replacement School Construction priority list, providing funding for the Beatrice Rafferty School.

ALASKA LAND CONVEYANCE

Question. I was disappointed to see that the Department is once again proposing to cut funding for completion of Alaska land conveyances. The State of Alaska and

the Alaska Native corporations are still awaiting conveyance and patenting of the 149 million acres promised them in 1959 and 1971 in the Statehood Act and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The last official numbers I saw showed that combined, the Government still owes the State and Natives interim conveyance of approximately 7 million acres and patents to about 46 million acres.

Only 4 years ago, the funding for these conveyances was roughly \$34 million, but the administration proposed to cut that by over 50 percent to just \$16.6 million in fiscal year 2013. In fiscal year 2014, Congress provided \$22 million, which should help to speed up the required land surveys. I was disappointed, then, when your fiscal year 2015 budget request of only \$19 million again proposes to cut funding for this important program. While \$3 million may not seem significant, the extra funding could help complete conveyances within 5 to 10 years, instead of the 20 or 30 years that likely would be result if funding fell back to fiscal year 2013 levels.

Why is the Department again seeking to cut conveyance funding when completing the conveyances is clearly a legal obligation under three different Federal laws?

Answer. The BLM has innovated and modernized its survey and business practices in Alaska and is already achieving faster and improved outcomes with a smaller investment. Under previous processes, the remaining conveyances would have taken decades to complete (until approximately 2045). To accelerate the timeframe for completing the remaining survey and conveyance requirements, the BLM transformed its survey technique to expedite land transfers. The new approach reduces physical monuments in the ground and provides precise geospatial data for land boundaries, reducing the cost of surveys by up to 50 percent and accelerating timeframes for the final patenting of lands to the State. With this new initiative, the BLM will meet its obligation to the State and Alaskan Natives substantially sooner and more economically. The 2015 request level plots a course for completing all surveys and land transfers in 10 years.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR THAD COCHRAN

Question. In February 2013 a study was released that estimated National Heritage Areas contribute \$12.9 billion annually to our Nation's economy. The study also reported that the 49 National Heritage Areas across the country support 148,000 jobs and contribute \$1.2 billion in Federal taxes annually. Would the President's budget proposed 54 percent reduction in funding for the Heritage Partnership Program have an effect on the economic impact and jobs supported by National Heritage Areas?

Answer. The reduction proposed in the President's budget supports the directive for the more established National Heritage Areas (NHAs) to work toward becoming more self-sufficient. This directive was provided in the House Report 111-180 for the fiscal year 2010 Interior appropriations bill. As NHAs develop other sources of non-appropriated funding to attain operational self-sufficiency, appropriated funds would still leverage significant economic benefits, including job creation, through tourism and visitor spending.

The budget provides support to sustain critical functions of the National Park Service's (NPS) valued NHA partners, especially those areas that are in the process of developing and implementing their sustainability plans and forming networks of operational and financial partnerships. The performance-based funding formula currently in the process of being implemented for NHAs will, once fully implemented, reward NHA entities that bring in additional non-Federal investment and which have also developed a sustainability plan.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LAMAR ALEXANDER

WHITE-NOSE SYNDROME

Question. In February 2010, white-nose syndrome was confirmed in the State of Tennessee and continues to spread. I am very concerned about this because of the potential long-term impact it could have on Tennessee.

Bats are consumers of enormous numbers of insects that threaten crops and forests. Because of the insects and the amount of insects that bats consume, economic analysis estimates that the value of pest suppression bats have per acre ranges from \$12 to \$173, with an average benefit of \$74 per acre. The same study estimates the total annual agriculture benefit of bats ranging from \$3 billion per year to \$53 billion per year, with the most likely annual benefit of \$22 billion per year.

As of 2011, agriculture and forestry industries in Tennessee impact the State's economy with \$66.4 billion in total economic activity and more than 337,880 in em-

ployment according to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. So the loss of these bats could severely damage the Tennessee economy.

