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From: Rees, Gareth
Sent: 2017-12-22T09:33:07-05:00
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Good Morning All,
Please find attached the weekly report to the Secretary. I have attached both the word and Google Doc versions of the reports. If there are any issues, please let me know.

Thanks and Happy Holidays

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Gareth C. Rees

Office to the Deputy Secretary

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Weekly Report to the Secretary 12/21/17

WEEKLY REPORT TO THE SECRETARY DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

December 21, 2017

Office of the Deputy Secretary

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Deputy Secretary will be on personal travel.

Associate Deputy Secretary Cason and Assistant Deputy Secretary Willen will be in Washington, DC.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

Twenty-four male bison have been held in isolation at the Stephens Creek capture facility in northern YELL since March 2016 pending transfer to the Fort Peck Reservation for quarantine. The risk of brucellosis transmission from these bison to cattle is negligible because they have been test-negative for more than 1 year (11 tests) and males are not known to transmit brucellosis, as well as the state-of-the-art facility at Fort Peck, the rigorous and proven testing protocol, and commitments from the NPS and tribes to work with APHIS on testing. The State of Montana and APHIS are still opposed to conducting bison quarantine on the Fort Peck Reservation. However, the NPS, APHIS, and State of Montana have developed and signed an agreement in principle to facilitate the movement/release of these 24 bison and other bison in the future. The Fort Peck tribes declined to sign the agreement because it does not immediately consider quarantine on their Reservation, but indicated they will stay involved in discussions and continue to receive bison completing quarantine.

Per the agreement in principle, APHIS and NPS staff have worked together to develop a risk assessment regarding possible brucellosis transmission from the 24 male bison. APHIS has prepared a draft of this assessment, but has yet to send it to the NPS for review despite several reminders/inquiries including as recently as December 19, 2017. Also, the NPS completed structural improvements to the quarantine pastures in the Stephens Creek area of YELL and representatives from APHIS and the State of Montana inspected the facility on December 7, 2017. The NPS is still waiting for written certification indicating these pastures are suitable for quarantine, which was due by December 15, 2017 (reminder sent by NPS on December 19). In addition, APHIS has committed to putting ~62 test-negative bison in double-fenced pastures at Corwin Springs, Montana (located north of YELL) through quarantine over the next several years in collaboration with the NPS, Colorado State University, and non-governmental organizations. The details of this agreement have not been worked out, but bison completing quarantine would be transported to the Fort Peck Reservation or other agreed-upon areas for release and management as wildlife.

Office of the Solicitor

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Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Jason Larrabee will be in the office.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Aurelia Skipwith will be in the office.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

Nothing additional to report.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

On December 26-29, Greg Sheehan will be on annual leave.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

Hot Topics

FWS Southwest Regional Director Amy Lueders and others met with DOI's Border Coordinator and representatives from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at Cabeza Prieta NWR in Arizona on December 13. The meeting included a field trip to the 860,000-acre refuge to facilitate discussions regarding current and future infrastructure needs to improve CBP's operational effectiveness, while enabling FWS to continue to meet its mission. Topics included road improvements and maintenance, the deployment of surveillance equipment including towers and mobile systems, potential expansion of Camp Grip and other projects. CBP representatives included personnel from the Office of Environmental Planning and Real Estate, Office of Acquisition, CBP's Laguna Niguel office for Border Patrol Facilities & Tactical Infrastructure, and agents representing Border Patrol's Tucson and Yuma Sectors, and the Ajo and Wellton Stations.

On December 12, the U.S. Department of Justice filed proposed settlements to resolve \$4.5 million in natural resource damages in a U.S. District Court. Tecumseh Products Company, Thomas Industries and Wisconsin Public Service Corporation are responsible for the release of hazardous substances into the Sheboygan River. FWS, Wisconsin DNR and NOAA are natural resource trustees for the site. The releases occurred in concentrations known to cause injury to many types of natural resources including fish, wildlife and their supporting habitats and also resulted in loss of recreational fishing services. A draft Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment (RP/EA) was released on December 12. Within the draft RP/EA, the trustees propose two projects, including preservation of Amsterdam Dunes, a 184-acre coastal wetland complex, and the Willow Creek Preserve, a 140-acre riparian, forested, and upland habitat within the city of Sheboygan. The trustees propose undertaking additional restoration planning to

identify and implement future projects with remaining settlement funds. A 30-day public comment period for both the draft Restoration Plan and settlements has begun.

After a \$2 billion environmental remediation, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR was created from former U.S. Army lands. On September 18, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) filed a complaint against Army, FWS and Shell raising similar allegations as they have for years regarding jurisdiction and permitting requirements at the refuge and on Army-retained lands (CDPHE v. United States). Attorneys for the United States (including those from the DOI's Solicitor's Office) have collaborated extensively and have met with CDPHE. The Department of Justice filed a motion to dismiss this lawsuit with the U.S. District Court on December 18. There was very limited media coverage of the initial lawsuit and FWS does not anticipate media attention of this procedural filing.

National Park Service

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

There are no meetings, hearings, or events scheduled for executive management for the week ahead.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

The acting Intermountain Regional Office Director and Bureau of Land Management Utah State Director are preparing to sign (date to be determined) the Old Spanish National Historic Trail (NHT) Comprehensive Administration Strategy (CAS). The CAS will provide direction and agreement for joint administration, confirm route alignments, identify high potential sites and segments, and establish the official trail logo for the trail. The plan originally included an Environmental Impact Study, but after extensive evaluation the agencies agreed that a NEPA National Environmental Policy Act review was unnecessary. Congressionally designated in 2002, the Old Spanish NHT is jointly administered by the two agencies to commemorate trade and travel between the formerly-Mexican communities of Santa Fe, New Mexico and Los Angeles, California from 1829 to 1848.

On December 13, all backcountry areas within Wind Cave National Park were temporarily closed until further notice due to the Legion Lake fire, which was centered in Custer State Park, South Dakota, and has spread into the eastern side of the national park. Exceptions to the closure include Highways 385 and 87, Beaver Creek Road, associated turnouts, and the immediate area around the visitor center. An emergency closure order has been posted on the park's website and the park is in coordination with the Great Plains Fire Public Information Group for fire updates. As of December 17 the fire was 54k acres and 90% contained.

In late December, depending on Departmental clearance, Golden Gate National Recreation Area will complete the Record of Decision for the Alcatraz Ferry Embarkation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. The selected alternative will rehabilitate historic structures for visitor use and ferry operations at Pier 31½ in San Francisco, supporting a commercial services concession that

will begin in 2019. Final approval of a general agreement and associated draft leases for a long-term ferry embarkation site at Pier 31½ is expected in January 2018.

During the week of December 18, a termination notice for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Dog Management Plan, Environmental Impact Statement, and Rule will be published in the Federal Register.

On or after December 20, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is expected to be signed for a land exchange within Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument. The proposed exchange was evaluated in an Environmental Assessment released in July 2017. The land exchange is broadly supported by the local community.

On December 22, Fire Island National Seashore (FISS) will release the Final Breach Plan/EIS for a 30-day no action period. The Final Breach Plan/EIS responds to public comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement which was circulated in October - December 2016. Comments ranged from supporting immediate mechanical closure of the breach to leaving the process completely up to nature. The plan identifies Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative because it allows the breach to be managed to NPS resource management policies and wilderness directives while allowing closure if necessary to prevent "loss of life, flooding, and other severe economic and physical damage to the Great South Bay and surrounding area." A Record of Decision may be signed by the Northeast Regional director no sooner than 30 days after the Environmental Protection Agency publishes a Federal Register Notice of Availability of the Final Breach Plan/EIS.

On December 25, a 45-day comment period concerning a proposed land exchange between Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and the local public utility company will close. The proposed land exchange would enable the Northern Indiana Public Service Company to install a 24" diameter natural gas line through Federal land. Congressional offices have been notified of the proposed exchange. The Federal government will grant an easement interest to allow for the natural gas line. Under this proposal, the Northern Indiana Public Service Company would convey to the Federal government a parcel of land, a segment of 11 acres that would match the value of the easement.

On or before December 29, the Blue Ridge Parkway anticipates completing environmental compliance and signing required right-of-way and construction permits for the Mountain Valley Pipeline. The pipeline would traverse both the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. All remaining concerns for the Blue Ridge Parkway under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act have been resolved. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has approved the pipeline project with final decisions by a number of other state and federal agencies still pending.

By December 29, final walk through and anticipated completion sign off of the Watch Hill Marina rehabilitation project at Fire Island National Seashore will be conducted, with facilities scheduled to reopen for the 2018 season. The marina suffered extreme damage to its electrical and lighting systems, and the adjacent bulkhead and boardwalk due to the impact of Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Woodstock Construction LTD began work on the \$5.4 million dollar project

with funding from Federal Highways and the NPS in September 2016. The project addressed substructure vulnerabilities and ensures the marina is more resilient to future storms.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in coordination with Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA), is preparing a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Chesapeake Bay Crossing Study. The purpose of the Tier I study is to consider multiple corridors for providing additional traffic capacity and access across the Chesapeake Bay. The NPS has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in this project, and the FHWA and MDTA has invited the NPS to become a participating agency in the environmental review process and development of the Tier I EIS. A response from the NPS is due December 31.

In late December, the NPS will publish a Federal Register notice announcing that the Department of the Interior (DOI) has authorized the preparation of a World Heritage nomination for the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks in Ohio. With nine component properties including those that form Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, and others managed by the State of Ohio, this series of geometric mounds is approximately 2,000 years old. The nomination file, which will take more than a year to draft, will be developed by local proponents in Ohio with guidance from the NPS. Upon completion and review, the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks will determine whether or not to submit the nomination to the World Heritage Committee.

In or after December, the NPS expects to release the final plan/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address the presence of wolves at Isle Royale National Park. The publication of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency NOA of this final plan/EIS in the Federal Register will initiate a 30-day wait period before the Regional Director of the Midwest Region will sign the Record of Decision. The NPS preferred alternative would introduce between 20-30 wolves to the island over a 3-year time period. A decision is needed because the potential absence of wolves raises concerns about possible effects to the current Isle Royale ecosystem, including effects to both the moose population and forest/vegetation communities. Over the past five years, the wolf population has declined steeply and at this time, natural recovery of the population is unlikely.

