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Attached is the daily news report for June 21.

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DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

UTAH – TOP STORIES – JUNE 21, 2017

1. BLM sponsoring weekend Jurassic Walks and Talks

The Deseret News, June 20 | Staff Writer

MOAB — The Bureau of Land Management's Moab field office is offering free Jurassic Walks and Talks each weekend through Labor Day.

2. BLM: "Please Help Prevent Wildfires"

Lake Powell Life, June 20 | Staff Writer

MOAB, Utah—The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Canyon Country Fire District is asking for everyone's cooperation in preventing wildfires this season. The heat of summer is here, which has led to drier conditions, especially at lower elevations and in our river recreation areas. Here are some general safety tips that can help prevent wildfire, keep families safe, protect resources, and not put fire fighters lives at unnecessary risk.

3. Utah continues to monitor effects of massive Gold King Mine spill

The Deseret News, June 20 | Amy Joi O'Donoghue

SALT LAKE CITY — No one is quite sure how the long-term effects of the massive Gold King Mine spill will continue to play out in Utah's San Juan River or Lake Powell, but monitoring will persist for years and years.

4. Additional fire restrictions put in place by color country interagency fire managers

The Independent, June 21 | Staff Writer

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5. New felony charges added in gate-closing case against Utah activist

The Salt Lake Tribune, June 21 | Brian Maffly

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6. Counties drawing maps on preferred monument boundaries

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SALT LAKE CITY — Kane and Garfield counties are drawing new monument boundaries for Grand Staircase-Escalante at the request of the U.S. Department of the Interior as part of an ongoing review of 27 controversial national monument designations across the country.

E&E/NATIONAL NEWS – TOP STORIES

1. Review of sage-grouse agreement could turn partners into adversaries

The Daily Yonder, June 21 | Bryce Oates

An Obama-era conservation agreement that has seen ranchers, environmentalists, energy companies, and government agencies work cooperatively to protect the sage grouse is under review by the Trump administration. If overturned, the decision could dismantle a process that protected wildlife habitat while accommodating ranching and energy development while avoiding litigation, participants in the current agreement say.

2. Zinke defends huge job cuts at Interior: 'This is what a balanced budget looks like.'

The Washington Post, June 21 | Darryl Fears

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Tuesday defended the \$1.6 billion in funding cuts that President Trump has proposed for his department, telling a Senate hearing that “this is what a balanced budget looks like.”



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3. INTERIOR: Department seeks input on which rules to kill

E & E News, June 21 | Jennifer Yachnin

The Interior Department today kicked off its regulatory reform initiative, seeking public comment on which policies it should work to eliminate or amend.

4. INTERIOR: Group demands documents on senior executive moves

E & E News, June 21 | Kellie Lunney

A conservation group today filed a Freedom of Information Act request with Interior seeking details on the department's reassignment of dozens of career senior executives.

5. METHANE: Interior to rewrite BLM rule

E & E News, June 21 | Pamela King

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke yesterday gave his most definitive indication to date that his agency would rework an Obama-era regulation to curb methane emissions from oil and gas operations on public lands.

6. NATIONAL MONUMENTS: Bishop to Grijalva: Have you Googled it?

E & E News, June 21 | Jennifer Yachnin

House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) today offered an acerbic reply to his Democratic counterpart's plea for assistance in obtaining details on the Trump administration's ongoing review of dozens of national monuments: Why don't I Google that for you?

7. WHITE HOUSE: Staffer for 'No. 1 public lands enemy' moves to CEQ

E & E News, June 21 | Emily Holden and Corbin Hiar

A former legislative assistant for a Republican senator who is a vocal critic of federal landownership has taken a job with the White House Council on Environmental Quality.



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UTAH – FULL STORY

1. **BLM sponsoring weekend Jurassic Walks and Talks**

The Deseret News, June 20 | Staff Writer

MOAB — The Bureau of Land Management’s Moab field office is offering free Jurassic Walks and Talks each weekend through Labor Day.

The short hikes to dinosaur fossil and track sites will be guided by a BLM paleontologist and will take place at 8 or 9 a.m. Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, with lots of time to ask questions. Different sites — including Mill Canyon, Copper Ridge, the Dinosaur Stomping Ground and Poison Spider — will be featured on a rotating schedule. The sites range in age from about 112 million years old to about 190 million years old.

In addition, the Moab Information Center will host free hands-on educational activities for kids at 6 p.m. Fridays, as well as free discussions about Moab’s dinosaurs and trackways at 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.

Maps and schedules are available at the information center, 25 E. Center. Information can also be downloaded at go.usa.gov/xNdsY.

The events are supported by the BLM and the Tread Lightly! Respect and Protect campaign, which aims to connect families to America’s natural and cultural heritage and instill a sense of pride and stewardship for paleontological and natural resources.

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2. **BLM: “Please Help Prevent Wildfires”**

Lake Powell Life, June 20 | Staff Writer

MOAB, Utah—The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Canyon Country Fire District is asking for everyone’s cooperation in preventing wildfires this season. The heat of summer is here, which has led to drier conditions, especially at lower elevations and in our river recreation areas. Here are some general safety tips that can help prevent wildfire, keep families safe, protect resources, and not put fire fighters lives at unnecessary risk.