Would you provide an update on the research the Department has conducted on the spread of white-nose syndrome and what the Department's goals for white-nose syndrome are and how do you plan to achieve them?

Answer. Since discovered in 2007, white-nose syndrome (WNS), caused by the fungus *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (Pd), has killed over 5 million bats, and the disease has spread to 25 U.S. States and five Canadian provinces. The National Park Service has detected the fungus in 10 park units. Formally accepted in 2011, the National Plan for Assisting States, Federal Agencies, and Tribes in Managing White-nose Syndrome in Bats (National Plan) provides a framework for coordinating the WNS investigation and identifies research and management goals for the collective response to the disease. Numerous discoveries stemming from collaborative research conducted over the last several years at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and other centers, universities, and State and Federal laboratories have contributed to current understanding of WNS and the ability to closely monitor disease spread. The result of this research has enabled the USGS to develop an enhanced molecular method (real-time Polymerase Chain Reaction) to detect Pd, demonstrate that bat hibernacula serve as long-term reservoirs for Pd, characterize the influence of temperature on growth of Pd, determine that infection by Pd disrupts the physiology of hibernating bats, and demonstrate that Pd was likely introduced to North America from Europe.

This fundamental understanding of WNS and the fungus that causes it has facilitated the USGS' ability to shift the focus of research from disease and pathogen characterization to disease management, in accordance with the goals identified in the National Plan. Some of the objectives defined below (e.g., enhanced disease surveillance) are sufficiently developed for immediate implementation, while others (e.g., vaccination of bats or implementation of a bio-control-based disease management) will require further development and longer-term investment. Ongoing and proposed management-based WNS research efforts at the USGS will:

- Enhance disease surveillance to more precisely define where the fungus Pd occurs and monitor the efficacy of proposed management actions.
- Investigate the role that environmental conditions play in the outbreaks of WNS to provide information to managers to manipulate the environment as a strategy to manage the disease.
- Define the host (bat) response to infection by Pd and what causes the manifestation of the disease to support the development of a vaccine.
- Develop and disseminate an edible vaccine to protect bats against infection by Pd.
- Define a host (bat) response to fungal infection to support bio-control-based suppression of WNS by manipulation of microbial populations naturally found on bat skin (micro-biomes).
- Characterize soil microbial communities that suppress Pd in underground bat hibernation sites to support a bio-control-based strategy to reduce pathogenic environmental reservoirs of the fungus.
- Develop a coordinated bat population monitoring database (NABat) to support regional and range-wide inferences about trends in distributions and abundances of bat populations in North America facing mortality from stressors such as white-nose syndrome and wind energy.
- Develop an online national wildlife mortality event reporting system that will facilitate the sharing of disease event information, such as outbreak onset and ending date, location, species involved, numbers involved, diagnoses, laboratory, and contact names.

Question. Does the research partnership between multiple Federal agencies and State agencies provide the best platform for solving this issue of white-nose syndrome? Are we seeing signs of improvement or should there be a more aggressive approach to solving this issue?

Answer. White-nose syndrome is still a significant problem and the continued spread of the disease is anticipated to threaten hibernating bat species throughout North America. The National Plan for assisting States, Federal agencies and tribes in managing WNS in bats was formally accepted in May 2011 and serves as the framework for the coordination of agency and partner efforts to respond to WNS. The multi-agency response to WNS has been greatly enhanced by operating collectively under the National Plan by providing a governance structure and mechanism for collaboration to ensure agency actions are coordinated, meeting the priority needs, and are not duplicative. A sister Canadian plan, adapted from the U.S. National Plan, has also facilitated research and response activities with many agency and academic partners in Canada. The National Plan identifies seven elements that

are critical to the investigation and management of the disease and describes the goals, objectives, and action items of the working groups established to handle each element. Collectively, the objectives and actions identified in the base plan address the greatest needs and knowledge gaps that must be covered in order to manage the disease. The objectives also reflect a scientific approach that is solidly based in research, which is necessary when facing the many questions inherent in the response to the outbreak of an emerging disease.