Potential Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in January 2018 following the Arches National Park release of the Salt Wash Rehabilitation Project Environmental Assessment (EA) in mid October 2017 for a 30-day review period. The park is currently preparing the Finding FONSI for Regional Director review. The proposed action will provide for a safer and better visitor experience and improve natural processes by reducing the flooding, sediment deposition, and closure of the Wolfe Ranch/Delicate Arch Viewpoint road, and improve the conveyance of water and sediment in three washes. The FONSI assessed impacts to hydrologic and geomorphologic processes, vegetation, visitor experience, and wilderness character and determined that there will be no significant impacts to these resources from the proposed action. During the public comment period, the park received nine public comment letters calling on the NPS to consider additional alternatives and suggested mitigation measures to manage impacts to wetlands, native vegetation and wildlife. The comments are addressed in the Errata Sheets attached to the FONSI, and resulted in minor changes to the EA. Additionally, the park consulted affiliated Tribes, the public, potential interested parties, and the State Historic Preservation Office during the planning process.

In January or February 2018, pending DOI approval, the NPS anticipates publishing an NOA in the Federal Register for the Draft Management Plan and Draft EIS for Saline Valley Warm Springs (plan/DEIS) in Death Valley National Park. The NOA will initiate a 60-day public comment period on the document during which public meetings will be held in the vicinity of the park. The plan/DEIS analyzes five alternatives for the management of the Saline Valley Warm Springs area, and is intended to provide a framework for natural and cultural resource management, administration and operations, and managing visitor access.

In early 2018, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is expected to begin conducting an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Morehead City Port channel project, located next to Cape Lookout National Seashore in Carteret County, North Carolina. Recently, the county and Rep. Walter Jones Jr. (R-NC-3) formally requested that the Corps prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a mitigated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) before moving ahead with the project. They expressed concerns that the Corps' alternatives will have negative impacts to nearby eastern Bogue Banks that were not evaluated, and that the draft EA does not comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. The county believes that the Corps should include the installation of a terminal groin (rock jetty) on the western tip of Shackleford Banks, an island within park boundaries that is designated as proposed wilderness.

In early January 2018, Phase 2 will begin on the waterline project to upgrade and replace the aging system in and around the National Mall and Memorial Parks. This phase is expected to take approximately one year. Work area will include West Potomac Park, the Washington Monument (WAMO) grounds, Lincoln Memorial, Ash Woods Road, the area between Constitution Gardens and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the recreation fields near the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. A majority of the work will be horizontal drilling, with pits every 500 feet to pull the line; however, there will be open trenching around WAMO.

On January 1, 2018, the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument will close to facilitate a comprehensive structural assessment of the facility. The complete closure of the house is due to the volume of items that will need to be moved to permit access to necessary locations, for measures to address lead paint remediation, and to identify structural data needed to develop proper plans for future architectural and engineering rehabilitation work. Details for announcing the closure are still be worked out.

On January 1, 2018, Golden Gate National Recreation Area is launching a required-reservation system for privately owned vehicles and concessioners at Muir Woods National Monument to improve visitor experience and enhance the protection of park resources. The contract requires the concessioner to make the reservation system accessible on mobile devices. Reservations will be required for all vehicles and shuttle riders beginning January 16.

On January 1, 2018, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park plans to implement a \$10 permit fee to anchor vessels overnight in Aquatic Park Cove using an online reservation through Recreation.gov. This system will provide boaters a convenient way to reserve a mooring in advance of visiting the park. The online registration system and overnight anchoring fee for boats in the Aquatic Park Cove will provide boaters a convenient way to reserve a mooring in

advance of visiting the park. It also will allow the park to inform visitors entering the Cove about security issues, swimmer safety requirements, and environmental regulations. Through a comparability study conducted by the park of three different Bay Area sites that offer similar experiences, accessibility and amenities, the analysis showed that the park's present fee anchoring permits are below similar operations, and that even with the fee of \$10, the Aquatic Park Cove will remain one of the most affordable anchoring experiences in the Bay Area. Recreation.gov does not have an app, but its site is mobile responsive.

On or about January 2, 2018, the NPS will distribute to parks approved FY 2018 financial support under the Helium Stewardship Act of 2013, which provides federal support to public-private partnership cost sharing projects for deferred maintenance and to correct deficiencies in the NPS infrastructure. Twenty-nine park projects will benefit from \$20 million in Helium Stewardship Act funding, matched by partners by approximately \$29 million. Projects will rehabilitate and make accessibility upgrades to trails, historic facilities, and exhibits. These projects will result in reducing the maintenance backlog by approximately \$63 million as well as improving the visitor experience at these parks. The NPS anticipates local media coverage about the individual awards and projects.

January 5, 2018 is the new deadline for public comments on alternatives for the Chesapeake and Canal Plan/EA. The NPS and Georgetown Heritage, the Business Improvement District (BID) for Georgetown, extended the comment deadline to ensure the public has ample opportunity to provide feedback. Early design concepts for Alternatives were presented at a public meeting on November 2.

January 5, 2018 is the new, extended deadline to submit comments on the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Grand Canyon National Park Expanded Non-native Aquatic Species Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. In addition to the open houses scheduled on December 6 and 7, the NPS also conducted an additional open house in Phoenix on December 12. The park released the EA for public comments on November 15, and announced the extension on November 30. The purpose of the plan is to provide additional tools to prevent, control, minimize, or eradicate potentially harmful, non-native aquatic species in the Colorado River and its tributaries from the Glen Canyon Dam downstream and through Grand Canyon National Park.

On January 8, Springfield Armory National Historic Site will hold a ceremony to formally recognize the NPS ownership as sole custodian of the Colonel J.B. Benton Small Arms Collection (BSAC). Benton was the founder of the Springfield Armory in 1871, and subsequently became Commanding Officer. The NPS and the U.S. Army Center for Military History (CMH) have a long, intricate history related to the BSAC. The NPS has cared for these objects for more than four decades in a world-class curation storage facility in compliance with the latest DOI standards and this ownership status has been questioned periodically by the CMH. Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA-1) will attend the ceremony as well numerous members from the CMH.

On January 10, 2018, a public meeting will be held to begin the NPS development process of a foundation document to guide planning and management of Stonewall National Monument. The

meeting will include a formal presentation on the foundation document process, an update on planning efforts to date, and an opportunity for the public to ask questions and submit comments. Anticipated meeting participants include members of the general public, neighbors, LGBTQ activists, local, state and federal elected officials and/or members of their staffs. A public comment period for the foundation document will be open from January 11 through February 11, 2018.

In January 2018, roof repair of the Lincoln Memorial begins. On September 19, a \$2.8 million contract for the work was awarded to Arrow DJB JV II, LLC of Upper Marlboro, and Maryland. Funded by the FY17 NPS appropriation, the work is expected to be completed in August 2018. The contract also includes repair of cracks in the white marble at the memorial's penthouse level, caused by the 2011 earthquake. This is the first phase of a \$25 million dollar restoration of the Lincoln Memorial that will include expanded exhibit and public use areas, funded in part by an \$18.5 million donation from businessman and philanthropist David M. Rubenstein.

On January 8, Devils Postpile National Monument will initiate a National Environmental Policy Act public scoping process, as an initial step to update the park's 2005 Fire Management Plan to better address current ecological conditions at the park. Issues to be included in a forthcoming Fire Management Plan Environmental Assessment include: 1) increased fuel loading, and 2) changed forest composition in the monument as a result of the combination of the severe wind event in late 2011 that uprooted thousands of trees, and the 1992 Rainbow Fire which affected 82% of the park.

In the next few weeks, the city of Charleston, South Carolina, will release an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a 30-day public comment for NPS approval of three replacement properties to satisfy the provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act and pursuant to a court settlement. The EA has been reviewed by the Southeast Regional Office and WASO LWCF staff. Two of the three replacement properties are near the lost outdoor recreation space and will serve the same community. The city believes this is non-controversial since the Department of Justice approved the settlement. Following this period, if no significant comments are received, a Finding of No Significant Impact will be signed by the Regional Director and these replacement outdoor recreation spaces would become subject to the provisions of the LWCF Act.

Through January 13, Everglades National Park is accepting written comments for the Old Tamiami Trail Modifications Environmental Assessment (EA). The park released the EA on December 14 for a 30-day public review. The EA evaluates options for modifying an original 5.7-mile segment of the trail located along the northern boundary of the park as proposed in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 2014 to facilitate hydrologic and ecologic restoration of the park.

On or after January 15, Mount Rainier National Park expects the Paradise Cellular Installation Environmental Assessment (EA) Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to be signed. The selected alternative would issue right-of-way permits to Verizon Wireless and T-Mobile, and potentially AT&T, to co-locate wireless communication facilities in the Jackson Visitor Center

attic. The NPS received 893 comments on the EA, with approximately 70% opposed to the service. A news release will be issued.

On January 17, Haleakala National Park will open a public comment period for its draft Environmental Assessment (EA) regarding sunrise visitor management at the summit of Haleakala. Overcrowding at the four sunrise viewpoints in the past few years has adversely impacted the health and safety of employees and visitors, as well as natural and cultural resources. In December 2016, the park implemented an emergency pilot reservation system. The overall response from visitors and the local community to this temporary reservation system has been positive. Public comments will be accepted through February 20, 2018.

On January 17, 2018, a public hearing will be held by the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDOH) concerning Meridian Energy Group, Inc.'s proposal to locate a petroleum refinery approximately 2.5 miles outside Theodore Roosevelt National Park in Billings County, North Dakota. Meridian Energy has received a zoning change and conditional use permit from Billings County, a water appropriation permit from the State Engineer, and NDDOH has issued them a preliminary construction permit for the Davis Refinery. The NPS has worked closely with the NDDOH and Environmental Protection Agency during the air permitting process. The NPS Air Quality Division is undertaking its own impact modeling to inform any official comment. The public comment period to NDDOH on issuing the final permit to construct began December 8, 2017 and ends January 26, 2018.

In January (TBD), the final rule to allow bicycle use on a portion of the East Shore Trail at Rocky Mountain National Park is expected to be published in the *Federal Register*. The East Shore Trail is an existing hiking and equestrian trail that runs north/south along the east shore of Shadow Mountain Lake near the town of Grand Lake, Colorado. A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed in February, 2015, that approved bicycle use on a two-mile segment of the trail. Rerouting trails along the East Shore to safely accommodate bike use triggered the rulemaking process per the NPS Bicycle Rule policy. The proposed rule was published in the *Federal Register* in December 2015. Substantive comments received during the proposed rule public comment period were addressed.