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Keep campfires small, and completely extinguish them before leaving camp. The best method is to douse the fire with water, stir the ashes and douse again, making sure that all ashes are cold to the touch.

Charcoal should be soaked in water after use.

Never throw cigarette butts from vehicle windows. Smokers should smoke only in areas cleared of all flammable debris.

It is illegal to possess or use fireworks on BLM managed public lands, in national forests, and in national parks.

Stay on established roads and trails and avoid driving over dry brush and grass that could be ignited by hot exhaust systems. Please ensure trailer chains don't drag on the ground and create sparks.

Firewood cutters should operate chainsaws only in the cool morning hours and keep a shovel and fire extinguisher nearby. Chainsaws must be equipped with spark arresters.

Public lands provide valuable, tangible goods, and materials we rely on and use every day to heat our homes, build our roads, and feed our families. They provide an amazing array of recreational opportunities and connect us to our shared American history and cultural heritage. Please practice good stewardship and take care of your public lands.

For further information, please contact the BLM Field Office (435) 259-2100 and ask for Leonard Garcia or Clark Maughan. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Relay Service (FRS) at 1-800-877-8339 to contact the above individual during normal business hours. The FRS is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to leave a message or question with the above individual. Replies are provided during normal business hours.

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3. Utah continues to monitor effects of massive Gold King Mine spill

The Deseret News, June 20 | Amy Joi O'Donoghue

SALT LAKE CITY — No one is quite sure how the long-term effects of the massive Gold King Mine spill will continue to play out in Utah's San Juan River or Lake Powell, but monitoring will persist for years and years.

Erica Gaddis, the newly appointed director of the Utah Division of Water Quality, briefed a committee of lawmakers on the situation during a Tuesday hearing, detailing that 540 tons of heavy metals now rest at the bottom of Lake Powell.

Testing by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency revealed that the heavy metal concentrations had all been flushed to Lake Powell by last July, carried along by the currents in the San Juan River.

Gaddis, who assumes her new role next Monday, said metals such as copper, zinc and aluminum tested above federal standards in 2015 in aquatic life in more than 150 samples. By 2016, only aluminum remained — with counts that exceeded the standard in 126 samples.

The breach of the Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado, happened Aug. 5, 2015, after an EPA official and a contractor on site for remediation attempted to drain ponded water. An estimated 3 million gallons of water and 540 tons of heavy metals left over from the mining operation flowed into the Animus River, moved into the San Juan River and wound up in Lake Powell.

The mine breach area has since been declared a Superfund site, which expedites federal response for monitoring and remediation.

Gaddis told members of the Legislature's Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee that Utah, the three other states impacted and Native American tribes are working together to monitor long-term impacts.

That task is complicated given the extent of legacy mining operations in the Bonita Peak Mining District in Colorado, where there are 48 historic mines near Silverton.

Gaddis pointed out that over the last decade, it's estimated there has been 877 million gallons of water released, with 8.6 million tons of tailings generated from the life of those mines



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The Utah Department of Environmental Quality has been reimbursed by the EPA for nearly \$464,000 in costs in the initial response and another \$212,000 in costs have received preliminary approval by the federal government.

Gaddis said about \$20 million has been appropriated by a congressional act to help Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Native American tribes with long-term monitoring.

Utah is also keeping its options open for any potential litigation against the EPA regarding the spill, she added.

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4. Additional fire restrictions put in place by color country interagency fire managers

The Independent, June 21 | Staff Writer

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These are restricted lands in Washington, Iron, Beaver, Kane, Garfield, Mojave, and Coconino Counties:

—Unincorporated, privately owned, and state-administered lands (Utah Division of Forestry Fire and state lands). Incorporated towns and cities are not included in these restrictions. Local fire departments have more information on municipal restrictions.

—Bureau of Land Management lands (Utah/Arizona Strip).

—Dixie National Forest (Pine Valley, Cedar City, Powell, and Escalante Ranger Districts).

—National Park Service lands (Zion National Park, Bryce Canyon National Park, Cedar Breaks National Monument, Pipe Springs National Monument, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and Rainbow Bridge National Monument).



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—Bureau of Indian Affairs lands (trust lands of the Shivwits, Cedar, Indian Peaks, and Kaibab Band Reservations).

The following acts are prohibited until further notice:

—Igniting, building, maintaining, or using a fire, including charcoal and briquettes, outside a fire structure provided by the agency within a designated area is prohibited. Campfires and charcoal fires are prohibited in Zion National Park's Watchman and South Campgrounds. All developed recreation sites, campgrounds, picnic areas, and home sites that are maintained and administered by the agency and home sites where running water is present are allowed. Stoves and grills that are fueled solely by liquid petroleum fuels are also allowed. Campfires and charcoal fires are allowed Zion National Park's Lava Point Campground. In Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, campfires are also permitted below the high-water mark of the lake in areas devoid of vegetation. Holders of Forest Service special use authorizations are exempt from the first restriction provided such fires are within a fire structure and are within their permitted area.

—Discharging, or using any kind of fireworks on unincorporated private land (always prohibited on state and federal lands).