The response to WNS has been significantly enhanced by the partnerships and collaborations that have developed to combat this novel disease, and the participation of State and Federal agencies has been integral to the efforts. The progress that has been made since the discovery of the disease in 2007 is considerable, and is virtually unprecedented in a wildlife disease response of this nature. WNS has brought Federal and State agency researchers and managers together with academics and non-government researchers across multiple disciplines and multiple countries. State agencies are largely responsible for monitoring populations of susceptible bat species, most of which are State trust species, and for managing the disease at the local level. State agencies also provide critical support for research projects conducted by Federal and non-government researchers. Federal agencies fund and conduct research, facilitate cross-border collaboration, and promote consistent approaches among States and on Federal lands. Additionally, the ability of the Fish and Wildlife Service to make funds available to State and Federal agencies, as well as academic and other private researchers, has also helped to promote collaboration, maintain critical State activities, and further the research achievements.

WNS has continued to spread, and observations this past winter suggest that impacts to bats may be just as severe in the Southeast and Midwest as they have been in the Northeast and eastern Canada. There is cause for hope, however, in that there is evidence of small numbers of little brown bats persisting in the affected area and the USGS is studying these populations to learn how and why they are surviving. The advancements to our understanding of disease mechanics and transmission, along with promising research into possible treatment options, are also cause for hope that the USGS will be able to develop new tools to manage the disease. These advancements have allowed researchers to shift their focus from basic science to management and conservation efforts. These efforts will continue to require attention and resources from all agencies and partners engaged in the international response, and will continue to be guided by the National Plan.

The progress and successful collaborations fostered by the national response to WNS support the use of the WNS National Plan as a model for future wildlife disease response by formalizing this collaborative arrangement into a robust infrastructure to address emerging wildlife diseases. The USGS is working with partners to create a National Fish and Wildlife Health Network designed to build a collaborative, operational framework by which Government agencies, tribes, universities and professional conservation organizations will cooperate to assist tribal, State and Federal agencies in their responsibilities to manage wildlife diseases, and wildlife-associated pathogens. The mission of the Network will be achieved through collaborative partnerships and the collective, voluntary adoption of protocols and actions to address fish and wildlife health issues, such as has been seen with the response to WNS. As currently planned, a Coordinating Committee will oversee and coordinate implementation of the Network. The Network will consist of agencies and organizations with the technical expertise to implement the guidelines and plans. The primary stakeholders are the tribal, State, and Federal government agencies responsible for managing the health of free ranging fish, wildlife, and marine animal populations. Specific areas of focus for the Network will include: (1) wildlife diagnostic laboratory protocols; (2) disease information management and dissemination; (3) coordinated disease surveillance; (4) interagency communication and response plans; and (5) species specific health issues. The Network will endeavor to address deficiencies in fish and wildlife disease monitoring and prevention programs where they exist, and facilitate the work of existing systems. The creation of this Network will be an important step in addressing this critical need.

In addition to interagency collaboration, the USGS has been working with non-governmental organizations in support of the Network, including the Marine Mammal Commission, the Wildlife Society, the American Fisheries Society, and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Activities include hosting a successful subject matter expert workshop, developing a concept paper, and drafting a coordinating committee charter.

The National Park Service (NPS) has detected the fungus in 10 park units. The NPS restricts access to caves serving as bat hibernacula or maternity roosts and restricts cave access to visitors which have been screened and hold permits or tour tickets. Show caves such as Mammoth Cave National Park remain open with

screening and decontamination procedures in place. The NPS only approves requests for scientific or educational permits when benefits outweigh the risk.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROY BLUNT

Question. Secretary Jewell, when you came before this Committee on May 7, 2013, we discussed at length the CityArchRiver project in St. Louis. As you and Director Jarvis have both stated, public-private partnerships will be a part of the new vision for Park Service operations. I wanted to review the topics you addressed in the hearing last year. If you can please provide the subcommittee with a written response to these items I would appreciate it.