On January 26 the draft air tour management agreement for Glen Canyon / Rainbow Bridge will close after a 45-day public review. The agreement and FAQs are available through the park's PEPC page. The park has sent letters to congressional offices and the air tour operators and has issued a press release. The NPS, the Federal Aviation Administration, and seven commercial air tour operators intend to sign the agreement, once complete, to manage air tours over Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Rainbow Bridge National Monument to ensure protection of resources and visitor use and enjoyment without compromising aviation safety.

On January 26 the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) will be issuing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Columbia Gas Eastern Panhandle Expansion Project. The proposed project being analyzed includes building an 8-inch gas transmission pipeline that would, in part, cross under Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park and the Potomac River near Hancock, Maryland. To streamline the review process, the NPS is participating in the EA as a Cooperating Agency. The park has received a draft for internal

review. The pipeline has attracted much public attention, and the superintendent has received over 550 emails requesting the park deny any right-of-way permit requests for a gas line crossing. No decision will be made until the EA process is complete. The 90-day Federal Authorization Deadline is April 26, 2018.

In late January 2018, the nonprofit Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue will begin rounding up and removing feral burros from Death Valley National Park and Mojave National Preserve. The organization anticipates removing up to 2,500 burros over the next 5 years to test burros for disease and domesticate the animals for adoption. Burros that cannot be tamed will be kept in sanctuaries by the organization. Compliance for burro removal was conducted as part of both parks' 2002 General Management Plans. This is anticipated to generate public interest and has already triggered a FOIA request.

Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs and the Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Indian Education

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

December 25 to January 2, Bureau of Indian Education Director Dearman will be on leave.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

The week of December 18, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs (PDAS-IA) Tahsuda expects to have two Dear Tribal Leader letters be ready for distribution announcing two sets of Tribal consultations scheduled for February and March 2018. One letter announces consultation on draft guidelines for background checks for foster care placements under the Native American Children’s Safety Act (NACSA). The other letter announces consultation on a draft approach to the forestry demonstration project authorized by the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act (ITARA).

On December 20, SIPI’s Fall trimester ends.

Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Update - 9th Circuit Judicial Training for Insular Areas – Ninth circuit Judge Margaret McKeown and staff Russ Mathieson reported to OIA on FY 2017 programs and discussed upcoming training for FY 2018. OIA provides \$650,000 annually to provide local training for judges, parole officers, bailiffs, attorneys, including administrative court staff in court systems in island areas.

Update – POTUS Signed the FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act. Outside of funding authorizations for the usual military construction and improvements for bases for Joint Marianas Guam and Kwajalein, these other policy topics were included in the Act:

- Section 335 – Report on Effects of Climate Change on DoD includes mention of Kwajalein Atoll Air Force radar installation built at cost of \$1,000,000,000 and projected to be underwater within two decades.
- Section 1049 – Workforce Issues for Military Realignment – H2B Visa Workers (Guam and CNMI)
- Section 1258D - Authorization to fund Palau Compact – Approximately \$125 million remains to be funded for the 2010 Agreement. In meantime, DOI has been paying \$13.1 million annually. Next Step: Congress appropriation.
- Section 1259D – DoD to Study U.S. interests in the Freely Associated States: 1) role of Compacts, 2) status of obligations, 3) PRC economic practices, and 4) other donors. OIA will seek to be involved.
- Section 1701 – Amendments to Small Business Act includes territories in definition of “State”.

Next Step - Congressional Appropriation and Administration Review and Update of Agreement, if needed.

Allowing Bikinians to Decide Own Budgets and Spending – OIA has received a number of thanks and support letters from the KBE leaders for our decision. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski is opposed to Interior’s recent decision to confer decision-making powers to Bikini Atoll Mayor and Council Members on spending of Bikini Resettlement Trust Fund.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

Press Releases and Other Actions

Compact Funding to Palau – ASIN has released a partial payment of \$3 million in funding to the Republic of Palau to provide FY 2018 funding for current government operations. Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act for 2017, and prior discretionary appropriation acts, Interior has extended annual economic assistance to Palau of approximately \$13.1 million a year since the U.S. and Palau signed the agreement in 2010. This payment includes \$528,985 for the

FY2017 Single Audit, a separate requirement under the Compact with Palau. (See related note on FY2018 NDAA above.)

Four Atoll Health Care Program in Marshall Islands

The program was awarded \$1,394,774 in FY17 and expects to deplete all grant funding by January 2018. OIA is preparing a partial award of \$721,320 for FY18 so the program can continue services without interruption. The 4 Atoll 177 HCP provides numerous health care services to the people of the 4 Nuclear-Affected Atolls in the Marshall Islands - Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap and Utrok.

Ongoing Grant Funded Projects

Women in Farming, Kosrae Micronesia - This project serves to increase awareness about the importance of a balanced diet and active lifestyle for healthy living to combat high incidences of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes. The group works with families and communities on the island to share healthy food recipes and food preservation techniques.

Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

ASLM Joe Balash will be in Washington, D.C. attending regularly scheduled meetings.

ASLM Deputy Assistant Secretary Kate MacGregor will be on annual leave.

ASLM Deputy Assistant Secretary Casey Hammond will be on annual leave.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

As early as December 22, DOI/BLM intends to send to the Federal Register the Final Rule on Hydraulic Fracking. On December 21, 2017, DOI and BLM leadership met to complete a final review and approval of the final rule documents.

On or before December 26, Washington Office BLM will issue 6 Instruction Memorandum's (IM) related to Greater sage-grouse management. The previous IM's were issued in response to the previous Administrations' Greater Sage Grouse policy. After coordinating and consulting with states and other entities, these revisions to the IMs are intended to provide more flexibility in Greater sage-grouse management decisions. Actions on the 68 Greater Sage Grouse Resource Management Plan Amendments are ongoing. A Scoping Report as the result of the Notice of Intent, is to be completed and released to the public in mid-January 2018.

As early as the week of December 24, BLM will publish Notices of Intent (NOI) regarding Management Plans in Bears Ears National Monument and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The NOIs are the first steps in proposing new management plans for these monuments, consistent with the Proclamations enacted by the President on December 4, 2017.

By December 27, the BLM-CA El Centro Field Office anticipates signing a Notice to Proceed for commercial operation of the Tule Wind Project. Avangrid Renewables has a power purchase agreement with Southern California Edison to supply up to 132 megawatts of energy for a 15-year contract period. The Tule Wind Project is located in the eastern portion of the County of San Diego and consists of 57 turbines, 52 of which are on BLM public lands and 5 on private property.

By late December, BLM-AK anticipates completing the first Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Section 17(d) (1) withdrawal revocation recommendation package. The package will be submitted this month to the BLM WO and then to the Secretary for action. The revocation Public Land Order will open approximately 229,715 acres to surface entry, mining, and mineral leasing in the Goodnews Bay area of Alaska. These lands were recommended for revocation in the 2008 Bay Resource Management Plan.

In late December, the BLM-UT Moab Field Office intends to initiate scoping for a programmatic EA analyzing potential impacts of issuing Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) for non-mechanized commercial and organized group activities. The proposed action would include use

of designated roads and trails, interpretive sites, and established viewpoints in the Moab Field Office.

In December and January, the GAO is conducting phone interviews with the BLM-CA Bakersfield Field Office oil and gas staff regarding an audit it has been conducting on the office's oil and gas well inspection and enforcement procedures. This audit is a continuation of the 2015 audit, and includes reviews of records analyses and verification, as well as the following types of inspections: production; drilling; abandonment; work-over; environmental; and idle/orphan wells.

On December 22, the BLM-CA Central Coast Field Office intends to sign the Decision Record for the Trio Jacalitos Canyon APD in Fresno County, CA. This APD has been on hold since 2013 when the BLM identified the need for additional wildlife, botanical, and cultural inventories. The BLM review was reinitiated in 2017 when the proponents provided notice that the inventories were being completed. This APD is likely to draw the attention of environmental organizations. Public notification for the proposed APD was posted on the BLM's National NEPA Register on October 2, 2017.

Assistant Secretary Policy, Management and Budget

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

On December 26-29, 2017, Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, Scott Cameron will be in Washington, DC, and participating in routine internal briefings.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

On December 15, 2017, the Office of Acquisition and Property Management (PAM) submitted the Department's FY 2017 consolidated annual report of real property data to the Federal Real Property Profile (FRPP). The FRPP is the General Services Administration's central database of Federal real property, which contains comprehensive data on the more than 150,000 real property assets (buildings, structures, and land) in the DOI inventory.

At the request of the Department of Commerce (Commerce), David Sims, the DOI Debarment Program Director within the Office of Acquisition and Property Management (PAM), is providing ongoing assistance to Commerce's Senior Counsel, Office of the Chief Counsel for International Commerce, involved in North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) renegotiations with Canada and Mexico. Mr. Sims provided text on the U.S. debarment regime mechanism and suspension and debarment due process and procedural provision, which is under consideration for inclusion in the new NAFTA.

The turnstiles for the Main Interior Building E-street entrance are scheduled to be delivered December 29, 2018. Installation will begin on Friday, January 5 and finish on Saturday, January 6. After the installation there will be functional testing, with the goal of having the C Street and E Street turnstiles to be fully operational by the beginning of February.

For Hurricane's Harvey and Irma, the Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC) is coordinating DOI efforts for the Natural and Cultural Recovery Support Function (NCR RSF). For Hurricane Harvey, the OEPC's Field Coordinator continues to develop the Recovery Support Strategy, with support from subject matter experts deployed by, the National Park Service. For Hurricane Irma, two OEPC staff members continue to serve as part of FEMA's interagency recovery team at the Joint Field Office in Orlando. Current efforts are focused on developing the Recovery Support Strategy to identify actions and resources recover impacted natural and cultural resources. For Hurricane Maria, OEPC is coordinating DOI efforts related with Emergency Support Function #10 (Oil and Hazardous Materials) and #11 (Protection of Natural and Cultural Resources), and the Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery Support Function. Missions Assignments have been received and DOI staff have been deployed to Puerto Rico to support the State Historic Preservation Office of Puerto Rico and the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and to support and coordinate the long-term recovery of natural and cultural resources. NPS and USFWS staff are serving as Field Coordinators, leading the NCR RSF, in U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, respectively.

