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**From:** Scott Hommel  
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[DOI Cabinet 30 Day Report 7-18-17.docx](#)

CA - please see attached.

V/R

Scott

MEMORANDUM FOR THE WHITE HOUSE STAFF SECRETARY AND CABINET SECRETARY  
Week of July 17, 2017

FROM: Scott Hommel, Chief of Staff, U.S. Department of the Interior

SUBJECT: Interior Department Weekly Update for the Week of July 18, 2017

**DOI 30-Day Policy Look Ahead**

**Presidential Initiatives and Awareness**

1. **HYDRAULIC FRACTURING RULE:** BLM will publish a proposed rule to rescind the 2015 “Oil and Gas: Hydraulic Fracturing on Federal and Indian Lands,” because it is unnecessarily duplicative of State and Tribal regulations and imposes burdensome requirements and cost on the oil and gas industry. The rescission of this rule will be highlighted as a major deregulatory action in the Unified Agenda, which will be released this Thursday by OMB.  
**Timing:** Late July 2017  
**Contact:** Kate MacGregor, Acting Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals
2. **CRITICAL MINERALS REPORT:** USGS will release a new report presenting resource and geologic information for 23 critical mineral commodities important to our national economy and national security, many of which are sourced entirely outside of the United States. This is the first update since the last assessment undertaken in 1973. The Department will be proposing for White House consideration a draft Executive Order directing Interior to help coordinate the appropriate agencies to undertake a government-wide approach to facilitate the domestic mining and processing of critical minerals.  
**Timing:** July 2017  
**Contact:** Scott Cameron, Acting Assistant Secretary for Water and Science
3. **MONUMENT REVIEW:** The comment period for the National Monuments review period closed on July 10. The Department received around 2 million comments. Several thousand comments are estimated to have come from letter writing campaigns, and many comments consisted of one to two line statements of support for public lands or monuments generally. The Secretary will travel to Nevada and New Mexico to visit the Basin and Range National Monument, the Gold Butte National Monument, and the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument the last week of July.  
**Timing:** August 24, 2017  
**Contact:** Downey Magallanes, Acting Deputy Chief of Staff
4. **NPS SENIOR PASS INCREASE:** The Department announced July 10 that beginning August 28, federal agencies would begin selling the new America the Beautiful Senior Pass, which allows lifetime access to certain federal lands. The new price for the Lifetime Senior Pass will be \$80, which is an increase from \$10. The annual senior pass will be \$20. This increase is mandated by the National Park Service Centennial Act, passed in December of 2016. Existing passes will be grandfathered.

**Timing:** August 28, 2017

**Contact:** Todd Willens, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

### **Reports to Congress and Congressional Testimony**

1. **SENIOR POLITICAL OFFICIAL SCHEDULED TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE:** Greg Sheehan (Acting Director, FWS) is scheduled to testify before the full House Natural Resources Committee on reforms to the Endangered Species Act. The hearing is specifically on five bills, but will largely be a messaging hearing for the Department and Congress. It will likely be contentious at points.  
**Timing:** 10 am, July 19, 2017  
**Contact:** Micah Chambers, Deputy Director, Congressional Affairs
2. **DOI OFFICIAL TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY COMMITTEE AT LEGISLATIVE HEARING:** SENR National Parks Subcommittee will hold a legislative hearing on a series of NPS bills. There are no major red flags. Robert Vogel, Acting Deputy Director for Operations, National Park Service will be the witness.  
**Timing:** Wednesday, July 19, 2017, 10 am.  
**Contact:** Micah Chambers, Deputy Director, Congressional Affairs
3. **DOI OFFICIAL TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE:** USGS is scheduled to testify on “Seeking Innovative Solutions for the Future of Hardrock Mining” before the Energy and Minerals Subcommittee.  
**Timing:** USGS, July 20, 2017 / Insular Affairs, July 25, 2017  
**Contact:** Micah Chambers, Deputy Director, Congressional Affairs
4. **DOI NOMINEES IN PROGRESS:** Mr. Bernhardt was reported out of committee June 6 and is awaiting a final floor vote. Cloture was filed on Monday and a vote is expected on Thursday. Brenda Burman (BOR), Susan Combs (A/S PMB) and Doug Domenech (A/S Insular Areas) will have their confirmation on Thursday morning before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee at 10 am. Courtesy meetings with Senators and Insular delegates and murder boards have occurred in preparation. Ryan Nelson (Solicitor) and Joe Balash (A/SLM) are expected to be announced shortly.

