

To: Martha Maciel[mmaciel@blm.gov]
From: Webster, Sarah
Sent: 2017-06-22T14:57:53-04:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: DRAFT: BLM-CA in the News, June 22
Received: 2017-06-22T14:59:22-04:00
[New Clips 6 22 LONG.pdf](#)

Martha,

There was a lot of BLM-California relevant news today, so I made its own section. See below.

CALIFORNIA

Western governors invite Zinke to discuss review

E&E News, June 21

Western state governors involved in the development of conservation efforts for the greater sage grouse said this week they are "ready to engage" with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on his agency's ongoing review of federal plans. In a June 20 letter to Zinke, a coalition of five governors — Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper (D), Idaho Gov. Butch Otter (R), Montana Gov. Steve Bullock (D), Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval (R) and Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead (R) — invited the secretary to meet with them in Whitefish, Mont., next week. "In announcing [the review], you indicated that the spirit of the order is to work hand in hand with states and ensure that their efforts in conserving the greater sage-grouse are fully recognized," the governors wrote. "We appreciate your acknowledgement of the western states' considerable role in conserving greater sage-grouse and would further emphasize the importance of including state officials as substantive participants in any federal review of current land use plans." *See PDF for full story.*

National Nude Hiking Day: What you need to know

ABC 10 News, June 21

...Sarah Webster, spokesperson for the Bureau of Land Management's California office, told 10News BLM-managed parks or trails follow California state law when it comes to public nudity. Webster said, "However, the public is advised to check with the local BLM office for the location they wish to hike, because there are some areas where hiking in the nude on public lands is prohibited, for example, in the Imperial Sand Dunes near El Centro. Failure to follow California state rules or the local BLM Field Offices' rules and regulations for hiking in the nude on BLM-managed public lands can result in a verbal or written warning, a citation, or arrest. The severity of the punishment will depend on the circumstances.

Youth explore nature at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve

High-Desert Star, June 21

‘Look! A dragonfly!’ “I see a woodpecker!” “What’s this cotton from?” “What type of snake is that?” Kids are exploring and asking questions about nature this week during the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve Kids Summer Encounter program.

Wacky Wilderness Days are back at Cache Creek Nature Preserve

The Davis Enterprise, June 22

Come to the Cache Creek Nature Preserve this summer and learn more about the natural world. The Cache Creek Conservancy is hosting “Wacky Wilderness Days” again, a series of five interactive programs to introduce students of all ages to the wonders of the natural environment around them.

BLM Announces Fire Restrictions for Lands Managed by Redding Field Office

Yubanet, BLM press release, June 21

The Bureau of Land Management will implement fire restrictions for public lands managed by the Redding Field Office in Shasta, Tehama, Butte, Trinity and Siskiyou counties beginning Monday, June 26. The restrictions will remain in effect until further notice.

BLM-CALIFORNIA RELEVANT:

American Canyon council members vow to fight for Berryessa National Monument status

Times-Herald News, June 21

The city council unanimously agreed to support efforts to maintain the National Monument designation of Berryessa Snow Mountain — which may be threatened by Trump Administration policy — and to send individual letters to that effect to the federal government. President Trump signed an executive order on April 26 to reevaluate all national monuments declared during a 21-year period from 1996 to last year, including the Clearlake area’s Berryessa Snow Mountain that took some seven years of work to achieve. Either Congress or the president can designate a national monument to protect federal land with the 1906 Antiquities Act.

CAL FIRE suspends burn permits for Butte County

KRCRTV, June 21

CAL FIRE will suspend all burn permits for outdoor residential burning within the State Responsibility Area of several Northstate counties on June 26. The suspension includes Butte, Lassen, Modoc, and Plumas Counties. Officials said after a wet winter, warming temperatures are quickly drying out the abundant annual grass crop. The increasing fire

danger is posed by the high volume of dead grass and hotter, drier conditions in the region.

PG&E begins daily aerial fire patrols

Monterey Herald, June 21

With the start of summer and fire season kicking into gear, Pacific Gas & Electric Co. began daily aerial fire detection patrols this week in Monterey County and other parts of its service area in California. The patrols will help Cal Fire, the U.S. Forest Service and local fire agencies to detect fires early. This year will be the fourth year of the patrols. PG&E was the first to report seven fires since the program started, giving fire agencies a chance to quickly respond before the blazes spread.

California Commission Halts Hunting of Imperiled Sage Grouse

YubaNet, June 21

The California Fish and Game Commission today voted to prohibit sage grouse hunting during the 2017-2018 season, citing spring surveys that revealed alarming and continuing declines in all sage grouse populations in the state. The Center for Biological Diversity has for years urged the commission to end sage grouse hunting due to declining populations.