A new Government Accountability Office (GAO) audit is Federal Efforts to Address Marine Debris (Job Code: 102349). Per request from the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard; Committee on Commerce, Science, and

Transportation; and other Senators. GAO will review: (1) the achievements and shortcomings of the Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act (the Act); (2) the tools and mechanisms available to the Federal government under the Act and other relevant authorities available for the United States to coordinate internationally to prevent, reduce, and mitigate marine debris; (3) the effectiveness of these tools and mechanisms and challenges with their use; (4) the extent of other Federal environmental programs that could provide useful parallels that could be applied to Federal efforts to address marine debris; and (5) Federal government considerations of international trade agreements, particularly in countries with limited infrastructure, in dealing with practices that may contribute to marine debris.

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) Entrance Conference is “Security Threats to Federal Land Management Facilities (Job Code 102426) – December 19, 2017, with the National Park Service (NPS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Per request from the Ranking Member of the House Natural Resources Committee, GAO will review: (1) actions NPS, FWS, BLM, and the U.S. Forest Service have taken to track, assess, and protect against security threats to their facilities and employees, including but not limited to those in rural and remote locations; (2) whether these actions conform with applicable Federal policies, agency guidance, and key practices; (3) the number of credible threats or attacks made against Federal personnel and real property in the past decade; (4) the cost of intentional damage done to Federal property over that time period and the portion of those costs ultimately paid by taxpayers; and (5) challenges Federal land management agencies face in addressing these security threats, how tracking of this information could be improved, and how agencies should use data to improve security for their employees and public assets they protect.

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) Exit Conference/Pending Reports is “Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation (ONHIR) (Job Code 101923)” – December 19, 2017, with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Office of the Solicitor. Per request from the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs; Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources; Senator John McCain; and Representative Lamar Smith, GAO reviewed: (1) the extent to which ONHIR completed its statutory relocation responsibilities; (2) how ONHIR responded to administrative appeals over time, including the extent to which any changes in eligibility have been made and communicated to Hopi and Navajo families; (3) steps ONHIR has taken to close out its functions, and to what extent these functions could be transitioned to other Federal or tribal entities; (4) the status of ONHIR’s efforts for engaging with homebuilding contractors and the extent of coordination with other Federal agencies in implementing grazing regulations and rangeland management assistance and competing infrastructure projects; and (5) the financial condition of the Navajo Rehabilitation Trust Fund and the status of revenues and expenses experienced by the Fund. ONHIR is an independent agency responsible for assisting Hopi and Navajo Indians impacted by the relocation that Congress mandated in 1974 for members of the tribes who were living on each other’s land. To date, we have only received GAO’s statement of facts which is unclear as to the findings and recommendations that GAO will have. The exit conference is scheduled for December 19, 10 a.m., Room 5527.

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) Exit Conference/Pending Report is “Statement of Fact: Reduce the Footprint Initiative (GAO job code 102015).” On December 14, 2017, GAO issued its Statement of Facts for the Department of the Interior regarding GAO’s engagement on the Implementation of the Reduce the Footprint (RtF) Initiative. GAO reviewed the approaches and challenges Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Act agencies identified to achieve their RtF targets; and the extent to which CFO Act agencies met their fiscal year 2016 RtF targets. GAO analyzed 24 CFO Act agencies’ 5-year Real Property Efficiency Plans for 2016 and 2017, and data reported to GSA and OMB to quantify the agencies’ progress toward their targets. Comments are due to GAO by December 22, 2017.

Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

The week of December 25, Deputy Assistant Secretary Andrea Travnicek will be teleworking (and available by phone and email). The week of January 1, she will be in Washington, DC, attending a number of various internal meetings and briefings.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

California Wildfire Response Activities:

In response to the ongoing California wildfires, the USGS continues collecting and distributing imagery at the request of State and Federal partners. The USGS sent one scientist to California to provide technical assistance to NASA in ground calibrating remote sensing data and imagery that can be used to help define extent and severity of burned areas, as well as help map the makeup of smoke plumes from active fires and ash and debris left behind after the fires. The USGS also continues partnering with FEMA, State, and local partners to develop increased monitoring for potential debris flows following wildfires that occurred earlier this year in Northern California and Orange County. USGS scientists have provided some media interviews regarding the increased risks of erosion, debris flows, and other hazards to local communities impacted by wildfires. Two USGS employees previously evacuated but have returned to their homes. There are no reported impacts to USGS facilities or assets at this time; however, some field work has been suspended or delayed due to the fires.

The Bureau of Reclamation deployed staff to Northern California to assist the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through Emergency Support Function 3 of the Stafford Act. Reclamation will provide staffing for QC/QA missions for debris removal. Staff will be deployed for 29 days.

Due to the Thomas Fire spreading rapidly northwest towards Santa Barbara County, a secondary Incident Command Post has been set up at Lake Cachuma Recreation Area. Reclamation is in contact with the U.S. Forest Service, Casitas Municipal Water District and Santa Barbara County Parks for updates. Reclamation staff will participate in coordination meetings with the Incident Command Team via phone conference and in person as necessary. If the fire is reasonably contained, Reclamation staff may perform a site visit of both Lake Casitas and Lake Cachuma, Dec. 25 through Jan. 7.

The USGS and BOEM will release a new assessment of undiscovered, technically recoverable oil and natural gas resources for the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska and adjacent offshore waters. The updated assessment was completed under Secretarial Order 3352, "National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska" which directs the USGS to lead a multi-agency effort between USGS, BOEM and BLM to update current energy assessments for undiscovered, technically recoverable oil and natural gas resources of Alaska's North Slope, focusing on Federal lands including the NPRA and Section 1002 Area. USGS, BOEM and the Department are coordinating on plans to announce this new assessment.

Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) requested Reclamation be the owner's representative during efforts to rehabilitate the spillway at Guajataca Dam. This would include reviewing final designs for permanent repairs that the U.S. Corps of Engineers will be preparing once the temporary repairs are constructed. The Bureau of Reclamation intends to work directly with the U.S. Corps of Engineers as a reviewer of their designs for the permanent repairs. Reclamation will also likely be involved with the risk analysis of the entire project.

30-60 DAY LOOK-AHEAD

Office of the Solicitor

SIGNIFICANT LITIGATION DEADLINES FOR NEXT THREE WEEKS SEPARATELY REPORTED

Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Nothing additional to report

U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service

On or around January 8, 2018, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice of availability of the draft revised stock assessment report for the northern sea otter stock in Washington State and open a 90-day public comment period. This action is not expected to be opposed. FWS will notify the state and outer coast tribes, and post the document on the Washington Fish and Wildlife Office website.

FWS is conducting community involvement activities under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (Superfund) for a contaminated area on Crab Orchard NWR in Illinois, a former military ordnance and industrial area. In April 2017, FWS held an open house to share information on potential cleanup alternatives for tenants and farmers who use the refuge. On September 3, FWS published a legal notice in the local paper announcing the availability of the Administrative Record, and has developed a community involvement plan. On January 6, FWS will announce a public comment on the proposed cleanup alternatives and will host an open house and public meeting at the refuge on January 24 to provide information and receive input on the proposed cleanup. Public comments will be accepted through February 5.

On January 17-18, FWS plans a meeting with representatives from the five range state fish and game agencies, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and other partners to discuss coordination on lesser prairie-chicken issues. The meeting is in Arcadia, Oklahoma.

FWS and NOAA have completed a public scoping process to evaluate ways to protect seabirds from predation by invasive house mice at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial, located in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. Midway is the largest Laysan albatross colony in the world and more than 3 million birds from 29 species nest on Midway's three islands. All of them are potentially vulnerable to mouse predation. The mice have been documented eating seabirds while they are nesting, resulting in injury and death. Due to their extreme dedication to raising their young, the birds won't leave the nest if attacked. FWS is preparing a draft environmental assessment that will evaluate alternatives to protect seabirds from mouse predation. The draft Environmental Assessment (EA) should be ready for public comment in mid-January. Outreach is planned to include local public notifications through the web and social media, when the draft EA is published, and notifications to members of Congress in Hawaii, with targeted stakeholder outreach.

On or around January 26, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice announcing the availability of comprehensively revised boundaries for the first batch of Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS) units included in the Hurricane Sandy Remapping Project, affecting 112 existing and 36 proposed new units in Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New Jersey. The notice will announce a 120-day public comment period and also advise of upcoming public meetings to be held via webcast. Landowners, state and local officials (and their representatives in Congress) will likely support the removal of certain areas from the CBRS and similarly oppose the addition of such areas to the CBRS. Taxpayer groups, recreational interest groups and conservation groups will likely support the additions to the CBRS. Outreach will include a news release and FAQs, as well as stakeholder and congressional outreach.

FWS Southwest Region is proactively reaching out to state agencies to discuss Secretarial Order 3356, and seek additional opportunities to support and expand hunting and fishing on Refuges in the Southwest. Currently the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) has been the most responsive to outreach. On November 9, 2017, FWS leadership met with ODWC to discuss several potential hunting and fishing opportunities that could occur on Refuges in Oklahoma. A follow up meeting with ODWC is planned in January. The FWS Southwest Region will continue to reach out to Texas, Arizona and New Mexico as well as Oklahoma to explore more opportunities.

FWS and partners will conduct the annual Mexican wolf population survey and capture, weather conditions permitting from January 22 through February 2. The Mexican Wolf Recovery Program is a multi-agency cooperative effort among FWS, Arizona Game and Fish Department, U.S. Forest Service, USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services and the White Mountain Apache Tribe, as well as in consultation with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Survey flights will occur on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation, Apache and Gila National Forests in eastern Arizona and western New Mexico, and possibly on some areas immediately outside the forests. The count is not open to the public. Limited media opportunities may be arranged, when possible.

In January and February, several border projects involving FWS are anticipated to begin. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will need access to water from a FWS-owned well on Buenos Aires NWR in Arizona for a road repair project. The Border Patrol & Air and Marine Program Management Office (BPAM PMO) plans a road construction project for a 66-mile portion of the Presumido Canyon Road through the Baboquivari Mountains in Arizona. CBP will update existing communications and surveillance towers on and adjacent to the Buenos Aires NWR.

Early in 2018, FWS expects to receive an Environmental Assessment (EA) on the Hecla Montanore Mines that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Hecla, and an environmental consultant are drafting; the EA will include an update of the baseline and new data on the Cabinet-Yak population of grizzly bears for the area. Energy and Resource Group Consulting plans to host weekly or bi-monthly calls among the consultants, USFS and FWS to keep project on track and information flowing. FWS is providing technical assistance on this project.