### **Other/Awareness Only**

1. **SECRETARY ZINKE INVITED TO THE EVERGLADES BY BIPARTISAN FLORIDA CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION:** Sen. Rubio led a letter to Sec. Zinke inviting him to tour the Everglades as soon as possible. No policy position touted within the letter, other than the importance of the Everglades to Florida. No date has been confirmed, but the Secretary has made it a priority. He would like to discuss the issue with Sen. Rubio over the phone in the immediate future before any trip is scheduled.

**Timing:** Early Fall, Sen. Rubio has proposed August 24

**Contact:** Micah Chambers, Deputy Director, Congressional Affairs

2. **SECRETARY ZINKE HAS BEEN INVITED BY SENATOR CASSIDY TO VISIT LOUISIANA AND THE GULF STATES:** No official invite has been sent, but Senator Cassidy's staff has indicated that they will invite the Secretary to tour the Gulf States and personally see the benefits of GOMESA. This is in reaction to the FY18 Budget proposal to eliminate state revenue sharing for the Gulf States. Sen. Cassidy and Secretary Zinke had an exchange on this topic during his Senate Energy budget hearing.

**Timing:** TBD

**Contact:** Micah Chambers, Deputy Director, Congressional Affairs

### **Other Significant Rulemakings and Actions**

1. **GULF OF MEXICO LEASE SALE:** On July, the Department published a Final Notice of Sale in the Federal Register the Gulf of Mexico Region-side Sale 249, which is the first offshore sale under the National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2017-2022. The sale offers 75.9 million acres offshore of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida for oil and gas exploration and development. The sale, scheduled for August, will include all available unleased areas in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico and provide a reduced royalty rate for shallow water leases to encourage exploration and production under current market conditions.

**Timing:** August 16

**Contact:** Kate MacGregor, Acting Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management

2. **GATEWAY WEST TRANSMISSION LINE:** BLM plans to issue a Notice of Intent for an Environmental Assessment to propose an alternate route for the Gateway West Transmission Line in Idaho. The line's current route cuts through neighborhoods and populated areas in order to avoid a National Conservation Area. The FY2017 funding bill included legislation rerouting the line away from the current controversial route.

**Timing:** July, 2017

**Contact:** Kathy Benedetto, BLM

3. **HELIUM SALE:** The Helium Stewardship Act of 2013 directs BLM to offer for auction and sale annually a portion of the helium reserves stored underground at the Cliffside Gas Field, near Amarillo, TX. The BLM has planned an upcoming sale and anticipates auctioning 500 MMcf in total of 30 lots for delivery in FY 2018. The U.S. provides 40% of the world's helium supply. Qatar, the second largest, recently announced they would close two helium production plants because of a boycott from other Aram states, which has affected commodities markets.

**Timing:** July 19, 2017

**Contact:** Kathy Benedetto, BLM

4. **COAL ACTIVITIES:**

- a. OSMRE Notice of Availability for the John Henry Mine Mining Plan Modification draft EA and unsigned FONSI, initiating a 30-day public comment period. Pacific Coast Coal Company's John Henry Mine is a surface mine located in King County, WA which has been inactive since 1999.

**Timing:** July 27

**Contact:** Kate MacGregor, Acting Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals

- b. OSMRE Notice of Availability for the Bridger Mine Mining Plan Modification Draft EA, initiating a 30-day comment period. The 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.

**Timing:** August 1

**Contact:** Kate MacGregor, Acting Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals

- c. OSMRE draft EIS for Western Energy Company's Rosebud Coal Mine Area F, located near Colstrip, MT. The proposed permit area for Area F would add 6,746 acres to the 25,576-acre surface coal mine. The mine currently employs 400 people, and produces 12.3 million tons per year.

**Timing:** August 1

**Contact:** Kate MacGregor, Acting Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals

- 5. **FWS REFUGE-SPECIFIC HUNTING AND SPORT FISHING REGULATIONS.** Fish and Wildlife Service will publish a proposed rule and open a 30-day comment period on the 2017-2018 Refuge Specific Hunting and Sport Fishing Regulations. The proposed rule would open various national wildlife refuges to hunting and/or sport fishing for the first time (new hunts) and expand hunting and fishing opportunities at others. The proposal also includes modifications to existing hunting and fishing regulations for refuges and wetland management districts.