You stated that:

- You would visit the Arch soon. I appreciate that you and Secretary Foxx visited on August 2, 2013 for the highway groundbreaking allowing time to meet with local elected officials, Civic Progress, and Regional Business Council leaders and to tour the ground.
- You would look into the pending agreement between the National Park Service and Bi State Development Agency, the long-term agreement having expired in December 2012. I am appreciative of your personal attention. The new agreement was signed finally 9 months after in January 2014. However I have concerns the delay has cost the project time and money.
- You would appoint one point person with whom the local partners can talk and help get decisions made. You stated that Peggy O'Dell, the Deputy Director was such a point person. Peggy O'Dell has been helpful and I know she is in charge of operations at the Park Service headquarters. However it is my understanding Ms. O'Dell is not the person who regularly interacts with the project partners, such as the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT), Great Rivers Greenway or CityArchRiver. The partners need a facilitator who can provide consistent and transparent communication. The facilitator should meet in person with key partners to work through open issues, ensuring that decisions are timely. Project partners have brought an enormous amount of resources to the table. When the Park Service is inconsistent or not transparent in communicating and resolving schedule and policy issues, there are consequences, including financial impacts.
- You were willing to look at public private partnerships “in a different way” and to understand partnerships only work in a collaborative way. I again want to stress that while I appreciate that the Park Service is in agreement with this goal, words must be put into action. Schedule delays because of slow legal reviews or document processing cost the project considerably. Current proposed schedule changes will already impact the schedule with a delay of 2 months to 1 year. I have been informed that extra costs resulting from these schedule delays could total approximately \$8.7 million. In the joint report language accompanying the 2014 Omnibus Appropriations bill, the Committee included language encouraging the use of public-private partnerships. I will repeat it and ask that you include in your responses to these questions the Park Service’s plans to meet this charge:

The Committees encourage the use of public-private partnerships as an important tool in the successful operation of land management agencies. These partnerships, which leverage Federal dollars with State, local, non-profit and philanthropy entities, have proven effective at achieving partner and Service goals and objectives. The Committees urge the Department and Service to reassess recent policy interpretations and review procedures to facilitate partnerships that have historically proven beneficial to national parks and partners.

Answer. The National Park Service is extremely pleased to have successfully executed a new agreement with the Bi-State Development Agency. This 50-year partnership serves as one of the best partnership models in the Service and we look forward to a continued relationship. The delay in construction start, along with the associated financial impact, is not a result of the delay in the execution of the Bi-State Development Agency agreement. The project team, including representatives of all key partners and the National Park Service (NPS) project management and technical team, meet daily to work through design, schedule, and funding issues. The NPS team strives to communicate the legal and policy requirements of the project, and to explore all opportunities to expedite and benefit the project. We continue to work closely with the Foundation to help them develop an approach to fulfill their commitment to fund increased operation and maintenance (O&M) costs resulting

from implementation of the proposed project. The Foundation-managed design process is also approaching completion. Once the Supplemental O&M Agreement with the Foundation is executed, completed designs are delivered, and construction funding is in place, we will be able to move forward into long anticipated construction phase. The Great Rivers Greenway-funded landscape construction is anticipated to begin soon, with the Foundation-funded Arch Visitor Center/Museum project following.

Question. I understand that the Department of the Interior, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with other Federal agencies and the State of Missouri, is engaged in discussions with The Doe Run Company concerning their legacy liabilities in Southeast Missouri. I had a meeting with your Deputy, Michael Connor, on this topic before he was confirmed. Mr. Connor also assured me he would inform you of the issue, which I have been told he has. As I hope you will appreciate, Doe Run is vital to the regional economy of Southeast Missouri, and the continued viability of the company is a matter of keen interest and importance to me.