In February, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice seeking public review and comment on a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) describing the potential effects of issuing a proposed Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for construction and development activities in Thurston County, Washington. UPC, LLC developed a draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and applied for a 15-year ITP. The project development site is 127 acres, and the conservation site is 64 acres. Species covered in the HCP include the threatened Olympia subspecies of the Mazama pocket gopher and the threatened Oregon spotted frog. This is not controversial. This HCP is a single-site developer and independent from the HCP that FWS briefed ASFWP on on November 17. This applicant would like to move forward with development in advance of the completion of the Thurston County HCP.

Endangered Species Act Listing/Delisting Actions

Pending approval by the Department, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposed listing determination for the Yangtze sturgeon, located in China. While there is no expected opposition to this determination, aquacultural businesses and countries including China may be concerned that the potential listing of this species will have an impact on other species that are traded internationally, such as the Amur sturgeon. Planned outreach includes a news release.

Pending approval by the Department, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to delist the Foskett speckled dace, an endemic fish species in Oregon, from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife due to recovery. FWS will also make available the draft post-delisting monitoring plan. This action will likely only receive local and regional interest. Oregon Desert Fishes Working Group (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, FWS) has been engaged and is supportive of this action. FWS will conduct outreach to local and regional media, Congressionals and stakeholders. FWS does not expect opposition to this proposal. The Department has prioritized this action to be published by December 31.

Pending approval by the Department, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* 12-month findings on a petition to list the beaverpond marstonia and a petition to delist the southwestern willow flycatcher. For the beaverpond marstonia finding, FWS does not anticipate opposition by stakeholders except for the petitioners; however, it is likely the petitioners will pursue media attention due to the conclusion that the species is extinct. For the southwestern willow flycatcher finding, FWS anticipates interest from the petitioners. Planned outreach includes separate news releases for each species, with supporting FAQs, and notifications to stakeholders and members of Congress. FWS is required by settlement agreement to submit the finding for the beaverpond marstonia to the *Federal Register* by December 31.

Pending approval by the Department, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final listing determination and designation of critical habitat for the Black Warrior waterdog, an amphibian in Alabama. FWS is designating 659 river miles as critical habitat. Much of this critical habitat has already been designated for other listed species. The costs of critical habitat are expected to be low. Stakeholders include Bankhead National Forest, the state of Alabama, Alabama Forestry Commission, National Alliance of Forest Owners, National Council for Air and Streams, Tennessee Valley Authority, Warrior-Tombigbee Waterways Association, Weyerhaeuser, Sierra

Club, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, and the Center for Biological Diversity. FWS received several substantive comments expressing concern about the inclusion of unoccupied critical habitat. After reevaluating whether each proposed critical habitat unit was essential for the conservation of the species, FWS determined the unoccupied units did not meet that criterion. Removal of the unoccupied units in the final rule will reduce the level of concern among the interested parties. Planned outreach will include a news release and notifications to stakeholders and members of Congress. FWS is required by settlement agreement to publish the determination in the *Federal Register* by January 4.

Pending approval by the Department, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposed listing determination for the Panama City crayfish, found in Bay County, Florida. Interested stakeholders include local governments (Bay County Commissioners, City of Panama City, City of Callaway, City of Lynn Haven and City of Springfield), the St. Joe Development Company and the Center for Biological Diversity. There may be some opposition from developers concerned that listing this species could have a negative impact on the development of new residential and commercial properties in the area. Planned outreach will include notifications to local stakeholders, a news release to local media, and social media posts. FWS is required by settlement agreement to submit the determination to the *Federal Register* by December 29.

Pending approval by the Department, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposed listing determination on the Barrens topminnow, found in Tennessee. This action is not expected to be opposed and media coverage is expected to be neutral. Interested stakeholders include Center for Biological Diversity (petitioner), Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and local landowners. Planned outreach includes a news release to all interested parties and the media. FWS is required by settlement agreement to submit the determination to the *Federal Register* by December 31.

Pending approval by the Department, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* the final delisting determination for Eureka Valley evening-primrose and downlisting, to threatened from endangered, of the Eureka dune grass. These are two plant species that occur in Death Valley National Park, California. The primary partner and stakeholder is the National Park Service who supports the actions. Some environmental groups opposed delisting the two species. However, in response to new information, we are no longer delisting Eureka dunegrass and are instead reclassifying it to a threatened species which may reduce the level of concern among the interested parties. Planned outreach will include a news release and notifications to stakeholders and members of Congress. This action is a Secretarial priority with a due date of December 30.

On or around January 8, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final rule to remove the eastern puma (cougar) (historically known to exist in southeastern Ontario, southern Quebec, and New Brunswick in Canada, and a region bounded from Maine to Michigan, Illinois, Kentucky, and South Carolina in the eastern United States) from the list of endangered and threatened species due to extinction. Although FWS does not anticipate major public resistance to the final rule, opposition to the conclusion of extinction may be expressed by advocates for puma and large predator conservation. There may be some concern due to “puma” sightings reported by the public. The best available information indicates that these are cases of mistaken identity and escaped captive animals, and, rarely, dispersers from western puma populations. This rule will

also acknowledge the current state of the North American puma taxonomy. Interested parties include the states within the eastern United States, the Humane Society of the United States, the Animal Legal Defense Fund, and the Cougar Network. A national news bulletin and congressional emails are planned.

On or around January 8, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to remove the Monito gecko, a reptile in Puerto Rico, from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife due to recovery. It is protected in a natural reserve managed by the Puerto Rico Department of Environmental and Natural Resources that has no public access. As a result, species' protections will remain in place after delisting. This action is a conservation success story and is not expected to be opposed. The primary stakeholder is the territory of Puerto Rico. Planned outreach will include a news release and web postings.

On or around January 12, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposed listing determination and proposed critical habitat designation for the Island marble butterfly, found in Washington. The proposed critical habitat designation includes approximately 812 acres. This action is not expected to be opposed and media coverage is expected to be neutral. Interested stakeholders include Xerces (the petitioner), federal partners including National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management, and state partners including Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Washington Department of Natural Resources, San Juan County Land Bank, the San Juan Preservation Trust and local landowners. A news release to all interested parties and the media is planned.

On or around January 15, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a revised proposed listing determination with a 4(d) rule on the Louisiana pinesnake, found in Louisiana and Texas. Interested stakeholders include the forestry industry, state wildlife agencies and Center for Biological Diversity. This action is not expected to be opposed and media coverage is expected to be neutral. The 4(d) rule will allow exemptions from the take provision. Planned outreach includes a news release to all interested parties and the media. FWS would like to finalize the 4(d) with the final listing rule, which is required by settlement agreement to publish by April 4, 2018; therefore FWS plans to submit the proposed 4(d) rule to the *Federal Register* by January 15.

On or around January 17, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final downlisting of the Tobusch fishhook cactus from endangered to threatened. This plant species has shown significant recovery due in part to collaborative conservation efforts with partners. Supporters of this action include the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas Department of Transportation, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, The Nature Conservancy. FWS has gained significant positive coverage on downlisting proposals, and anticipates more interest when this final determination is announced. Outreach planned includes a news release and social media postings.

On or around January 19, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a taxonomic change for the orangutan. The original listed entity included all orangutans in the genus *Pongo*. However, the orangutan has recently been reclassified as belonging to two distinct species: *P. pygmaeus* and *P. abelii*. Therefore, we are revising the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife to reflect the

current scientifically accepted taxonomy and nomenclature of the orangutan. This change does not alter regulatory protections afforded to the orangutan and is not expected to be opposed. Since this is a technical correction, minimal outreach is planned.

On or around January 24, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to downlist the Hawaiian goose (nene) from endangered to threatened. FWS will also propose to establish special regulations for the conservation of the species under section 4(d) of the ESA to allow for flexibility in managing lands. Landowners of resort, golf course, agricultural, residential, and recreational properties are likely to support the reclassification and associated 4(d) rule while conservation groups may be opposed. Interested stakeholders include the State of Hawaii, federal agencies, conservation and bird groups, various private landowners, and the public. Outreach includes a news release, social media, emails and phone calls to Congressional offices and stakeholders.

On or around January 24, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice of availability of a draft post-delisting monitoring plan for the black-capped vireo. While this action is not expected to be controversial, stakeholder who oppose the delisting of the species, may express use this notice to express their concerns about the delisting. Stakeholders include the petitioners, Pacific Legal Foundation, Jim Chilton, New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association, New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau, New Mexico Federal Lands Council, and Texas Farm Bureau, and the Office of Travis Co. Judge and Big Bend National Park. Planned outreach will include notifications to local stakeholders, a news release to local media and social media posts.

On or around February 2, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final listing determination for the Texas hornshell, a mussel that occurs in New Mexico, Texas and Mexico. The states of New Mexico and Texas have not overtly opposed listing the hornshell, and FWS has worked with oil and gas companies extensively on a Candidate Conservation Agreement for the Black and Delaware Rivers, the only portion of the range of Texas hornshell where oil and gas production is occurring. FWS anticipates significant participation in these agreements which will provide regulatory certainty for these companies. Stakeholders include the Center for Biological Diversity, the States of Texas and New Mexico, the Bureau of Land Management, the Independent Petroleum Association of America, and local landowners. Planned outreach will include notifications to stakeholders and relevant members of Congress and a news release to local media. FWS is required by settlement agreement to publish the final determination in the *Federal Register* by February 10; therefore, FWS plans to submit it by February 2.

National Wildlife Refuge Actions

In January, FWS will award nearly \$19 million in grants to coastal states to conserve and restore coastal wetlands and their fish and wildlife habitat. Each year, the Service supports coastal wetland conservation through the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program and the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund. The grant funds are derived from excise taxes on fishing tackle and motorboat and small engine fuels. The grants will support 22 projects in 13 coastal states to protect, restore or enhance more than 30,000 acres of coastal wetlands and adjacent upland habitats, including 287 miles of shoreline. Over \$21 million in additional matching funds will be provided by partner contributions from state and local governments,

private landowners and conservation groups. Conservation of this habitat will help recover coastal-dependent federal trust species, enhance flood protection and water quality, provide economic benefits to coastal communities and increase recreational opportunities for hunters and anglers. The grant recipients (states) have not yet been informed that they will be receiving funds. Planned outreach includes congressional and stakeholder notifications and a news release.

