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Cc: OCL Office[Pamela_Barkin@ios.doi.gov]

From: Nevils, Joseph

Sent: 2017-08-09T16:05:10-04:00

Importance: Normal

Subject: LEGISLATIVE REFERRAL: (DUE 8/14/17 @ 1 PM) HRG #46 - INTERIOR (NPS) Questions for the Record from 6/20/17 Hearing Re: President's Budget Request for the Department of the Interior

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QFRs Submitted to Sec. Zinke from the 6-20-17 SENR Cmte Hrg -NPS.LWCF.Antiquities Act OCL.docx

DEADLINE: MONDAY, AUGUST 14, 2017 @ 1 PM

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL REFERRAL

Date: August 9, 2017

To: Legislative Liaison

From: Pam Barkin (501-2563)

Contact: Joe Nevils (208-4580)

Subject: HRG #46 - INTERIOR (NPS) Questions for the Record from 6/20/17 Hearing Re: President's Budget Request for the Department of the Interior

These are from the Secretary's SENR budget hearing and are

NPS/LWCF/Antiquities Act questions.

Please send agency comments or respond with a "no comment" to Pamela Barkin@ios.doi.gov and Joseph Nevils@ios.doi.gov by the deadline above.

Attachment(s): 1

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Joseph Nevils
Legislative Assistant

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**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

Questions from Ranking Member Maria Cantwell

Question 1: I would like to follow up on our discussion about hiring a site manager at the Hanford Unit of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

As I noted at the hearing, the National Park Service announced earlier this year that a site manager for the Hanford unit had been selected, but that her transfer from another park was being delayed during the Trump Administration's hiring freeze.

I understand that the hiring freeze is no longer in place, but the appointment still has not been carried out—even though there are currently no Park Service staff on the ground in Hanford and the person selected for this position is simply transferring from one park to another.

We were told that any transfer or new hire requires senior DOI approval, but at the hearing you indicated that you didn't think you were holding up this position.

Can you please confirm that the appointment of a site manager for the Hanford unit is not being held up and provide me with a time frame for when the transfer will be approved?

Answer:

As I stated at the hearing, I believe that we need to provide our front lines in the parks with the appropriate resources to get the job done. I appreciate you bringing this issue to my attention and look forward to its resolution.

Questions from Senator Ron Wyden

Question 6: While the Antiquities Act authorizes the President to designate national monuments, there does not appear to be any authority within the Act to reduce the size of the monuments. Most legal scholars conclude that any ambiguity in the Antiquities Act was cleared up with the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 whereby Congress made clear that only the legislature has the authority to diminish or rescind national monuments.

Given this, does the Administration intend to ask Congress for legal authority should it want to proceed to implement the interim report's first recommendation?

If the Administration is not planning to seek new authority from Congress, please provide a citation for the legal authority that would allow a President to rescind or diminish a national monument that was established by a previous President.

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

Answer:

As provided in his Executive Order, our role in the review of monuments is to provide a recommendation to the President. Final action and authority rests with him.

Question 7: Bears Ears National Monument was strongly supported by local tribes and the public, evidenced by the hundreds of thousands of public comments and signatures submitted. Despite that support, however, your interim recommendation to the President was to reduce the size of the monument.

In Oregon, Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument is critical to the beauty and economic well-being of Oregon and highly supported by my constituents. I wrote to you about this last month to share with you the robust process and support that was behind this designation.

I am greatly concerned about your analysis and recommendation for Bears Ears. Your decision runs entirely contrary to the flood of public comments your Department received reflecting that the vast majority of the public supports keeping the National Monument intact. I am concerned about the implications that decision has on your review of the remaining National Monuments.

Given your recommendation for Bears Ears, it seems clear that you are unconvinced by the public comments and the opinions of sovereign tribal nations which called for keeping the monument intact. Looking ahead to your review of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, if public comments are not persuasive for you and are overshadowed by far fewer voices of special interests, then what role does the public comment process play in your analysis of Cascade-Siskiyou, or any other monument? And how do your actions help the department achieve your stated goal of regaining public trust?