Are you aware of the ongoing discussions involving your Department?

Answer. Yes, I am aware of the discussions.

Question. I would also like to ask for your personal assurance that you will pay close attention to this matter, and that you will make sure that Doe Run receives fair treatment, consistent with the importance of this company to the long-term economic interests of Southeast Missouri.

Answer. The importance of Doe Run to Southeast Missouri is well understood by the Department, as it has been in operation for over 150 years. Close attention is being paid to the Doe Run situation. Senator Blunt's concerns have been heard and Doe Run will receive fair treatment.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN HOEVEN

Question. You were recently quoted as saying that you anticipate releasing your new regulations for fracking on public land "sometime in 2014." As you know, I have had serious concerns about new Federal regulations of hydraulic fracturing on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, which is why I introduced the Empower States Act, allowing States and tribes the ability to regulate hydraulic fracturing on Federal lands, like BLM land.

Our tribes still have concerns about the proposed regulation. On March 18, 2014, the Three Affiliated Tribes on the Fort Berthold Reservation participated in a consultation with the BLM and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) on the proposed rule for Hydraulic Fracturing on Federal and Indian Lands. Following the consultation, the Three Affiliated Tribes sent you a letter expressing their concern that your Department is not seriously considering the tribal impacts of the proposed rule.

How does your Department plan to work with the tribes to develop a rule that affirms tribal self-determination and authority and to comply with the Department's tribal consultation policy?

Answer. The goal of the hydraulic fracture (HF) rule is to ensure a consistent, minimum baseline standard for operations across all public and tribal lands that are available for oil and gas development, and aims to streamline and minimize the efforts required to comply with any new requirements, while also protecting Federal and tribal interests and resources. The BLM has revised the proposed rule to reduce some of the information requirements and avoid duplication with the requirements of States (on Federal land) and tribes (on tribal land). The BLM has included various options in the revised proposed HF rule to encourage streamlining, flexibility, and more efficient operation on both public and tribal lands. The BLM is committed to working closely with tribes to address any concerns on the impacts of the revised proposed rule for hydraulic fracturing. The BLM has been actively engaged in tribal consultations from the onset of this rulemaking effort.

Question. North Dakota and other States regulate hydraulic fracturing on State, Federal, and private lands. Why do you believe we need the Federal Government to add additional regulations when the States regulate this area and FracFocus discloses the chemicals?

Answer. The BLM has an important role to play in ensuring the safe and effective use of hydraulic fracturing techniques on Federal and tribal lands. The current rules covering these operations are 30 years old. The goal of the rulemaking is to ensure a minimum baseline standard for operations across Federal lands and for Indian trust minerals, including in States and on Indian reservations that are not regulating hydraulic fracturing. The BLM intends to continue to work with the State and tribal regulatory agencies to avoid duplication of requirements from certain States (on Federal land) and tribes (on tribal land), while also protecting Federal

and tribal interests and resources. The revised proposed rule also adds a provision allowing the BLM to approve a variance that would apply to all lands within the boundaries of a State, a tribe, or described as field-wide or basin-wide, that is commensurate with the State or tribal regulatory scheme. The BLM must determine that the variance would meet or exceed the effectiveness of the revised proposed rule. States and tribes would be invited to work with the BLM to craft variances that would allow technologies, processes, or standards required or allowed by the State or tribe to be accepted as compliance with the rule. Such variances would allow the BLM and tribes to improve efficiency and reduce costs for operators and for the agencies.

Question. The President's budget provides for \$310 million for Public Safety and Justice, which funds law enforcement activities on approximately 56 million acres of Indian country in 35 States. Programs under this activity include investigative, police, and detention services; tribal courts; fire protection; and facilities maintenance.

In North Dakota, we've had significant population growth in the Bakken, which includes the Fort Berthold Reservation, and the BIA recently assumed the child social services on the Spirit Lake Reservation.