NATIONAL

Zinke defends reorganization, budget to skeptical senators

GREENWIRE, June 21

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke today defended his decision to reassign dozens of senior executives as part of a major departmentwide reorganization that is just getting underway. The Senior Executive Service "by definition" gets moved around, Zinke said, responding to concerns raised by Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) during testimony before the Senate Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. Udall, the panel's ranking member, said lawmakers have been "left in the dark" about the department's reorganization plans, which he believes are moving too quickly. See *PDF for full story*.

Group demands documents on senior executive moves

E&E News, June 21

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.

Zinke hits Dems for delaying Interior nominees

The Hill, June 21

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke hit back at Democrats on Wednesday during a contentious budget hearing, accusing them of "willfully" delaying the confirmation of his department's nominees. "In my opinion, it's being slow-rolled, and it's not the White House," Zinke said in response to questions from Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) on the slow pace of staffing during a hearing of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, the Environment and Related Agencies.

Department seeks input on which rules to kill

E&E News, June 21

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."

BLM to save time, resources through data digitization

Federal News Radio, June 21

The Bureau of Land Management has been scrutinized recently for inconsistencies in data monitoring throughout its offices, but an update to its 20-year-old tracking system may be coming soon. The current program, automated fluid minerals support system (AFMSS), is used to monitor those drilling for oil and gas under federal leases on public and Native American lands. This adds up to roughly 40,000 onshore oil leases in 32 different states — about 27 million acres and 94,000 wells — and around 3,000-4,000 operators, from the small mom-and-pop companies to the larger oil companies. The agency is also responsible for 1 billion acres of surface and subsurface federal minerals.

Staffer for 'No. 1 public lands enemy' moves to CEQ

GREENWIRE, June 21

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. *See PDF for full story.*

Sarah K. Webster

Lead Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
Bureau of Land Management California State Office
Office: (916) 978-4622

CALIFORNIA

Western governors invite Zinke to discuss review

E&E News, June 21

Western state governors involved in the development of conservation efforts for the greater sage grouse said this week they are "ready to engage" with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on his agency's ongoing review of federal plans.

In a June 20 letter to Zinke, a coalition of five governors — Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper (D), Idaho Gov. Butch Otter (R), Montana Gov. Steve Bullock (D), Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval (R) and Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead (R) — invited the secretary to meet with them in Whitefish, Mont., next week.

"In announcing [the review], you indicated that the spirit of the order is to work hand in hand with states and ensure that their efforts in conserving the greater sage-grouse are fully recognized," the governors wrote. "We appreciate your acknowledgement of the western states' considerable role in conserving greater sage-grouse and would further emphasize the importance of including state officials as substantive participants in any federal review of current land use plans."

Zinke announced earlier this month that the Trump administration would review federal greater sage grouse conservation plans to determine if they are hindering energy production on public lands (Greenwire, June 7).

The Interior and Agriculture departments finalized their greater sage grouse plans in 2015 — covering grouse habitat across 70 million acres in 10 Western states — including amendments and revisions to 98 Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service land-use plans.

The five governors are all members of the Federal-State Sage Grouse Task Force that worked to develop those initial plans, an effort aimed at avoiding a decision by the Fish and Wildlife Service to list the bird under the Endangered Species Act.

In their letter, the group, which is co-chaired by Hickenlooper and Mead, invited Zinke's own sage grouse review team to meet during the Western Governors' Association annual conference, which is set to take place in Montana next week. Zinke is a keynote speaker at the event in his hometown.

The letter asks Interior officials to detail how their review will be conducted, including a timeline for its completion.

The Interior Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment on whether Zinke will attend.

No hunt in Calif.

In California, hunters will be unable to target sage grouse during the 2017-18 season, following a decision by the state's Fish and Game Commission today.

The agency voted to issue a one-year moratorium on the bird, citing declines in its population in the state.

"The commission did the right thing by prohibiting sage grouse hunting in California this season," Center for Biological Diversity senior attorney Lisa Belenky said in a statement. "This is one small step in the right direction. But to truly save this iconic Western bird from extinction, we've got to protect its rapidly disappearing habitat."

NATIONAL

Group demands documents on senior executive moves

E&E News, June 21

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 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.

Department seeks input on which rules to kill

E&E News, June 21

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.

Staffer for 'No. 1 public lands enemy' moves to CEQ
GREENWIRE, June 21

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

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).

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

Zinke defends reorganization, budget to skeptical senators
GREENWIRE, June 21

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke today defended his decision to reassign dozens of senior executives as part of a major departmentwide reorganization that is just getting underway.