—Operating or using any internal or external combustion engine without a spark arresting device properly installed, maintained, and in effective working order as determined by the Society of Automotive Engineers recommended practices J335 and J350.

—Detonating of explosives, incendiary or chemical devices, pyrotechnics, exploding targets, or tracer ammunition (always prohibited on federal land).

—Cutting, welding, or grinding of metal in areas of dry vegetation.

—Smoking except in an enclosed vehicle or building or a developed recreation site or areas of a minimum of three feet in diameter cleared down to mineral soil.

Lands not in fire restrictions are becoming increasingly dry, and fire danger is increasing daily. Campfires should be drowned before being abandoned, and all ignition sources should be kept a safe distance away from vegetation to mitigated unwanted wildfires.

Fire managers are continually evaluating the need for further fire restrictions. Please verify with your local land management agency before conducting any fire related activity in question.



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Information on fire restrictions affecting the Arizona Strip and Mohave and Coconino Counties can be found at firerestrictions.us/az.

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5. **New felony charges added in gate-closing case against Utah activist**

The Salt Lake Tribune, June 21 | Brian Maffly

A prominent environmental activist and her husband appeared Monday in court to answer felony charges arising from a confrontation with two San Juan County ranchers who allege the couple imperiled cattle by closing a gate.

Rose Chilcoat and Mark Franklin, of Durango, Colo., were assigned an Aug. 22 preliminary hearing before Judge Lyle Anderson in Monticello's 7th District Court.

Initially charged with misdemeanors, trespassing on state trust land and providing false information, Chilcoat now faces two new felony counts of retaliating against a witness and "attempted wanton destruction of livestock."

She and her colleagues with Great Old Broads for Wilderness contend the charges are groundless and being proffered in retaliation for her efforts to keep all-terrain vehicles out of Recapture Canyon and other advocacy efforts aimed at protecting San Juan County's wild landscapes.

Her work has provoked the wrath of area residents who blame her and other out-of-town environmentalists for last year's designation of the Bears Ears National Monument and restrictions on motorized access to public lands.

The San Juan County sheriff claims a motion-activated camera recorded Franklin closing a gate at a corral on Lime Ridge, just off U.S. Highway 163, on April 1. The act allegedly prevented Zane Odell's cattle from reaching a water source inside the corral.

"At no time did either of us do anything to harass or endanger livestock and livestock had full access to water at all times," Chilcoat wrote on a web page set up to raise money for her and Franklin's legal defense. She vowed to fight the charges, which she described as bullying by San Juan County's ranching community.



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"I stand up for what I believe in, for clean air and water, healthy lands, and permanent protections for the public lands that belong to all Americans — not just the local community that would prefer to use and abuse the land for their personal gain," Chilcoat wrote.

In the first 18 hours the page was up, 31 people pledged \$4,520 toward the \$50,000 the couple estimates it needs. Excess funds raised will go to conservation groups active in southern Utah.

According to the couple's supporters, part of the corral's fence was down at the time so it didn't matter if the gate was closed or open.

County Attorney Kendall Laws declined comment.

The 59-year-old activist is associate director at Great Old Broads for Wilderness a former National Park Service ranger and founding board member of Friends of Cedar Meas, a Bluff-based stewardship group. Franklin is a biologist who specializes in interpretation and owns a Durango graphic design business.

The confrontation with the ranchers, Odell and Zeb Dalton, occurred two days after the fence closing, when Chilcoat and Franklin stopped by the corral on their way home from a weekend trip to Valley of the Gods. Odell recognized their truck and used his vehicle to block them, while police were called.

The responding sheriff's deputy, Chilcoat wrote in her post, told them no crime had been committed and allowed them to leave.

Chilcoat's critics tell a different story, describing the gate incident as an "act of environmental terrorism." The local blog The Petroglyph claimed Chicoat was "throwing a fit" when the ranchers detained the couple.

"Apparently, Rose Chilcoat forgot about being civil when she and her husband locked cows out of their water source last weekend, endangering and cruelly harassing Mr. Odell's livestock," states the blog, run by Monticello resident Monte Wells, who was convicted with San Juan County Commissioner Phil Lyman on conspiracy charges arising from a 2014 Recapture Canyon ride.

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6. Counties drawing maps on preferred monument boundaries

The Deseret News, June 21 | Amy Joi O'Donoghue

SALT LAKE CITY — Kane and Garfield counties are drawing new monument boundaries for Grand Staircase-Escalante at the request of the U.S. Department of the Interior as part of an ongoing review of 27 controversial national monument designations across the country.

Rep. Mike Noel, R-Kanab, told members of the Commission for the Stewardship of Public Lands that producing a consensus map for the monument is no easy task given the amount of land involved — 1.9 million acres.

"What you run into is that it is so massive," Noel said during the Tuesday meeting. "It is not something you can do in a day, a week or even a month."

There were initially two interim maps produced for Grand Staircase-Escalante's potential new boundaries, but Noel said the Interior Department wants one working map for the monument from which to make its recommendations to President Donald Trump.

San Juan County Commissioner Bruce Adams said there have been informal discussions about Bears Ears National Monument boundaries and what areas merit protections, but no directive for an actual map.