Answer:

Each monument is being reviewed in a holistic fashion. We have listened to every facet of the impacted local communities including state, county and federally elected officials, tribes, local businesses, and trade associations. For all of the reviews, each group's input is weighed as we craft recommendations for the President.

Question 9: The budget includes at 84 percent cut to LWCF. LWCF is essential to maintaining and increasing access to our public lands. Cuts this deep would mean LWCF could essentially only cover staff salaries, with possibly a little left over for emergency acquisitions. Willing sellers will be left in the lurch, and projects that could expand access by connecting previously inaccessible public lands could be lost to commercial development.

Given these cuts, how does this budget reflect the need to improve recreation and other access to public lands?

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

Answer:

The President's budget proposes to balance the Federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. Land acquisition is an area where the Department has flexibility to defer expenditures.

Questions from Senator Debbie Stabenow

Question 2: The MotorCities Heritage Area inspires and educates Michigan residents and visitors on how the automobile changed our state, the nation, and the world. This site exemplifies Michigan's pride in our automotive and labor history and has a positive influence on our region's future. In FY17, MotorCities received only \$491,000 but the site generates \$35.4 million in tax revenue, supports 4,560 jobs, and is estimated to have an overall economic impact in the region of \$410.4 million. Your proposed budget eliminates all funding for this National Heritage area as well as the other 48 heritage areas across the country.

When asked about eliminating funding for these important cultural areas during last week's House Appropriations Committee Hearing, you provided no further justification than "tough choices had to be made." I find this to be eye opening when you also propose to increase funding for fossil fuel production on public lands. **Can you explain how you justify eliminating funding for some of our most important cultural and historical areas while shifting that funding to fossil fuel development?**

Answer:

The President's budget proposes to balance the Federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long.

Question 5: The National Parks Service has a well-known maintenance backlog across the country, including sites in Michigan like the Sleeping Bear Dunes and Isle Royale National Park. According to a report by the Pew Charitable Trusts, total deferred maintenance on Park Service lands in Michigan totaled nearly \$50 million.

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

It is my understanding that Interior's FY2018 budget cuts the Park Service's Operations account by \$200 million compared to FY2017 levels. In addition, I understand the budget proposes to decrease Park Service staff by 1,200.

While you have testified about your commitment to addressing the Park Service's maintenance backlogs, could you explain how the FY2018 budget would accomplish that objective? It strikes me as difficult to address these needs when you are cutting the resources and the personnel that are required to maintain our National Parks.

Answer:

Across the Department, 2018 funding for land management operations is reduced by approximately seven percent, which will impact staffing levels. However, the budget also prioritizes funding non-recurring infrastructure projects that will help address the deferred maintenance backlog. In the long run, this will create a better experience for visitors and staff by ensuring that facilities are safe, functional, and can be operated more efficiently.

Additionally, the current estimate for the NPS deferred maintenance backlog is \$11.3 billion which is difficult to address fully using only annual appropriations. NPS continues to pursue innovative public/private partnerships, such as the Centennial Challenge program, and uses the Recreation Fee program to reduce some of the backlog. We will continue to work with NPS and Congress to develop innovative funding ideas to reduce the backlog.

Questions from Senator Al Franken

Question 6: Secretary, during your confirmation hearing you spoke about the importance of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to preserve special areas and improve public access to the outdoors. You also touted your support of the program while serving in the House. This is something that we really agree on—the LWCF has done great things in Minnesota, such as improving state and local parks and helping to protect some of the most beloved areas of the state. This is why I am so disappointed to see the proposed cuts in the President's budget. Did the administration consult with you before releasing the budget proposal? Did you support their proposal to cut LWCF? If so, how do you justify this shift, do you still support the program?

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

Answer:

In recent years, a large portion of the Department's LWCF portfolio has focused on projects to acquire new lands both on federal lands and through grants to States. The President's budget proposes to balance the Federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. Land acquisition is an area where the Department has flexibility to defer expenditures.