**Timing:** August 2017

**Contact:** Todd Willens, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

- 6. **COLUMBIA RIVER DAM EIS:** Interior, USACE, and Bonneville Power Administration are in the early stages of drafting an EIS that by court order will include the possibility of removing one to four USACE Dams on the Lower Snake River. This resulted in litigation related to the risk to salmon because of the operation of USACE Dams in the Federal Columbia River Power System. OMB and CEQ were briefed this week on the status as well as the Pacific NW Congressional delegations. The next step is to identify draft alternatives in the EIS, which is expected October 2017.

**Timing:** Ongoing

**Contact:** Scott Cameron, Acting Assistant Secretary of Water and Science

### **Release of High-Profile Grants**

- 1. **STATE WILDLIFE GRANT PROGRAM:** In late July, FWS will announce it has apportioned \$50 million to state fish and wildlife agencies for developing and implementing programs that benefit wildlife and their habitats. The funding is provided through the FWS's State Wildlife

Grants (SWG) program and is distributed through an apportionment formula in accordance with appropriations.

**Timing:** July 2017

**Contact:** Todd Willens, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

2. **CENTENNIAL CHALLENGE GRANTS:** This Saturday, while visiting Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, the Secretary will announce the award of \$18 million in Centennial Challenge projects. Many of the projects accomplish deferred maintenance projects, and all represent public-private partnerships, since each project requires a minimum 50/50 match with non-federal funds.

**Timing:** July 22, 2017

**Contact:** Todd Willens, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks

### **Legal Decisions**

1. **EVERGLADES WATER QUALITY CONSENT DECREE:** The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has informed the Department of Justice (DOJ) that it wishes to vacate the 25 year-old consent decree in this case, which governs water quality/pollution control efforts that affect Everglades National Park and A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. SFWMD has shared a draft motion to vacate, and DOJ is reviewing. DOI's technical experts, working with EPA and the Corps, have prepared an analysis of facts relevant to SFWMD's arguments, and we are currently reviewing a draft. DOJ will need to decide the USG position on the case: U.S. v. South Florida Water Management District (S.D. Fla.) - Everglades Water Quality Consent Decree. The federal agencies expect to brief decision-makers in the upcoming weeks.

**Timing:** Ongoing

**Contact:** Dan Jorjani, Acting Solicitor

### **Other/Awareness**

1. **FEDERAL HISTORIC TAX CREDIT REPORT:** The FY16 Annual Report on the Economic Impact of the Federal Historic Tax Credit will be issued this month. This is a joint report was undertaken by NPS through a cooperative agreement with Rutgers University Center. It finds that \$6.5 billion of private investment in historic rehabilitation for FY16 produced an estimated 109,000 jobs and benefitted the national economy with over \$12.3 billion in output, \$6.2 billion in GDP, and \$1.7 billion in taxes generated. The Historic Tax Credit provides a 20-percent federal tax credit to property owners who undertake a substantial rehabilitation of a historic building in a business or income-producing use, while maintaining its historic character. The program is administered by the NPS and the Internal Revenue Service, in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Offices.

**Timing:** Mid July

**Contact:** Todd Willens, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks

2. **DOI POSTPONES ADVISORY BOARD MEETINGS.** The Department is continuing to review the charter and charge of the more than 200 boards, committees, and advisory panels ensure they are structured to receive maximum public input and comply with the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The Department spends more than \$10 million to facilitate these boards and many are not meeting their charter obligations, are not meeting regularly, and have little turnover or numerous unfilled positions. Meetings have been postponed until September 2017 following the Department's review unless justified on a case-by-case basis.

**Timing:** May-September 2017

**Contact:** Lori Mashburn, White House Liaison

### Key Events for Upcoming 30-Days

#### Travel by Secretary

July 20	<b>Secretary Zinke</b> will travel to Denver, Colorado to visit with employees, announce Centennial Challenge Grants at Rocky Mountain National Park, and speak at the American Legislative Exchange Council, and Western Conservative Summit
July 22	
July 24	<b>Secretary Zinke</b> will travel with POTUS to the Boy Scout Jamboree in West Virginia
July 25	<b>Secretary Zinke</b> travel back to Nevada and on to New Mexico to visit monuments before the completion of the monuments review due August 24, as required by the President in Executive Order 13792
July 30	
August 5	<b>Secretary Zinke</b> on personal leave
August 19	