The potential reconfiguration of Utah's two controversial monument designations is the result of an executive order issued in late April by Trump directing Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to take a look at 27 monuments designated since 1996 of more than 100,000 acres.

Zinke stressed during his four-day trip to Utah in May that only those monuments where there is concern local objections were not taken into consideration — and where the designation may broach the parameters of the Antiquities Act — are up for possible modification.

For monument critics, a preliminary report issued June 12 by Zinke provides a clear signal that the designation of 1.35 million acres for Bears Ears and the 1.9 million acres set aside for Grand Staircase-Escalante will not stand.

They contend setting aside such a large swath of land does not abide by the provisions of the 1906 Antiquities Act, which gives the president the power to protect cultural artifacts, but within the "smallest area" compatible to accomplish that goal.



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The monument controversy has stoked an intense campaign of opposition from Native American tribes and environmental groups who say they will sue over an unraveling of boundaries by the Trump administration.

Eye-catching Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante

Both the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante monuments offer unique geological, historical and cultural attributes that caught the eye of former U.S. presidents — first with Bill Clinton in 1996 at Grand Staircase-Escalante and then in 2016 with Barack Obama at Bears Ears.

Grand Staircase-Escalante is rich in paleontological discoveries, with a regular treasure trove of new species of dinosaurs uncovered on a routine basis.

Bears Ears is said to hold 100,000 cultural artifacts in a region revered as sacred by five Native American tribes who pushed for monument protections.

Utah's top political leaders have said they don't discount the need for some level of protections at Bears Ears, but they argue that a monument designation of such wide impact is an overreach.

Rural leaders say there are some spectacular vistas and paleontological resources at Grand Staircase-Escalante, but 1.9 million acres is not necessary.

Zinke's final report is due later this summer.

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E&E/NATIONAL NEWS – FULL STORY

1. Review of sage-grouse agreement could turn partners into adversaries

The Daily Yonder, June 21 | Bryce Oates

An Obama-era conservation agreement that has seen ranchers, environmentalists, energy companies, and government agencies work cooperatively to protect the sage grouse is under review by the Trump administration. If overturned, the decision could dismantle a process that protected wildlife habitat while accommodating ranching and energy development while avoiding litigation, participants in the current agreement say.



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Last week, Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke announced that the Trump Administration would be revisiting the collaborative conservation approach to improve sage grouse habitat in 11 Western states.

Pat O'Toole, one of more than 1,500 ranchers who are part of the current cooperative plan to protect the sage grouse, said undoing the agreement would be a bad move for everyone involved.

"The sage grouse initiative, the collaboration, up to now it's been working," said O'Toole, owner of Ladder Ranch along the Wyoming and Colorado border.

"It's the collaboration that's the key. Everybody involved has been trying to prevent the whole sage grouse effort from the conflict and litigation that could from a listing" of the bird as an endangered species.

The sage grouse team involves ranchers along with the Bureau of Land Management, U. S. Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, state agencies and non-governmental partners. The success of the collaboration, including its public-private partnership, led to the 2015 decision to invest in this approach rather than list the sage grouse as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Listing the grouse as endangered would trigger a more stringent set of regulations that limit landowner and public agency choices and could trigger litigation.

In making his announcement to review the sage-grouse agreement, Secretary Zinke said energy development would be a key factor.

"The team will be asked to identify plan provisions that may need to be adjusted or rescinded based on the potential for energy and other development on public lands," Zinke said.

He also said any changes would be worked out "first and foremost in consultation with state and local governments, and in a manner that allows both wildlife and local economies to thrive."

The two co-chairs of the federal-state sage grouse task force, Governors John Hickenlooper (Democrat) of Colorado and Matthew Mead (Republican) of Wyoming are not pleased with the review.



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“We understand that you are considering ... moving from a habitat management model to one that sets population objectives for the states,” they wrote in a letter to Zinke. “We are concerned that this is not the right decision.”

The sagebrush steppe is a broad region of the Intermountain West characterized by broad open grasslands, cattle ranches and wildlife habitat. Sage grouse currently reside in 186 million acres in parts of Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, South Dakota, and North Dakota, as well as the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Three-quarters of the grouse inhabit just 27% of the area. Sage grouse conservation efforts focus on the riparian habitat that is most important to the species, as well as to preserving access to sagebrush for grouse diet.

O’Toole said he strives to strike a balance between conserving habitat for wildlife along with producing cattle and sheep. As a leader in conservation efforts for the region, O’Toole has taken numerous steps to improve habitat and manage livestock in a manner that supports a diversity of goals, including a focus on sage grouse.

“Working forward in a science-based capacity, on our ranch, we’ve been able to successfully increase numbers of grouse population. We’ve demonstrated that agriculture and grazing can be complementary and beneficial, not destructive, to sage grouse on our land.”

Conservation groups, too, are speaking out against Zinke’s decision. An outdoor group fears that undoing the agreement could lead to greater restrictions on hunting and fishing.

“This review could threaten to undermine the decision not to list the grouse as endangered,” said John Gale, conservation director of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. “Now we’re facing a warranted [endangered species] listing, which would threaten the multiple use mandate and access to hunting and fishing on our public lands.”