Questions from Senator Joe Manchin III

Question 1: In West Virginia, the Land and Water Conservation Fund is the reason you and your agencies have incomparable public assets such as the Harpers Ferry and the Gauley and New Rivers National Recreation Area. In 2016, West Virginia received more than \$400,000 in grants from the state side of the fund. These funds were used for all sorts of upgrades that will make the West Virginia outdoors even more wild and wonderful. I know it is just as important to your home state, where it protects the Greater Yellowstone area and Glacier and, I understand, key recreation access and drinking water supplies for your own hometown of Whitefish, Montana. I was surprised by your FY18 budget recommendation for LWCF, which would gut the program by 84 percent and stop many conservation and access projects dead in their track. Furthermore, your budget submission offers what I consider a false and dangerous choice between maintaining facilities in these parks and conserving public access and the actual resources people go to the parks to enjoy. Good management requires that you do both, just as I worked to do with West Virginia's state parks when they were under my care as governor.

The FY2018 Budget in Brief document says, "The LWCF receipts authorization expires at the end of fiscal year 2018 and the Administration will review options for reauthorization, including consideration of a range of conservation-related investments that could be funded through the LWCF."

Simple yes or no question, do you support permanent reauthorization of LWCF?

Do you have any recommended policy proposals for permanent LWCF reauthorization that you would like to share with the Committee today?

How do you intend to balance those commitments with a budget that essentially wipes out LWCF, and specifically endorses diverting those very revenues you previously sought to defend for their intended LWCF uses?

Answer:

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

Yes, I continue to support the LWCF. In recent years, a large portion of the Department's LWCF portfolio has focused on projects to acquire new lands both on federal lands and through grants to States. The President's budget proposes to balance the Federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. Land acquisition is an area where the Department has flexibility to defer expenditures.

Question 2: The President's budget proposes eliminating the Heritage Partnership Programs Commissions and grants, a program of the National Park Service. National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape. There are currently 49 – two of which are located in West Virginia. These are not land management programs – they are cultural and heritage programs that generate revenue. As an example of the positive economic impacts of a national heritage area designation, the National Coal Heritage Area in southern West Virginia generates \$207 million in economic impact, supports 2,744 jobs and generates \$16.8 million in tax revenue. National Heritage Areas leverage federal funds to create jobs, generate revenue for local governments, and sustain local communities. NHAs average \$5.50 for every \$1.00 of federal investment. According to the budget justification, this is a program that is better funded locally. The problem with that is there are 49 National Heritage Areas spread all over the country, the local hunger to contribute to these programs will vary depending on location, mission, etc.

Do you believe the National Park Service has a role to play in ensuring that funds that have already been invested continue to yield as high of a return as possible?

Are you concerned that the administration may be viewing opportunities for potential cuts from a high level, and not considering hearing the local support for these programs?

Answer:

National Heritage Areas provide economic and cultural benefits, and are good examples of the benefits of partnerships. The President's budget proposes to balance the Federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long.

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

Question 3: Secretary Zinke, during your confirmation hearing you said that we must find ways to get the younger generations –specifically millennials—into the outdoors. You said, specifically, “We have to motivate and incentivize outdoor activities to teach our millennials the importance of the great outdoors. If you look at the numbers, and the demographics are actually a little different. The people that are visiting the parks are the older generations. So we have to look at new ways of incentivizing younger millennials to experience the parks...”

I couldn't agree more, and part of my motivation as a Senator is to conserve areas that are simply too special to not be preserved so that we can pass them off to our children and grandchildren. West Virginia is an outdoorsman's paradise, with some of the best hunting, fishing and other recreational opportunities you can find. Like you, I am a grandfather, and I have enjoyed taking my grandchildren hunting and fishing to teach them the joys, and serenity of the great outdoors. That is why I can't escape the irony of the President's budget request proposing to eliminate several programs that do exactly what you described in your confirmation hearing—getting millennials out to enjoy and conserve our public lands and quite possibly become the next Teddy Roosevelt. The President's budget proposes to eliminate the Fish and Wildlife Service Youth Conservation Corps Program, and reduce funds for the National Park Services Visitors Services Youth Projects and Interpretation and Education Projects as well as the Volunteers in Parks Program.