Bosque del Apache and Valle de Oro NWRs along with other federal and non-federal partners were recently awarded a \$1 million North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant for restoration and enhancement of nearly 1,100 acres in the Middle Rio Grande Valley in New Mexico. NAWCA grants increase bird populations and wetland habitat, while supporting local economies and American traditions such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, family farming, and cattle ranching. In recognition of this grant, Ducks Unlimited is arranging for a field visit to Bosque del Apache NWR and has invited Senator Udall (D-NM) and Representative Pearce (R-NM) to attend. The field visit is tentatively set for January 15, 2018.

Migratory Bird Management Actions

In January, FWS plans to publish in the *Federal Register* the proposed 2018-19 hunting regulations for certain migratory game birds. FWS annually prescribes frameworks, or outer limits, for dates and times when hunting may occur and the number of birds that may be taken and possessed in hunting seasons. These frameworks are necessary to allow state selections of seasons and limits and to allow recreational harvest at levels compatible with population and habitat conditions. Planned outreach includes congressional and stakeholder notifications and a news release.

In January, FWS plans to publish a final rule removing regulations setting forth the provisions for two depredation orders for double-crested cormorants. FWS had used these standing orders to allow for lethal control of cormorants where they impact aquaculture and public resources; however, on May 25, 2016, the District Court for the District of Columbia ordered that both the Aquaculture Depredation Order and the Public Resources Depredation Order be vacated until FWS performs a new and legally adequate environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement for national cormorant management orders in compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This final rule administratively implements the court's decision. While the depredation orders no longer exist, on November 15, 2017, FWS provided some measure of relief to aquaculture facilities. It issued a final EA under NEPA, which allows aquaculture facility managers and property owners across 37 central and eastern states and the District of Columbia to apply for individual permits for lethal take of cormorants where they are impacting resources. This latest action is not controversial. If-asked talking points will be planned for outreach.

In January, FWS will publish a final rule in the *Federal Register* on special methods of hunting migratory game birds by tribal members on ceded lands in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota for the 2017-18 season. This rule prescribes special migratory bird hunting regulations for certain tribes on Indian reservations, off-reservation trust lands and ceded lands. This rule responds to tribal requests for FWS recognition of their authority to regulate hunting under established guidelines. This rule allows the establishment of season bag limits and, thus, harvest at levels

compatible with populations and habitat conditions. This new final rule replaces the August 31, 2017, interim final rule. Outreach will include talking points, emails and phone calls to tribes, states, Congressional offices and stakeholders.

In January FWS, will publish a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* for migratory bird subsistence harvest regulations in Alaska for the 2018 season. These regulations allow for the continuation of customary and traditional subsistence uses of migratory birds in Alaska and prescribe regional information on when and where the harvesting of birds may occur. These regulations were developed under a co-management process involving FWS, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Alaska Native representatives. The rulemaking is necessary because the regulations governing the subsistence harvest of migratory birds in Alaska are subject to annual review. This rulemaking proposes region-specific regulations that go into effect on April 2, 2018. Planned outreach includes congressional and stakeholder notifications and a news release.

National Park Service

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area will be the subject of an eight-page spread in the January/February 2018 issue of *Westways Magazine*, the official publication of the Southern California Automobile Association of America. The article is timed to coincide with the park's 40th anniversary.

On February 1, Joshua Tree National Park will be expanding its current online campground reservation system to include Jumbo Rocks and Cottonwood campgrounds. Currently the park offers approximately 200 sites for reservation, and the inclusion of Jumbo Rocks and Cottonwood campgrounds will double the number of reservable sites. Park management is moving towards expanding the number of reservable sites following an extensive public comment period and a series of public meetings on how better to serve the camping community at the park. Sites can be reserved at [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov); first come, first serve campers will still have access to four other campgrounds.

On February 1, Joshua Tree National Park will implement a pilot transportation program with a fleet of shuttle buses operating throughout the northern portion of the park during the peak season. The shuttle will be a free option for visitors, and will travel the 30 miles between Twentynine Palms, California and the village of Joshua Tree, providing access to all of the major campgrounds and hiking trails. After a two-year test period, the park will reevaluate the system to determine if it should be further expanded or made permanent.

On February 1 and 2, 2018, Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL-5) and possibly additional members of the House Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition (SEEC) are planning to visit coastal areas of Everglades National Park and sites in Northeastern and Central Florida Bay. Topics during the visit will include Hurricane Irma effects, and Everglades Restoration and Ecosystem Sustainability programs.

On February 7, 2018, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore will host a Quarter Launch & Coin Exchange at Mather Elementary School in Munising, Michigan, commemorating the release of

the parks's quarter, the 41st coin to be released in the United States Mint America the Beautiful Quarter Program. As a prelude to the event, the United States Mint will host a coin forum the evening before, February 6, at Munising Township Office in Wetmore, Michigan. The WASO Office of Communications is in contact with the United States Mint who will draft a press release for coordination by the WASO Solicitor's Office.

On or about February 9, 2018, the city of San Francisco will certify a California state-level environmental compliance document for the Alcatraz Ferry Embarkation Plan. This will be subsequent to Golden Gate National Recreation Area completion of the Record of Decision for the Alcatraz Ferry Embarkation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement scheduled for late December 2017. The selected alternative will rehabilitate historic structures for visitor use and ferry operations at Pier 31½ in San Francisco, supporting a commercial services concession that will begin in 2019.

In February 19, 2018, President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter will speak at the Plains High School, a part of Jimmy Carter National Historic Site, during the annual Presidents Day celebration. The Congressional delegation, state and local officials will be invited to attend.

In February 2018, Death Valley National Park and the Ridgecrest Bureau of Land Management (BLM) office anticipate opening a public comment period on the Keystone Mine Plan of Operations Amendment and accompanying Environmental Assessment. The mine is on BLM land near the park's western border, but the mining plan includes the use of water rights within the park.

The deadline to submit proposals for the 250th non-profit has been extended until February 28, 2018. The team is working on the press release and it will go out this week

Through March 2018, the NPS will conduct annual deer management actions at Catoctin Mountain Park, Antietam National Battlefield, Monocacy National Battlefield, and Rock Creek Park. This will be Catoctin's ninth season of deer management operations, Rock Creek Park's fifth season, and the second season for Antietam and Monocacy National Battlefields. Park staff members are conducted deer population density surveys in October and November 2017 to determine the number of animals to remove, as determined through their deer management plans. Sharpshooters from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service will remove deer from closed park areas during the daytime in some parks and from park roads after dusk in all parks. Venison will be donated to local food banks

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) estimates the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Alaska Stand Alone Pipeline to be released in summer 2018, with a prior review by cooperating agencies expected to begin in February 2018. The proposed action remains outside of Denali National Park and Preserve (DENA), and a right-of-way application has not been submitted to the NPS. The applicant considers the route through DENA to be infeasible because of the procedural requirements of Title XI in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. However, proposed legislative changes to preclude the procedural requirements of Title XI are pending in Congress. The applicant could change their proposed route because of changes in legislation or with the Final Supplemental EIS. The Corps could

direct the applicant to the route through DENA as the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA) because of fewer impacts to wetlands. If the route would encumber DENA lands, the applicant would submit a right-of-way application to the NPS.

In the spring of 2018, Mojave National Preserve expects to begin the public comment period on a Management Plan for Developed Water Sources and Environmental Assessment (PDWS/EA). The plan will provide a comprehensive strategy and water management techniques to ensure the preservation of wildlife, historic, wilderness, and recreation values in the management of developed and undeveloped water resources in the park (wildlife guzzlers and developed springs). The process is being closely watched by local hunting and conservation groups concerned about how the park will manage wildlife guzzlers, which are viewed by some as necessary for maintaining a healthy bighorn sheep population.

Heads-up/reminders:

In 1976, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) assistance was provided for the acquisition of approximately 1.26 acres of lake front property and site development at Marion Beggs Memorial Park (Beggs Park) located along the shore of Lake Champlain in the Town of Essex, New York. On May 30, 2017, New York State contacted the NPS with a proposal by the Town of Essex to upgrade and expand the water pumping station; and add a public restroom, water fountain, and a rooftop viewing platform to Beggs Park. The NPS determined that the proposal would trigger a conversation because an upgraded facility would expand into the surrounding LWCF protected parkland, which is a non-public outdoor recreation area. On October 25, Rep. Elise Stefanik's (R-NY-21) district office in Plattsburgh, NY, contacted the Northeast Regional Office (NER) on behalf of the Town of Essex by letter outlining the project and requesting an appeal of NPS' findings on the matter. On November 8, representatives from the Town of Essex, New York State, and NPS staff participated in a follow-up discussion about the proposal. After discussing the project and the LWCF compliance finding, the Town of Essex indicated that they would like to bring their issue to the attention of the NER regional director in hopes of an appeal. The regional director responded to the letter indicating she did not have the authority to alter the finding, and provided clarification on the decision and process. The matter was also raised to the NPS Associate Director for Partnerships and Civic Engagement, who manages the LWCF program, and has offered to have a call with the interested parties if requested.

Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs and the Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Indian Education

On January 11-12, the Advisory Board for Exceptional Children will be meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Advisory Board was established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) to advise AS-IA on the needs of Indian children with disabilities.

On January 12, Dr. Sherry Allison, SIPI President, will serve as a keynote speaker at the Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, California.

January 13 is the deadline for comments on BIE's Strategic Plan.

On January 16, PDAS-IA will lead the first Tribal consultation session on potential revisions to fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR 151 in Sacramento, California.

January 16-19, BIE will be hosting a Strategic Plan planning session in Washington, DC.

On January 18, PDAS-IA will lead the second Tribal consultation session on potential revisions to fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR 151 in Prior Lake, Minnesota.

January 23-24, the Self-Governance Advisory Committee (SGAC) January quarterly meeting will take place in Washington, DC. Representatives of the Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs are invited to attend on January 24.

On January 23, PDAS-IA will lead the third Tribal consultation session on potential revisions to fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR 151 in Mashantucket, Connecticut.

On January 25, PDAS-IA will lead the fourth Tribal consultation session on potential revisions to fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR 151 in Portland, Oregon, following the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest conference.

February 12 – 15, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) will hold its Executive Council Winter Session at the Capital Hilton in Washington, DC. It is expected that representatives of the Department will be asked to participate.

On February 20, PDAS-IA will lead the fifth Tribal consultation session on potential revisions to fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR 151 in Phoenix, Arizona.

On February 22, PDAS-IA will lead the sixth (and last scheduled) Tribal consultation session on potential revisions to fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR 151 in Miami, Florida.