Gale, a grouse hunter, said that the conservation efforts have had far reaching impacts on other species as well. “Sage grouse habitat conservation is critical for the grouse, and also for other key species. Removing invasive species and protecting riparian areas is positive for pronghorn, for mule deer, for elk, for other upland game birds in the sagegrass steppe ecosystem. There’s 350 species dependent on these conservation efforts.”



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Backcountry Hunters and Anglers issued a report studying the potential impacts of fossil fuel development on sage grouse habitat on public lands. Conducted by Western EcoSystems Technology, the study looks in detail at sage grouse priority habitat management areas (PHMA). The study concludes that the current cooperative management plan does not place too many restrictions on energy development:

An overlap of only 4 percent exists between PHMA and existing coal and oil and gas leases on federal lands.

The majority of federal lands within the PHMA have zero to low potential for oil and gas, solar and wind energy development based on existing data sources. For oil and gas, approximately 79 percent of federal lands and minerals within the PHMA have zero to low development potential.

The majority of federal lands and minerals identified as medium or high development potential for oil and gas are located outside of the PHMA. For oil and gas, approximately 71 percent of all federal lands and minerals within the study area with assumed medium to high development potential are located outside of the PHMA.

Gale said the successful sage grouse conservation strategy is not in conflict with energy development. "Energy development is an appropriate and necessary use of our public lands, particularly in the West, yet it must be pursued responsibly and in the right places. Our report shows that the vast majority of greater sage grouse habitat is ill-suited to energy development of any kind, now or in the future – and that more than three-quarters of areas potentially suited to energy production located outside areas important to sage grouse."

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership's Ed Arnett is concerned about other aspects of the review. "A fair and transparent review by a new Administration is credible, but we have some clear concerns," Arnett said. "Secretary Zinke's comments about captive breeding, for instance. For the sage grouse, it hasn't worked. If you were to poll biologists, they would tell you that captive breeding is a last resort only to be used when everything else fails. The better approach is to stick with improving habitat and allowing the native population to increase over time. You can't decouple wildlife populations from habitat conservation."

It's exactly these multiple uses and benefits that works for the Western economy, said Chris Saeger of the Western Values Project. "The current plans strike a balance between traditional resource development and the outdoor economy. Protecting sagebrush landscapes is about



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protecting jobs for people who work as outfitters and in the tourism industry. Right now, we can protect those jobs and pursue energy development on public lands thanks to the direction the last administration took on this issue.

“Secretary Zinke is opening a can of worms that will benefit oil and gas companies at the expense of outdoor industry jobs. It’s not the government’s jobs to pick winners and losers, but if Secretary Zinke gets his way, big oil will win, and the rest of us will lose.”

Saeger, and the Western Values Project, have found that the direct economic contribution of recreation in the sagebrush region was more than \$1 billion in 2013 alone. That number has grown ever larger in 2017.

Conservation groups vow to monitor Secretary Zinke’s review of sage grouse habitat plans closely. Zinke’s order mandates a 60-day review period that will culminate in issuing a report that documents recommended changes. The workload is stacking up at the Department of Interior, also performing a comprehensive review of National Monuments and the Antiquities Act.

Back at Ladder Ranch, O’Toole said he is confused about the need for all the fuss.

“I never thought we were finished. The work of habitat restoration, of balancing the need for agriculture and food production, of energy production. That work is never done. It’s clear that sage grouse conservation is working to achieve its goals. We have to ask ourselves, are you looking for agendas or are you looking for solutions? There’s plenty of evidence to document the successes of the collaborative approach. We need to stick with what’s working, and improve things that aren’t.”

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2. **Zinke defends huge job cuts at Interior: ‘This is what a balanced budget looks like.’**

The Washington Post, June 21 | Darryl Fears

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Tuesday defended the \$1.6 billion in funding cuts that President Trump has proposed for his department, telling a Senate hearing that “this is what a balanced budget looks like.”



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But Democrats on the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources took issue with the \$400 million that the national parks would lose in fiscal 2018, which they said would trigger staff reductions at 90 percent of them. They also questioned the \$370 million in cuts the Bureau of Indian Affairs would face, including for education and assistance programs, and \$163 million in cuts to the U.S. Geological Survey.

Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington, the committee's ranking Democrat, insisted that the proposed budget "would devastate our national parks." And the reductions for Indian Affairs cut "betrays the secretary's dedication to Native tribes," she charged.

Republicans, on the other hand, applauded the Trump administration's proposals to invest in energy exploration on public lands, including a controversial move to open the Arctic to oil and gas exploration after the Obama administration closed it.

At a time when the administration has instituted a policy against allowing agencies to respond to information requests from Democrats, those on the committee took the opportunity to pepper Zinke with questions unrelated to the budget.

The department's review of the Bears Ears National Historic Monument in Utah and Zinke's recommendation to reduce its 1.3 million-acre designation was called "illegal" by one member. Another said the secretary's statement that Native tribes "were happy" with the outcome was patently untrue. Yet another took issue with Interior's attempt to change a methane rule without public comment and other required procedural steps.

Zinke was pointed in describing the president's reasons for seeking royalties from energy exploration on public lands and offshore. "In 2008, [Interior] made \$18 billion in offshore revenue alone," he said, compared to \$2.6 billion last year, a drop of more than \$15 billion. The secretary did not note that the decrease was tied to a steep decline in oil prices over that period. Instead, he focused on how the difference would have covered the \$11.5 billion infrastructure repair backlog facing the National Park Service in a single year.