Do you still stand by your statement in your confirmation hearing that we must find ways to get the younger generation into the outdoors?

Do you believe this budget reflects that goal?

Answer:

Yes, I believe that it is important to get our children and grandchildren out to our parks and public lands to experience our collective heritage. By focusing on priorities to ensure that we take care of the assets we currently own, as this budget does, we make sure that these lands will be maintained and available for future generations.

Questions from Senator Mazie Hirono

Question 2: The President's budget proposes to reduce the Operation of the National Park System account by \$200 million, which would reduce base funding for parks throughout the country, impacting staffing, hours, and services. The budget proposes reducing staff by 1,242 FTEs, causing 90 percent of national parks to reduce current staffing levels.

The National Parks subcommittee just held an oversight hearing on opportunities to improve the workplace environment within the National Park Service. It was mentioned how employees are

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke

currently overextended with increased park visitation and how that negatively impacts employee morale.

Do you think this reduction in National Park Service staff funding will improve or worsen the workplace environment?

Answer:

Across the Department, 2018 funding for land management operations is reduced by approximately seven percent, which will impact staffing levels. However, the budget also prioritizes funding non-recurring infrastructure projects that will help address the deferred maintenance backlog. In the long run, this will create a better experience for visitors and staff by ensuring that facilities are safe, functional, and can be operated more efficiently.

Question 3: You have also noted that one of your highest priorities as Secretary is to address the \$11 billion deferred maintenance backlog within the National Park Service.

If there was an influx of funding to address the backlog, whether it be as part of an infrastructure package or something else, how do you expect projects to be completed if there aren't enough National Park Service staff to perform those duties?

Answer:

I believe that we have to realign our employees to make sure that the focus is at the field level, rather than in layers of bureaucracy. This type of realignment will support the proposals contained in the 2018 budget, particularly those prioritizing taking care of the assets we currently own.

Question 5: The National Park Service is charged with not only protecting our nation's natural resources, but also the cultural and historic resources that tell the story of our country. An example of this is Honouliuli in Hawaii where the story of Japanese internment is told.

What will you do as Secretary to ensure the telling of our nation's diverse history, as well as the preservation of historic and cultural resources, receives adequate funding and capable management given the dramatic cuts proposed in the current administration's budget?

Answer:

I am a strong supporter of the National Parks. The President's budget proposes to balance the Federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified.

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long.

Question 6: As noted before, climate change continues to be a major factor in landscape, infrastructure, and natural resource planning in Hawaii.

How will you ensure that our national park sites in Hawaii and beyond are protected and adequately resources in the face of these changes and what appears to be inadequate funding in the administration's budget?

The President's budget supports many actions to mitigate and adapt to extreme weather, drought, flood, wildfire, and other hazards that affect federal lands. These mitigation and adaptation strategies are fundamental to the Department's stewardship mission.

Questions from Senator Angus S. King, Jr.

Question 1: I wanted to follow up on your comment during the hearing about cuts to individual national parks. In the hearing after I asked if there are cuts at individual parks that will hit their operating budgets, you stated that those kind of cuts would be "very doubtful" to individual parks. Yet Acadia National Park is facing an 8% cut to its Operation and Maintenance budget from the National Park Service FY18 budget request. This cut is also in the context of a national park that has seen nearly 60% increase in visitation in ten years, and is facing a nearly \$70 million backlog.

How does the Department of Interior specifically plan to make the National Park Units function more efficiently while visitation levels are at their highest and are projected to continue to grow, yet Operation and Maintenance funding is requested to be cut?