I need to know if you believe this money will help reduce crime on the reservations and help ensure children on the Reservation are safe.

Answer. The 2015 budget includes a comprehensive and integrated approach to address the interrelated problems of poverty, violence, and substance abuse faced by Indian communities. In addition to continuing the robust funding support for public safety programs, the 2015 budget incorporates an increase of \$11.6 million for social services and job training programs as part of the Tiwahe Initiative. As a longer term effort to address conditions that contribute to crime in Indian communities, the Tiwahe Initiative will support culturally appropriate services with the goal of empowering individuals and families through health promotion, family stability, and strengthening tribal communities as a whole.

Beyond funding, the BIA Office of Justice Services constantly looks for ways to improve program effectiveness with other tools and resources. For example, the lessons learned from a successful pilot program to reduce violent crime at four reservations were published in a handbook in June 2012. This compendium of best practices serves as a valuable resource to guide law enforcement entities operating throughout Indian country. It includes strategies that proved effective and those that didn't. The information it offers ranges from general approaches to communities policing to detailed instruction on specific crime reduction plans.

The BIA fully utilizes all resources at its disposal to help reduce crime and ensure children are safe in Indian communities across North Dakota, as well as throughout the Nation.

Question. As you are aware, North Dakota's BLM Field Office in Dickinson has been facing a backlog of permit applications for drilling on Federal lands. I am pleased that my bill to create the Montana/Dakotas State Office became law last December. The BLM has also used innovative approaches to help tackle the workload—bringing in strike teams to the Miles City district headquarters, using teleworkers, and securing land for employee housing.

In one notable example, the BLM has worked with the North Dakota (ND) Petroleum Council to facilitate extra funds from the oil industry to help pay salaries and benefits for five additional employees to process permits in the Bakken region. The agreement has important protections against favoritism, so no company receives expedited treatment. I commend BLM for finding creative solutions and fostering collaboration.

In this time when additional Federal funding is limited, do you think that this model can be replicated to other areas and States across the country? Are there any other steps that can be taken to increase partnerships with other agencies—like the U.S. Forest Service and BIA—as well as industry stakeholders?

Answer. The BLM remains committed to expediting the processing of applications for drilling permits nationwide and advancing the responsible development of oil and gas resources on public land. As part of this commitment, the BLM is expanding remote processing so additional staff are able to assist in reviewing permits, and establishing one-stop shops where resources are consolidated to further accelerate permit review. The BLM is conducting outreach to industry to reduce instances of incomplete permitting packages, thereby reducing labor costs and processing times. BLM has signed agreements with oil and gas associations that allow industry to provide supplemental financial support for agency permitting activities under certain circumstances; however, BLM would prefer to fund these activities through more traditional means (e.g., standardized user fees and/or discretionary appropriations) to avoid the potential for conflicts of interest. It should be noted that the

President's 2015 budget request includes a more than 20 percent funding increase to strengthen the BLM's Oil and Gas Management program and supports continued implementation of leasing reforms, enhanced oversight, and a strengthened inspections process.

Question. Another issue I am concerned about is the impacts of the proposed grazing administrative fee of \$1 per animal unit month will have on our ranchers. How has the administration taken into account the impacts this new fee would have on ranchers?

Answer. After analyzing several different fee proposals, including (1) a flat fee of \$500/permit, (2) a graduated fee schedule based on labor spent by category, (3) a graduated fee schedule based on animal unit months (AUMs) billed by category, and (4) a fee based on AUMs billed, the BLM determined that No. 4, an administrative fee charged on the basis of actual grazing use, or animal unit months (AUMs), is the most equitable and fair for permittees. The impacts to ranchers would vary depending on their size, i.e. a rancher with 500 AUMs billed would have a \$500 bill. This may not reflect the actual cost of doing the work; i.e. the cost to process a permit for a 100 AUM permit may be the same as a 5,000 AUM permit. The BLM will analyze potential impacts from the permit administration fee proposed in the President's fiscal year 2015 budget request during the 3-year pilot period.