February 26 - March 1, the IA Safety Manager/Division Chief will travel to Washington, DC, to attend the quarterly DOI, Occupational Safety and Health Council Meeting at the USGS Headquarters Office in Reston, Virginia.

March 21 to 22, the Tribal-Interior Budget Council (TIBC) will meet at the Washington Plaza Hotel in Washington DC.

Items of Note/Expected Legislative, Legal, Policy Issues

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is in the process of reviewing the final Streamlining Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) draft, which will be sent to Interior after HUD's final review. A 60-day public comment period has concluded on the HUD National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process Improvement Implementation Plan with 12 recommendations determined.

A Federal Register notice requesting input on BIA's Categorical Exclusions (CatXs) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is currently in surname. BECRM is working with the Department's Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC) on this effort.

There are currently leasing regulations from ten Tribes awaiting the Department's approval under the Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Homeownership (HEARTH) Act: Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes, Lummi Nation, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Coquille Indian Tribe, Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Band, Little Traverse Bay Band, Ramona Band of Cahuilla, Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Pechanga Band of Luiseno Mission Indians, and the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin. Leasing regulations from a few additional Tribes are also in various stages of review, including some under statutory authority that is similar to the HEARTH Act but specific to the Tribe. These additional leasing regulations will be presented for Departmental approval as soon as possible.

On December 12, the General Accounting Office (GAO) met with the Office of Trust Services (OTS) on the Tribal Resilience Program. The GAO's Office has requested past OTS records detailing the methodology of the Tribal Resilience Program procedures for selecting and approving fund distributions of Tribal proposals.

The National Football League Fox Sports network will be releasing a documentary about the Chemawa Indian School football team soon. The Indian Affairs' Office of Public Affairs is working with the media on this.

Indian Affairs' Office of Public Affairs is working with Government Executive on a story about employee grievances at the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) in Albuquerque, NM.

Regulations Ready for OS Review

None pending.

Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs

Care for Insular Area Veterans – Health and Human Services and OIA staff are convening on January 9 to discuss current status of health services and benefits for veterans of U.S. Insular Areas. Similar discussions to be held with Veteran's Affairs officials.

Travel to the USVI and Puerto Rico (PR) – In January or February 2018, ASIN Domenech will travel to the VI and PR for Hurricane Recovery Support meetings. He will also attend Conservation Trust meetings in PR.

Travel to the RMI – In January 2018, ASIN Domenech and OIA Director Nikolao Pula will travel to the Republic of the Marshall Islands for discussions with RMI President Hilda Heine, U.S. Ambassador to the RMI Karen Stewart and travel to Majuro, and Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site at Kwajalein Atoll.

Interagency Group on Insular Areas (IGIA) – Expected to be held on Monday, February 26, 2018, the IGIA is co-chaired by the Secretary and the White House Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Justin Clark. This is the largest annual convening of high-level federal officials discussing issues of concern to the U.S. territories. It is also attended by the Governors and the Delegates.

Coral Reef Task Force Meetings - The winter meetings of the Coral Reef Task Force are likely be held February 20 – 22, 2018 here in Washington, D.C.

Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management

In January, as required under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, BOEM plans to publish a final rule to adjust the offshore facility limit of liability for damages to reflect the increase in the Consumer Price Index since 2013. The rule will increase the limit of liability under OPA from \$133.65 million to \$137.56 million.

In early January, BOEM plans to publish the Draft Proposed Program (DPP) for the 2019 – 2024 National OCS Oil & Gas Program. Publication of the DPP is the second step in developing the new Program; it follows a Request for Information that was published on July 3, 2017, in response to which BOEM received over 815,000 comments.

In early-January, pending final approval, BOEM plans to host a webinar to solicit input from the public on draft guidance for the submission of Construction and Operations Plans that contain a design envelop, which would allow lessees the flexibility to defer final design decisions in order to take advantage of rapid technological advances.

On or about January 2, OSMRE Western Region plans to submit the Bridger Mine Mining Plan decision document to OSMRE Headquarters for review and approval by the ASLM. Bridger Coal Company's Bridger Mine is an underground mine located in Sweetwater County, WY that employs 540 people. If the modification is approved, production is estimated to be 2.24 million tons per year.

On January 4, BOEM plans to publish an RFF in the Federal Register seeking input on a proposed path forward for renewable energy leasing offshore of the Atlantic Coast. The RFF describes the process and factors used by BOEM to identify and forecast areas along the Atlantic Coast where future leasing should be focused and development is most likely

On January 6 - 8, BLM will host a meeting at its Colorado River District/Lake Havasu Field Office in Lake Havasu, AZ to develop an interagency strategy to contain the spread of quagga mussels from the Lower Colorado River. In its June report to the Western Governors Association Development, the Department identified this strategy as one of its top priorities.

On January 8, BLM-CO will attend the Western States Land Commissioners Association (WSLCA) Winter Meeting in Denver. The WSLCA is an organization representing 23 state land management agencies that together manage more than 440 million acres of surface and subsurface state lands throughout the central and western U.S. The BLM has an MOU with the

WSLCA to advance the long-term goals of both the BLM and member states by resolving state-Federal land exchanges and other appropriate realty actions.

In early January 2018, Washington Office BLM will be issuing an Instruction Memorandum (IM) titled "Interim Direction on Mitigation. This IM will implement E.O. 13783 and S.O. 3349 as they relate to mitigation. The IM will provide updated guidance on mitigation and will rescind the BLM's Mitigation Manual Section and Handbook issued on December 22, 2016.

On January 9, Walter Cruickshank, Acting BOEM Director will participate in the Offshore Wind Finance Forum: Advancing Investment in U.S. Offshore Wind in New York, NY. The purpose of the Forum is to explore ways to improve the investment case of project financing U.S. offshore wind. Acting Director Cruickshank will speak at a breakfast briefing on the U.S. offshore wind market and regulations.

On January 11, BSEE Director Angelle will meet with officials from the U.S. Coast Guard to receive a briefing on USCG programs of interest to BSEE at USCG Headquarters in DC.

On January 15, BOEM plans to publish the Oil and Gas and Sulphur Operations in the Outer Continental Shelf Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment as a final rule to adjust the level of civil monetary penalties for inflation, as required under the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act.

On January 18, BSEE Director Angelle will attend a meeting of the Committee on Marine Transportation Systems (CMTS) at the Department of Transportation in Washington, D.C.

On January 21, BOEM plans to publish a Proposed Sale Notice proposing a multi-factor auction for two unleased areas within the Massachusetts Wind Energy Area.

January 22 - 23, ASLM Deputy Assistant Secretary Kate MacGregor, Acting BOEM Director Walter Cruickshank, and other representatives of BOEM are scheduled to attend a meeting in Sacramento with DoD and offshore wind developers to discuss wind exclusion areas proposed by DoD off the State's Central Coast.

On January 23, BSEE Director Angelle is scheduled to speak at a meeting of the Texas Oil and Gas Association in New Orleans, LA.

On January 24, the BLM-NV Southern Nevada District Office proposes to sell 40 parcels totaling 754.88 acres of public land in Clark County. The competitive sale would be by sealed and oral bidding in accordance with the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA).

From January 28 through February 2, the Society for Range Management will hold its 71st annual meeting in Sparks, NV. On January 30, BLM-NV State Director John Ruhs will provide a presentation on wild horses and burros symposium, "Moving Beyond Ecological Effects of Wild Horses." On January 31, there will be a tour of the Northern Nevada Correctional Center's wild horse inmate training program.

On January 31, BLM-CA staff will participate in an oil and gas operator seminar that focuses on surface and environmental requirements associated with new oil and gas projects, including APDs and Sundry Notices. The BLM will provide seminar participants a refresher on the items the BLM needs regarding biological, cultural, and paleontological reviews to ensure a quick turn around when new permits are submitted.

On January 30, BOEM tentatively plans to publish a Notice of Unsolicited Request for a Submarine Transmission Cable ROW and a Request for Competitive Interest and Public Comment. This follows a request for a ROW grant from Clean Power Northeast Development, Inc. for its Atlantic Link Submarine Transmission Cable Project, which would consist of two high-voltage direct current cables and one fiber optic cable that stretches approximately 230 miles in length, from Colson Cove, New Brunswick, Canada to Plymouth Massachusetts.

On January 31, Mike Celata, BOEM-GoM Regional Director will speak at the Outer Continental Shelf Advisory Board's 2018 Workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to promote continuing education of land, legal, and other exploration and production professionals with regard to laws, policies, regulations and practices on the OCS.

In February, the BLM-CA Bakersfield Field Office staff will participate in a USFS-led public meeting in Fillmore about four Applications for Permit to Drill in the Sespe Oil field, which is adjacent to. USFS is the lead agency on the NEPA analysis. This meeting will generate public interest. Previously, BLM-CA had received inquiries from Congresswoman Julia Brownley's (CA-26-D) office.

In February, BLM-CA's Bakersfield Field Office will participate in a USFS public meeting in Fillmore, CA regarding four APDs in the Sespe Oilfield, which is adjacent to a USFWS refuge and a California condor sanctuary. The USFS is the lead Federal agency for the preparation of the NEPA analysis. The BLM anticipates a negative reaction to the proposed wells from local residents who in the past opposed oil and gas development and because of the presence of several active anti-oil and gas organizations in the surrounding counties.

On February 6, BSEE Director Angelle will attend the BSEE/USCG Quarterly Meeting at USCT Headquarters.

On February 16, BOEM plans to publish the Final Notice of Sale and the Record of Decision for Lease Sale 250 in the Gulf of Mexico. The lease sale is scheduled to occur in March 2018 and it will be the second lease sale in the 2017 – 2022 National OCS Oil & Gas Program.

On February 16, Mike Celata, BOEM GoM Regional Director plans to speak at the Institute for Energy Law Oil & Gas Conference in Houston, TX. Specifically, Regional Director Celata will discuss BOEM's current financial assurance proposal.

On February 20-21, Mike Celata, BOEM GoM Regional Director plans to speak at the 10th Annual Decommissioning & Abandonment Summit in New Orleans, LA. The purpose of the conference is to bring together stakeholders and members of industry to share decommissioning and abandonment data, case study insight, and lessons learned.

Assistant Secretary Policy, Management and Budget

PMB is working with the Office of Congressional Liaison, Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, and Office of Communications on an integrated rollout strategy and timeline for the FY 2018 reprogramming on the common regional boundaries and the January 10-11 Leadership Summit with DOI executives from around the country.