Answer:

I am a strong supporter of the National Parks. The President's budget proposes to balance the Federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long.

Question 2: You specified in the hearing that Advisory Commissions, though temporarily suspended during the review period, could apply for exemptions to meet formally for scheduled meetings. You also stated that if the Acadia National Park Advisory Commission had a scheduled meeting, "all they have to do is put in a request for exemption." If a request for an

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

exemption is requested and filed for a scheduled September 11th meeting of the Acadia Advisory Commission, will this request be granted, as you stated?

Answer:

In order to make sure all commissions are giving local communities adequate opportunities to comment on park management decisions, the Department is reviewing the more than 200 boards, committees, and commissions under its responsibility. Throughout this review process, committees and commissions have been given the option to pursue waivers to meet. No such waiver was requested by the Acadia National Park Advisory Commissions; however, the review is scheduled to be completed later this year so that commissions can get back to work.

Question 3: Back in January during your nomination hearing, you stated before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee that “I am on record supporting full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund for a reason. I think it is an incredibly important program that has done great work.” Unfortunately the President’s budget calls for an 84% decrease to all LWCF non-outdoor recreational program funding. This hits home in Maine where LWCF grants have served the state well not only in acquisition but in development, planning or infrastructure investments in land conservation that helps generate outdoor recreation revenue. How does limiting LWCF funding in such a large way help protect the program?

Answer:

In recent years, a large portion of the Department’s LWCF portfolio has focused on projects to acquire new lands both on federal lands and through grants to States. The President’s budget proposes to balance the Federal government’s budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. Land acquisition is an area where the Department has flexibility to defer expenditures. In addition, as I pointed out in the hearing, the LWCF program is funded by off-shore royalties and revenues, which dropped significantly throughout the last administration. In order for programs like LWCF to operate successfully, we must prioritize our revenue portfolio as well, which this budget does.

Question 4: It is my understanding that LWCF State and Local Assistance Grants over \$100,000 awarded by the National Park Service in 2017 have been put on hold for “an additional layer of review.” This is unfortunately putting a substantial burden on local organizations who have worked to line up project partners, funding sources and timetables to accomplish their conservation and park projects.

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

One such project in Maine is in the town of Acton, for the purchase of 25 acres at Goat Hill, a valued destination for the year around and seasonal residents of the region. The current owners have allowed access over the years but have recently decided to sell the 25 acres of hill top. The Town of Acton (pop. 6000) has voted in referendum to contribute more than half of the funds needed for this purchase. Acton's LWCF State and Local Assistance Grant award funding is needed to help with the purchase price and to begin infrastructure investments to be sure the public can access the trail and summit during Maine's peak outdoors season.

What is the process for review of projects that have already been awarded, like the project in Acton, and when will the process be completed? Will these communities be given some guidance in the near term on whether and how their work to secure assistance through the NPS state grant program will be affected?

Answer:

After being confirmed, I made it a goal to be accountable for how the Department spends the taxpayer's dollar. As a part of that effort, I asked for a review of all grants that exceeded \$100,000 so we could have a thorough accounting of what is being dispersed and how it is being used. This is a simple good governance effort as we look to spend taxpayer dollars in the most efficient and wise manner.

Questions from Senator Tammy Duckworth

Question 2: As you are aware, there is an \$11+ billion National Park Service maintenance backlog. What specific plans does the Administration have on how this backlog will be addressed in the Administration's infrastructure proposal?

Answer:

As demonstrated in the President's budget, it is important that we take care of the assets that we own. The Department continues to work with the Administration on the enactment of this budget and any infrastructure proposals moving forward.

Question 3: During your confirmation, you shared that the National Park Service deferred maintenance backlog is a priority, as is supporting front line park rangers. However, the Administration's budget cuts the park service operating budget by 8% and reduces staff levels by over 1,200 people.

How can we reasonably expect the maintenance backlog to be addressed if we're cutting the staff that would do this work?

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

How are you proposing to support front line rangers when you are seeking to cut more than 1,200 rangers?