"I support the president's budget," Zinke said, tough decisions and all. "It does not favor oil and gas and coal over any other strategy."

Committee Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) supported Trump's effort to seek revenue from gas exploration in her state, which she said has the nation's highest unemployment rate.



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According to Murkowski, developing “one-ten-thousandth” of Arctic refuge would generate tens of millions of dollars and create much-needed jobs.

Murkowski said she found the budget request reasonable. “It asks us to look at areas where we can cut spending and take care of land in hand rather than buying more,” she said.

That’s exactly what the president intends with his 84 percent cut of Interior’s Land and Water Conservation program, Zinke said. As opposed to buying more, the country should do more to take care of what it has, he stressed.

But Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) said the proposal is ill-timed for her state. Hawaii is the nation’s only state without a national forest, though it has several major landowners willing to change that distinction by selling land to the government. “You were a big supporter of the Land and Water Conservation Fund in your confirmation hearing,” she said. “Has that changed?”

Zinke replied that oil and gas revenue contribute greatly to the fund. However, Congress controls how much of that money goes into the fund. In 2013, for example, lawmakers allocated only \$305 million from the \$14 billion in revenues collected.

Hirono wasn’t persuaded. “There are private industries that have waited for years, and suddenly the pipeline is closed,” she said.

Cuts to national parks such as Yellowstone and Glacier at a time when visitation is on the rise were also questioned by a Republican, Sen. Steve Daines of Montana. “We do share the goal of strengthening parks,” he told Zinke. But if a dramatic budget decrease coincides with a dramatic increase in visitation, “how do these cuts assure the services we expect?”

Zinke said staffing problems could be solved in part by having fewer middle management positions as part of a reorganization to put more employees in the field.

One of the most pointed exchanges came as several senators singled out the reductions proposed for Indian Affairs, particularly a \$23 million decrease for the Bureau of Indian Education on top of millions of dollars less for social services and financial assistance programs.

“Those of us who serve on an Indian Affairs committee just know how woefully underfunded the tribes are,” said Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.). “How do these cuts support sovereignty?”



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Zinke repeated himself: "This is what a balanced budget looks like."

Franken looked up from notes he was reading. "There are ways to balance the budget other than on the backs of tribes."

"It's unfortunate," Zinke said.

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3. **INTERIOR: Department seeks input on which rules to kill**

E & E News, June 21 | Jennifer Yachnin

The Interior Department today kicked off its regulatory reform initiative, seeking public comment on which policies it should work to eliminate or amend.

Interior revealed in a press release that it will begin accepting comments at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) for policies implemented by the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Education, National Park Service, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey, among others.

"Interior is seeking input from the public, and specifically from entities significantly affected by Federal regulations, on what Interior regulations may be appropriate for repeal, replacement, or modification," the statement said. "This initiative is part of a government-wide initiative to alleviate unnecessary regulatory burdens on the American public."

In late February, President Trump signed an executive order aimed at reducing federal regulations. The order mandated each agency head to appoint a regulatory reform officer and will require a Regulatory Reform Task Force to provide regular updates on its repeal efforts.

Agencies are tasked with addressing regulations that may eliminate jobs or inhibit job creation, are outdated or unnecessary, are viewed as creating excessive costs, rely on data or methods that are not publicly available, or conflict with other regulations or executive orders.

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4. INTERIOR: Group demands documents on senior executive moves

E & E News, June 21 | Kellie Lunney

A conservation group today filed a Freedom of Information Act request with Interior seeking details on the department's reassignment of dozens of career senior executives.

"The scope of the job reassignments is unprecedented among past administrations, and timing of the notices suggests that the job changes will happen at the earliest date [Interior Secretary Ryan] Zinke is allowed to enact such changes under the law," said a press release from the nonprofit Center for Biological Diversity, the group that filed the [FOIA](#) request.

The group is seeking all records, including correspondence, email messages and phone records, that reference the department's reassignment of several senior executives, which came to light late last week.

Agencies must give senior executives at least 15 days' notice if they are being reassigned to another Senior Executive Service job within the same agency and their commuting area; for reassignments outside their geographic commuting area, agencies must give those affected at least 60 days' notice. Interior appears to have complied with that time frame, at least during this round of reassignments.

Affected senior executives can either accept the reassignment or resign. They have the right to appeal a reassignment if they believe it was the result of discrimination or a prohibited personnel practice.

By statute, agencies can reassign senior executives, provided they comply with the proper notification process. Senior executives know when they enter the SES that they are subject to involuntary reassignments. In fact, the cadre of top career leaders was intended to be a mobile force, changing assignments as needed. President Obama issued an executive order during his second term aimed at reforming the SES; one of the recommendations involved moving senior executives around more to avoid complacency and improve management throughout the government.

Zinke told reporters after giving testimony to a Senate Appropriations subcommittee earlier today that he needs to think about what Interior will look like in 100 years. "This is the time to



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do the reorganization," he said, noting that in five years, 40 percent of the department's workforce will be at retirement age. "This is an opportunity that doesn't come around a lot."