In early/mid-January 2018, a progress report will be sent to the Western Governors Association (WGA) from DOI for the invasive mussels initiative in the Columbia River Basin and across western waters. The Office of Policy Analysis (PPA) is working with the bureaus on the report which addresses action items which were announced by the Secretary in June to address invasive mussels in the Columbia River Basin, and across western waters.

On February 18, 2018 the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Management Directive 715 Report is due to the EEOC.

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) biannual meeting is scheduled for February 19-23, 2018 in Washington, DC, with a public business meeting to be held on Thursday, February 22. The DOI Office of Policy Analysis (PPA) and the Department of Commerce (through NOAA) are co-chairs of the USCRTF, and are coordinating the event. The focus of discussion is tentatively set for the following: hurricane impacts in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria; natural disaster recovery and resilience; and long-term sustainable financing for the Watershed Partnership Initiative. The meeting will also include a progress report on implementation of the FY16-20 Framework for Action.

On March 31, 2018, the No FEAR Act Report is due to Congress.

Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

In December, Reclamation intends to publish a Notice of Availability for a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement for the Yolo Bypass Salmonid Habitat Restoration and Fish Passage Project. The document addresses methods to improve fish passage and increase floodplain fisheries rearing habitat in the Yolo Bypass to benefit Sacramento winter-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley steelhead and the Southern Distinct Population Segment North American green sturgeon. The NOA will be published in the Federal Register once the decision memo is signed by the Deputy Secretary. The Federal Register Notice is pending Bureau approvals. Two public meetings have been rescheduled for public comment on Jan. 17 in Woodland and Jan. 18 in West Sacramento.

Westlands Settlement legislation (H.R. 1769) is pending before the House of Representatives that would settle more than 20 years of litigation against the United States and reduce the threat of continued adverse legal action. Reclamation has a statutory obligation to provide drainage service within the San Luis Unit, and is subject to injunction orders entered by the U.S. district court in 2000 in the Firebaugh case to provide drainage without delay. Reclamation adopted a plan for drainage service in a 2007 Record of Decision. The estimated cost of implementing that plan is \$3.8 billion. Currently, approximately \$3.1 billion of this drainage service work remains to be implemented. H.R. 1769 (Valadao) would affirm an agreement between the United States

and Westlands Water District (Westlands) in central California (Settlement). The Settlement, authorized by H.R. 1769, would relieve the United States of all drainage obligations within Westlands. Westlands would assume this obligation including indemnifying the United States of any past, present, or future claims, while agreeing to permanently retire a minimum of 100,000 acres of lands within Westlands. The Settlement would also relieve Westlands of certain financial obligations, authorize the conversion of Westlands' current 9(e) water service contract to a 9(d) repayment contract, and transfer title to certain CVP facilities that lie within Westlands boundaries to Westlands. The present value of the debt forgiven as part of the Settlement is estimated to be \$331.1 million in 2015 dollars. The legislation would eliminate a statutory obligation for construction estimated to cost more than three billion dollars. The district court has stated it will not grant further stays of the current injunction past January 15, 2018. If legislation is not enacted prior to that deadline, Reclamation will be required to expend significant funds to implement the Control Schedule of drainage measures for Westlands approved by the court and will likely face additional litigation. Interior is in the process of finalizing for clearance an administration position letter to Congress that supports H.R. 1769 and encourages its passage by the House.

North Coast Rivers Alliance et al. vs Reclamation (Case No. 16-cv-307-LJO-MJS) regarding San Luis Unit Interim Renewal Contract(s) (IRC) litigation, whereby the environmental documentation surrounding Westlands Water District (Westlands) IRCs is at the center of attention. Litigation on each of Westlands IRCs has been ongoing in one form or another for many years. In July 2016, the 9th Circuit affirmed in part, reversed in part, and remanded the District Court's rulings on the adequacy of Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA) for the San Luis Unit IRCs that covered 2012-2014 time period. In response to the 9th Circuit ruling, its timing, subsequent motions, and the fact that the 2014-2016 IRCs had expired, Reclamation prepared a Revised EA for the current IRCs covering the period 2016-2018. On August 9, 2017, Plaintiffs filed a response to Reclamation's status report notifying the Court of the revised EA once again questioning its adequacy. The report is a preview of what Plaintiffs will argue in the case going forward.

Reclamation, with co-lead Washington State Department of Ecology in cooperation with the Yakama tribe; U.S. Forest Service and Bonneville Power Administration have prepared a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for the Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Plant and Keechelus Reservoir-to- Kachess Reservoir Conveyance Projects. The SDEIS is currently undergoing final internal review prior to release in January for a 60-day public comment period.

On January 8, oral arguments in the *Texas v. New Mexico* case over Rio Grande water have been scheduled before the U.S. Supreme Court. Although the litigation was filed by Texas against New Mexico, the United States was allowed to intervene as it involves Reclamation's Rio Grande Project and the associated water.

On Jan. 12, Reclamation is scheduled to make the Pojoaque Basin Water Supply Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) available to the public via publication of a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. The package is set to be e-filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on that same day. The FEIS has been surnamed by the Commissioner's staff

and is now being reviewed by the Department's Indian Water Rights Office, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Solicitor's Office.

On January 25, the city of Atlanta will host a Celebration of Success luncheon event focusing on the Urban Waters Federal Partnership in the Proctor Creek Watershed showcasing the multiple projects accomplished over the last few years. Invitees include representatives from the NGO, local community, corporate, and local, state, and federal governments. EPA has asked for representation from headquarters and regional director levels.

On January 25, the Department has been invited to participate in a meeting of the National Executing Committee for Space-based Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT EXCOM) to be held at the Pentagon. The Deputy Secretary serves as the DOI principal for the PNT EXCOM. The PNT EXCOM advises and coordinates among the federal departments and agencies on policies, architectures, requirements, and resource allocation for maintaining and improving U.S. space-based PNT infrastructures, including the Global Positioning System (GPS), its augmentations, and relationships with foreign space-based PNT service providers.

In January, Reclamation will announce the selected ideas for the Arsenic Sensor Challenge. The challenge seeks ideas for a rapid, low-cost monitoring of arsenic that will benefit water treatment plant operations, wastewater monitoring, contaminated site remediation, private well owners, scientific research and other interested parties.

In January, Reclamation is planning to release the FY 2018 Desalination and Water Purification funding opportunity (DWPR). The DWPR Program is helping Reclamation and its partners confront widening imbalances between supply and demand in basins throughout the Western United States through testing and development of new advanced water treatment technologies.

In January, the Bureau of Reclamation is planning to launch the Detecting Leaks and Flaws in Water Pipelines – Stage 1 Prize Competition. Reclamation and its collaborators are seeking methods and technologies that can reliably and easily detect leaks and flaws in operating, pressurized water pipeline infrastructure regardless of size, depth of burial, pipe material or interior lining.

In January, the Bureau of Reclamation is planning to launch the Pathogen Monitoring for Potable Reuse – State 1 Prize Competition. Reclamation and Xylem, Inc., in collaboration with the Water Environment & Reuse Foundation, the State of California and the Environmental Protection Agency are seeking the development of improved monitoring techniques to protect public health and optimize operations at water treatment facilities. Success could facilitate public and regulatory acceptance of direct potable reuse systems.

On January 31, the USGS will release the 41st annual Mineral Commodity Summaries 2018. The 2018 report identifies events, trends, and issues in the domestic and international minerals industries from 2017. The report is the earliest comprehensive source of mineral production data for the world. It includes statistics on 88 mineral commodities that are important to the U.S. economy and national security. The report identifies events, trends, and issues in the domestic and international minerals industries. A news release is planned.

In the coming months, a USGS paper will be published that evaluates earthquake shaking hazard, risk and building and infrastructure design criteria for South America. The project was funded in part by the USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and uses the latest data, models, and methods applied in developing the U.S. building code maps. During the past century, South America has experienced many catastrophic earthquakes. New results indicate that over 150 million people live in areas with significantly elevated seismic hazard, primarily within the northern and western portions of the continent where tectonic earthquakes associated with subduction and crustal faulting are most common. Future earthquakes will most likely cause billions of dollars of economic losses and thousands of casualties across the most seismically active regions. The new ground shaking models presented in the report can be used for analyzing building design standards and improving risk assessments which can save lives and dollars by providing new information on where and how to strengthen buildings in vulnerable areas. The report will be published in the *Bulletin of the Seismological Society of America* and a USGS Top Story is being developed.

Major Press Inquiries

- USGS Alaska Science Center biologists Bob Gill, Lee Tibbitts and Brandt Meixell were all contacted by National Geographic Magazine for an upcoming story (March 2018) on migratory birds with an insert poster that will feature migratory pathways of numerous bird species, including some that have been studied by the USGS. Tibbitts and Meixell provided tracking data for the new map for bar-tailed godwits and greater white-fronted geese.
- Paul Steblein, USGS Wildland Fire Science Coordinator, was contacted by the Discovery Channel Canada Science and Technology show called 'Daily Planet' which showcases "the latest and greatest advancements in the sci-tech world" to learn about the work the USGS is doing in regards to the LA wildfires. The program also interviewed USGS fire ecologist Jon Keeley.
- **Media: Background Interview with BBC Assistant Producer for Upcoming Sea Otter Nature Series:** An assistant producer with the BBC is interested in speaking with sea otter ecologists from the USGS Western Ecological Research Center for a new wildlife series called, "First Year on Earth." If the center and producer are able to schedule a meeting, the interview will provide the producer with background information on environmental or anthropogenic variables affecting the range expansion of California's southern sea otters (*Enhydra lutris nereis*), and the physical and behavioral development of young otters. The BBC will partner with the Monterey Bay Aquarium to conduct three filming shoots on sea otters in Monterey Bay beginning in early-mid January and continuing through early May 2018.
- **Media: "The Verge" Interviews USGS Ecologist for Facebook Video on California's Tree Mortality:** On Tuesday, December 12, a reporter with The Verge (<https://www.theverge.com/>) interviewed Adrian Das of the USGS Western Ecological Research Center (WERC) for an upcoming Facebook video about tree mortality in the Sierra Nevada of California. The interview's primary purpose was to provide the reporter with background information for the video. Das works for lead scientist Nathan Stephenson, out of WERC's Sequoia & Kings Canyon Field Station. Stephenson's

research program identifies the way in which disease, insect attacks, drought, and other threats interact to affect tree mortality in the Sierra Nevada.