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INTERIOR DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

NEWS TO SHARE:

Breitbart: Interior Department Kickstarts Initiative to Get Veterans Back into America's Wild

"Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke — himself a retired Navy SEAL veteran, the father of a Navy diver, and father-in-law to a Navy SEAL — hosted the gathering to kickstart the initiative, one of his big priorities at the department. Speaking to the group of several dozen, he noted that today's veterans spend their entire careers at war, noting that his son-in-law has deployed more than ten times. "Our veterans are spending more time overseas than they are at home. And it has an effect on the VA. It has an effect on communities because normal has become over there, rather than over here, so I'm concerned about the experience when they come home that our public lands are once again returned to the people," he said."

CORRECTING THE RECORD:

New York Times: Trump Plans to Shrink Two National Monuments in Utah

"Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah said on Friday that President Trump had told him the administration would shrink two national monuments covering millions of acres in the state. Senator Hatch, a Utah Republican, said Mr. Trump told him in a phone conversation that he had approved recommendations drawn up by Ryan Zinke, the Interior secretary, to reduce the size of Bears Ears National Monument, established by former President Barack Obama, and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, designated by former President Bill Clinton. "I'm approving the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase recommendation for you, Orrin," the president said, according to a statement by Senator Hatch."

- **Secretary Zinke's Statement:** "No President should use the authority under the Antiquities Act to restrict public access, prevent hunting and fishing, burden private land, or eliminate traditional land uses, unless such action is needed to protect the object. The recommendations I sent to the president on national monuments include no eliminations of national monuments. The recommendations will maintain federal ownership of all federal land and protect the land under federal environmental regulations, and also provide a much needed change for the local communities who border and rely on these lands for hunting and fishing, economic development, traditional uses, and recreation."

THE HILL: Trump administration's costly one-two punch for taxpayers

"Much has been written in recent weeks about cabinet secretaries' profligate use of charter aircraft at the taxpayers' expense. While Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price racked up almost a million dollars in flights this year — a revelation that led to his abrupt resignation — other Trump administration officials including Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt have also been racking up the

miles....Last year both EPA and Interior's Bureau of Land Management finalized rules designed to limit the waste of taxpayer-owned natural gas, increase royalty revenue and reduce air pollution. These common-sense standards were designed to help cut the approximately \$2 billion worth of natural gas (primarily made up of methane) currently wasted by the oil and gas industry every year."

- **DOI Statement on travel:** "The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always continue to work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including using government coach class fare options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources."
- **DOI Statement on Methane Rule:** "The BLM had suspended upcoming compliance deadlines in its waste prevention rule, requirements that otherwise would be required to be met by January 17, 2018, pending the outcome of litigation in Wyoming challenging the lawfulness of the rule. The rule otherwise was in effect. Yesterday the district court in the Northern District of California invalidated that suspension, which means the compliance deadlines would need to be met by the January 2018 deadline. Today BLM published a proposed rule that would extend those compliance deadlines by one year, until January 2019. The public will have 30 days to comment on that proposed rule."

OTHER TOP STORIES:

Los Angeles Times: Under Trump, the lines are drawn for a battle over resources in the West

"This administration, the President, believes in American energy dominance," Zinke added. "Our goal is an America that is the strongest energy superpower this world has ever known. I can assure you today that the war on American energy is over." Not quite, say environmental legal groups and an array of supporters. The Trump administration, they assert, is fighting an unwinnable battle to sustain 20th century fuels and industrial practices against a tide of much more powerful 21st century trends in technology, energy markets, public sentiment, science and law."

Bloomberg: Puerto Rico to Cancel \$300 Million Whitefish Contract

"Puerto Rico plans to cancel a \$300 million contract to rebuild the hurricane-ravaged electrical grid that went to a tiny company based in Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's Montana hometown, the head of the island's power utility said. Ricardo Ramos, executive director of the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, or Prepa, said he will request permission from the utility's board of directors to end the deal with Whitefish Energy Holdings LLC. The contract stipulates that 30 days of notice is required. Existing work, including on key transmission lines, will continue for now."

E&E News: Key Obama-era leasing reform to get the ax

"Among the federal regulations targeted by the Interior Department for elimination is a key Obama-era leasing reform strategy designed to guide oil and natural gas development away from areas with high natural and cultural resource values. Interior plans to rescind the use of

master leasing plans (MLPs), which has allowed the Bureau of Land Management in specific instances to keep energy development away from national parks and other environmentally sensitive areas. The MLPs were a key component of federal onshore leasing reforms the Obama administration rolled out in early 2010. Interior's 44-page report, released this week, says the agency is working on "ending" the use of MLPs by year's end. Instead, BLM will use individual resource management plans to guide where energy development will be allowed on public lands."

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