The secretary also pointed out that reassignments within the SES are "not unprecedented" and are "completely normal."

Still, they are not frequent. Several issues over the years have thwarted the goal of a nimble SES at many federal agencies: people's reluctance to uproot to another geographic region, performance management systems that aren't standard across agencies and a lack of transparency into the rotational assignment decisionmaking.

Taylor McKinnon, public lands campaigner at the Center for Biological Diversity, said that Zinke "in typical Trump administration fashion" was "sowing chaos in the ranks of the agency's leadership. Kicking out these kinds of long-term staffers opens the door to all sorts of trouble, including sweetheart deals for polluters."

Zinke pointed out after the hearing that he wasn't firing anyone.

"If you accept an SES position, you should be prepared to move," Zinke said, adding that the department is shifting people to jobs where their skills are better-suited or moving them out of headquarters into the field, where there is greater need.

The Interior secretary told Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) today that he would provide a list of the affected senior executives and the positions once the individuals had decided to either accept the reassignment or resign, citing privacy rules.

"After they make the choice, I will be glad to give you the list, but until that time, I will honor their list," Zinke told the top Democrat on the Senate Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee.

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5. **METHANE: Interior to rewrite BLM rule**

E & E News, June 21 | Pamela King

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke yesterday gave his most definitive indication to date that his agency would rework an Obama-era regulation to curb methane emissions from oil and gas operations on public lands.

"My intention, so you know, is we're going to rewrite the rule," the former Montana congressman said in response to a line of questioning from the top Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Washington Sen. Maria Cantwell had been asking Zinke whether he would enforce BLM's [Methane and Waste Prevention Rule](#) after delaying its forthcoming compliance dates (Greenwire, June 14).

The suspension followed a failed effort to scrap the rule under the Congressional Review Act — a move that would have barred Interior from reintroducing a "substantially similar" regulation (Greenwire, May 10).

"Congress has said this is the law, and we want to know how you're enforcing it," Cantwell said to Zinke during a committee hearing on Interior's proposed fiscal 2018 budget.

Interior postponed elements of the rule in light of pending litigation, according to a Federal Register [notice](#) last week. The notice did not say whether Interior would propose a new rule to replace the existing regulation, although a prior [secretarial order](#) noted that a revision was possible.

The order also suggested suspending or rescinding the rule, depending on the results of an agency review.

In a Monday [letter](#) to Zinke, Cantwell and Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) questioned Interior's authority to halt provisions of a rule that has already taken effect (Greenwire, June 20).

"The effect of this claim is to allow the Department, according to its whim, to suspend properly promulgated regulations with no public notice and comment nor any legal reasoning beyond an unsubstantiated claim that 'justice requires' suspension of a rule that has already gone into



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effect," the senators wrote. "This could lead to all manner of improper giveaways and special relief for regulated industries."

Zinke said the new rulemaking would be subject to public notice and comment.

"I follow the law," he said.

New rule

After the hearing, Zinke offered a few details about Interior's plans for the rule over the next two months.

The existing rule dictates that operators submit waste minimization plans with applications for permits to drill. They must also meet new requirements for royalty-free use of production, downhole well maintenance and liquids unloading.

Postponed requirements include incremental methane capture percentages through 2025 and optimization of leaky pneumatic equipment and storage tanks.

"We're going to go forward and redo it. It can't be arbitrary," Zinke said. "Personally, I think unrestricted methane is a waste, and as the steward of our public lands, I think we've got to be cognizant of decentivized waste. That means incentivized capture systems."

Zinke did not offer specifics on how Interior would encourage companies to contain escaped methane but outlined some potential destinations for the gas. The flare stack — where excess gas is burned into the atmosphere — would not be one of them, he said.

"This is an asset that we're flaring, and we need to find a different way to make sure the gas is used, whether it's reinjected, whether it's stored, whether it's transferred to some other location," Zinke said.

"But certainly flaring it is wasteful."

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6. NATIONAL MONUMENTS: Bishop to Grijalva: Have you Googled it?

E & E News, June 21 | Jennifer Yachnin

House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) today offered an acerbic reply to his Democratic counterpart's plea for assistance in obtaining details on the Trump administration's ongoing review of dozens of national monuments: Why don't I Google that for you?

In a two-page [letter](#) to Arizona Rep. Raúl Grijalva, Bishop praised Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's review of monuments as "honest, fair and open" while dismissing the Democrat's recent assertions that the Trump administration is conducting its assessment without sufficient public input.

In a missive to Zinke earlier this month, Grijalva asked the Interior Department to produce a detailed itinerary of his recent visit to Utah — where he was evaluating both the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments — as well as an account of public comments collected to date (E&E News PM, June 13).

Noting media reports that indicate the Trump administration intends to respond to informational requests only from Republican lawmakers, Grijalva also sent a secondary letter to Bishop asking him to sign onto his request.

In his response, Bishop noted: "It is clear we both share a genuine concern for transparency when decisions are made regarding national monuments."

He added: "I am also pleased to let you know that after a few cursory Google searches, it appears as though the administration has already made the information you requested ... publicly available online."

Bishop pointed to "extensive news coverage" about Zinke's travels in Utah, as well as Zinke's own postings to Twitter, "where he proved himself to be quite the amateur photographer."