Question. Grazing provides numerous environmental benefits such as managing vegetation. How have you taken into consideration the effects that could take place if fewer ranchers pay to graze in BLM lands due to increased cost?

Answer. As a tool for improving the BLM's administration of grazing permits and use, the proposed fee would help the agency manage livestock grazing in a manner which achieves and maintains the health of public lands. The BLM will analyze potential effects from the permit administration fee proposed in the President's fiscal year 2015 budget request during the 3-year pilot period.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MIKE JOHANNIS

Question. Last year I wrote to the Department of the Interior (DOI) about a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Proposed Niobrara Confluence and Ponca Bluffs Conservation Areas, first asking that the comment period be extended, and later asking follow-up questions and expressing strong concerns I was hearing from Nebraskans. My office continues to hear of strong concern from constituents in that region.

What are the next steps on this project, and when will they occur?

We have been told that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Park Service (NPS) will complete a final EIS for the project sometime this summer—perhaps early this summer. Is that a correct understanding?

After the submission of that final EIS, can we expect an open comment period and public meetings in Nebraska?

Answer. The FWS and the NPS core planning team involved in developing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Land Protection Plan—Niobrara Confluence and Ponca Bluffs Conservation Areas—met in Yankton, South Dakota in February 2014 to review the extensive public comments received, develop responses, and discuss a proposed course of action. Due to overwhelming interest, the original comment period had been extended to a full 6 months.

The planning team is continuing to look at the best way to complete the final EIS, taking into consideration the desire for additional public input. In early summer, a full briefing package will be sent to each member of the Nebraska and South Dakota congressional delegations to answer remaining questions on the overall status of the project and when the planning process is expected to be finalized. The current goal is to finalize the Land Protection Plan and complete a Record of Decision in summer of 2014.

Question. For the current fiscal year or in the fiscal year covered by the fiscal year 2015 budget request, do you have any plans to make any designations under the Antiquities Act, or to consult or otherwise cooperate with the Executive Office of the President to identify properties for designation under the Antiquities Act?

Answer. As I stated at the hearing, the Antiquities Act, as provided by Congress, has been used by Presidents of both parties for more than 100 years as an instrument to preserve and protect critical natural, historical, and scientific resources on Federal lands for future generations. As Secretary of the Interior, I do not have the authority to designate monuments under the Antiquities Act; that authority is vested in the President. I support the administration's interest in conducting an open, public process that considers input from local, State, and national stakeholders be-

fore any sites are considered for designation as national monuments through the Antiquities Act.

Question. For fiscal year 2015, please explain the extent to which DOI budget resources will be used to help make or manage any forthcoming designations under the Antiquities Act and where these designations will be located.

Answer. There are no specific funds set aside in the fiscal year 2015 budget for unplanned yet possible new designations under the Antiquities Act. If necessary, the Department could rearrange 2015 funding priorities to accommodate the costs associated with making or managing an unforeseen designation, as such costs would be very modest in the first year.

Question. Are any Antiquities Act designations planned for either the State of Nebraska or in lands or waters contiguous to the State in the current fiscal year or in fiscal year 2015?

Answer. I am not aware of any such planned Antiquities Act designations.

Question. Is there any legal bar to DOI preparing statements of environmental impacts consistent with principles found in the National Environmental Policy Act for designations made by the President under authority granted to him in the Antiquities Act?

Answer. As stated above, the administration supports conducting an open, public process that considers input from local, State, and national stakeholders before any sites are considered for designation as national monuments through the Antiquities Act. While land management agencies typically use the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process in their development of management plans for new national monuments, I understand that NEPA does not apply to these discretionary decisions by the President because the President is not an agency.

SUBCOMMITTEE RECESS

Senator REED. And with that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:59 a.m., Wednesday, March 26, the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]