The Senior Executive Service "by definition" gets moved around, Zinke said, responding to concerns raised by Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) during testimony before the Senate Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee.

Udall, the panel's ranking member, said lawmakers have been "left in the dark" about the department's reorganization plans, which he believes are moving too quickly.

The reassignments are "not unprecedented," Zinke asserted, 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 front line is short of people," Zinke said. "Headquarters and management seem just fine."

Agencies by statute can reassign senior executives, provided the agencies comply with the proper notification process. Senior executives know when they enter the Senior Executive Service that they are subject to involuntary reassignments.

Udall asked for a list of affected senior executives, which Zinke said he would provide once they make a decision 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 said.

In his written testimony, Zinke said he would pursue reducing the department workforce by 4,000 full-time jobs through a mix of attrition, separation incentives and reassignments, to meet the recommendations of the fiscal 2018 budget request. During a U.S. Chamber of Commerce event yesterday, the former Montana congressman said Interior is about to enter "probably the greatest reorganization" in its history, moving toward a new system with 13 "joint management areas" that he has detailed in recent weeks (E&E News PM, June 20).

"You'll see the first blush of it coming out in about 60 days or so," Zinke said yesterday. "The president is supportive of it, he's been very supportive of it, and we're going to go forward and reorganize."

Udall also raised specific concerns over reports that the Bureau of Land Management is eyeing a reduction of 1,000 positions through attrition and separation incentives, such as buyouts or early retirement offers. Acting BLM Director Mike Nedd sent a June 16 email to employees, posted online by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, that outlines the agency's budget challenges in light of the administration's \$11.7 billion proposal for the department in fiscal 2018, a 13 percent cut from 2017 enacted levels, depending on the budget numbers cited.

"While the fiscal 2018 budget is not final, we must heed the staffing levels that it calls for," Nedd wrote. "For our agency, this could mean 1,000 fewer full-time equivalent employees across the nation. I understand this may create anxiety among some staff as we try to plan for the future of our agency, ourselves, and our families. Your leadership team is working to minimize the impact to our workforce while reviewing our priority work to determine what can be accomplished with the resources available."

The White House is recommending \$1.1 billion for BLM in fiscal 2018, a decrease of \$180.5 million below the 2017 enacted level.

Udall also expressed the need to consult with Indian tribes over any reorganization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Zinke said the department should have the plan to reorganize BIA "within 90 days" and that the tribes will be a part of it, adding that not "every part of Interior" will be affected as much as others by reorganization.

"There's no chance that Interior is going to reorganize BIA without sitting down with the tribes, and Congress," said Zinke.

Hard choices

In his second of three appearances this week before congressional committees, Zinke reiterated today to lawmakers that the budget proposal is the result of tough decisions, but that it's what a "balanced budget" should look like.

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) disagreed.

"This is not a balanced budget," said Alexander, adding that mandatory spending — programs like Social Security and Medicare — is the part of the \$2.7 trillion budget that is "out of control." Alexander said until that changes, funding for things like national parks and the National Institutes of Health "will be squeezed into nothing."

For instance, the proposed Trump budget also would scale back new federal land acquisition and support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund — cuts that have infuriated public land and conservation advocates. The omnibus spending deal that lawmakers agreed to earlier this year provided \$400 million for LWCF in fiscal 2017, while the Trump fiscal 2018 budget request seeks to reduce funding for LWCF to \$64 million.

Republican and Democratic appropriators at today's hearing were not happy about the proposed 85 percent cut to LWCF.

"I know you are for [support] LWCF," said Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.). "This budget does not indicate you are for it." Zinke reiterated that new federal land acquisition is not a priority right now, given the nearly \$12 billion maintenance backlog at the National Park Service.

"The budget funds core tasks and treaty obligations, but not much more," Zinke acknowledged, pledging to work with lawmakers on their priorities. "It's a starting point."

Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) made it clear that she wasn't in favor of wholesale cuts to certain programs just to "hit a budget number."

Some of the proposed cuts she said were "troubling" included reductions to programs that convey land titles to tribes, to the payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) program and to BIA. She did

praise other aspects of the proposed budget, including fully funding fire suppression activities at the 10-year average.

BLM methane rule

Several lawmakers, including Tester, Udall and Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), asked Zinke whether he would uphold the Obama-era rule regulating oil and gas flaring on public lands.

Zinke reiterated what he told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee yesterday: He has suspended the rule, but he intends to follow the law, referring to the Administrative Procedure Act, which governs the way agencies propose and establish regulations (Greenwire, June 20). Last month, the Senate voted down a resolution that would have overturned the methane rule.

"As a former Navy officer and congressman, I do follow the law," he told the panel.

However, he also said that he "intends to rewrite the rule."