Bishop also urged Grijalva to join him in pushing for reforms to the Antiquities Act of 1906, which allows presidents to designate federal land as monuments to protect areas of cultural, historic or scientific interest.



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"As of this month, the Act has existed for 111 years with no formal mechanism for consulting or notifying the public and local communities before a unilateral designation," wrote Bishop, who has criticized presidential use of the act and encouraged President Trump to rescind the Bears Ears designation.

Grijalva expressed dissatisfaction with Bishop's response.

"It's disappointing that House Republican oversight of the off-the-rails Trump administration goes no further than a Google search," Grijalva told E&E in a statement. "We're seeking an actual accounting of the comments received and a more detailed idea of the meetings Secretary Zinke held because the information they've made public is pretty thin. We wouldn't need to ask Chairman Bishop to join our request if this administration abandoned its unprecedented stance that Democrats are not entitled to responses when they write letters."

Are N.M. monuments 'settled'?

In the meantime, Zinke today declined to assure New Mexico Sen. Tom Udall (D) that a pair of national monuments in his state would not be affected by the administration's review.

During testimony before the Senate Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, Udall asked Zinke to confirm that he would not recommend changes to either the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks or Rio Grande del Norte monuments.

"Will you commit to me today that you will respect the wishes of the vast majority of New Mexicans and maintain the existing boundaries of these two monuments?" Udall asked.

The senator pointed to Zinke's public comments to Sen. Cory Gardner (R) yesterday, in which the secretary confirmed that Colorado's Canyons of the Ancients National Monument was not on the agency's "priority review list" (E&E News PM, June 20).

While Zinke, who noted that he is set to visit New Mexico in the coming weeks, suggested he is unlikely to make changes to "settled" monuments, he indicated that no decisions have been made.

"In the case of New Mexico, I do not want to rip a Band-Aid off a monument that's settled. ... If it's settled and people are happy with it, I find no reason to recommend any changes," he said.



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7. **WHITE HOUSE: Staffer for 'No. 1 public lands enemy' moves to CEQ**

E & E News, June 21 | Emily Holden and Corbin Hiar

A former legislative assistant for a Republican senator who is a vocal critic of federal landownership has taken a job with the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

Chris Prandoni, who was formerly handling energy and environment issues for Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), has been CEQ's associate director for natural resources since June 12, an administration aide confirmed.

"He will be working on land and natural resources issues," said White House spokeswoman Kelly Love.

Prandoni's hiring sends mixed signals about the Trump administration's stance on public lands.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has repeatedly stated that he opposes the sale or transfer of public lands, a position that earned him the support of some Democrats and sportsmen's groups, but Prandoni's former boss has pushed bills to sell off federal land.

Lee has said the federal government owns too much of the land west of the Rockies, including two-thirds of the land in Utah.

"When an unelected and unaccountable bureaucracy owns and manages more than half the land in your state, that is a recipe for disaster," his website says.

Prandoni's move is already worrying conservation groups.

The Center for Biological Diversity in March named Lee the No. 1 public lands enemy in Congress. The list includes members "trying to seize, destroy, dismantle and privatize America's public lands," according to the group.

Athan Manuel, director of the Sierra Club's lands protection program, said the administration "has shown nothing but contempt for our public lands, going so far as to try and undo national monuments, so it's no surprise that it would look to hire staff from one its congressional allies



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that has been a leading voice in opposing all national monuments — including Bears Ears — since being elected."

The Interior Department recently outraged environmental groups by recommending shrinking the Bears Ears National Monument in Lee's home state of Utah.

Brett Hartl, government affairs director for the Center for Biological Diversity, said Prandoni would "be in a position to put pressure on the agencies to rubber-stamp things and not take a hard look at the environmental consequences of a proposal."

"Sen. Lee has introduced some of the most extreme anti-public lands legislation of almost any member of Congress," he said. "I would assume that person had a significant role in shaping all of it."

Hartl said Prandoni would be part of a larger push the Trump administration is making "under the guise of infrastructure reform" to gut environmental reviews.

The White House is still discussing how to speed environmental permitting in building roads and pipelines, although conservative groups are looking to make it part of a potential spending package (Climatewire, June 19).

When Lee hired Prandoni in May 2015, he cited his "extensive policy experience with carbon taxes, cap and trade, EPA regulations, and oil and natural gas development on federal lands" as helpful for advising him in his role on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Prandoni was previously director of energy and environment policy for the group Americans for Tax Reform, where Lee's office said "he managed their energy portfolio covering oil and natural gas policy, as well as mining, electricity generation, and utility interests." Americans for Tax Reform is part of a conservative coalition that recently met with CEQ about ways to ease regulations for infrastructure development.

Prandoni is one of several Capitol Hill aides to head to CEQ. He follows Alex Herrgott, a longtime staffer for Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), who is CEQ's associate director for infrastructure (E&E Daily, May 1). Mary Neumayr, who was senior energy counsel for Republicans on the House Energy and Commerce Committee since 2009, has been acting chief of staff since March (E&E Daily, March 10).



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CEQ is still short-staffed, however, and the White House has not yet nominated someone to lead the office.

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