Answer:

I believe that we have to realign our employees to make sure that the focus is at the field level, rather than in layers of bureaucracy. This type of realignment will support the proposals contained in the 2018 budget, particularly those prioritizing taking care of the assets we currently own.

Questions from Senator Rob Portman

Question 1: I've been working on the implementation of my World War II Memorial Prayer Act, which was signed into law by President Obama on June 30, 2014. This Act requires the Interior Department to install a plaque at the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. with the prayer that President Roosevelt gave to the nation on the morning of D-Day. I understand that the site for the plaque has been approved, but that the design of the plaque is still being reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission. I have written to the Park Service to encourage them to move as quickly as possible to complete this project. Can you make the completion of this project a priority for the National Park Service?

Answer:

I support the placement of this plaque, and the sacrifices of all our men and women who defend our nation. I understand that the design concepts for the plaque were favorably presented to the National Capital Planning Commission in July. After approval of a final design, the NPS will work the Friends of WWII to complete this commemoration as expeditiously as possible.

Question 2: The Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, which includes the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, has been on the National Park Service's Tentative List for consideration to become a World Heritage site since 2008. I understand that the next step is to issue a Federal Register notice to announce the nomination. Will you work with the Ohio partners to ensure that this nomination process continues to move forward?

Answer:

I look forward to working with you and your partners.

Question 3: As you know, my National Park Service Centennial Act was signed into law on December 16, 2017 (P.L. 114-289). The Act provides a reliable funding stream for the Centennial Challenge fund and the Park Foundation's endowment. I know you have been

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

pushing for the change in the senior pass fee in a timely manner and I believe it will actually result in a leverage of greater than 2 to 1 over time. Can you please provide an update on when the Department will announce and implement that increase providing crucial funding to the parks?

Answer:

The Senior Pass increase will take effect across the country on August 28, 2017. The National Park Service issued a news release with this information on July 10, 2017.

Question 4: I've worked with Senator Mark Warner to introduce the National Park Service Legacy Act, which will provide funds from oil and gas leases for backlog projects. I was encouraged during your nomination hearing when you said you'd like to see NPS infrastructure projects included in the infrastructure reform plan, and hope that my National Park Service Legacy Act can help with this effort. As the infrastructure package hopefully begins to take shape do you believe that the Legacy Act could be an option to provide additional funding to reduce the deferred maintenance backlog? Can you help us in the Administration with these efforts?

Answer:

Yes, I look forward to working with you, Congress, and the Administration on options to address and reduce the deferred maintenance backlog at the Department.

Question 5: As you know, another program that is funded by oil and gas leases is the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Like you, I support the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and I support its permanent reauthorization. The LWCF is also of particular interest in my home state of Ohio, as two factory buildings at the Dayton Aviation Heritage site were included on the list of LWCF priorities in the previous budget request. These factory buildings were where the Wright Brothers built the first airplane, and are the oldest surviving aviation-related buildings in the U.S. It is important to have these buildings acquired by the Park Service so that our aviation heritage is preserved and can be taught to future generations. I am aware that the President's budget proposes to severely cut LWCF and does not include any new land acquisition projects. However, Congress appropriated \$400 million for LWCF in the FY17 Omnibus bill. If Congress continues to appropriate money for LWCF, will you support the activities of the LWCF program?

Answer:

The President's budget proposes to balance the Federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. In addition, as I pointed out in the hearing, the LWCF

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

program is funded by off-shore royalties and revenues, which dropped significantly throughout the last administration. In order for programs like LWCF to operate successfully, we must prioritize our revenue portfolio as well, which this budget does. That said, I continue to support the LWCF and will work with Congress to ensure support for our federal lands.

Questions from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Question 7: As you know, Secretary Zinke, I have voiced my concern about the executive order that requires a review of many national monuments across the country, including Gold Butte and Basin and Range in my state of Nevada. I submitted a comment letter to emphasize the economic and environmental benefits as well as the widespread support of both of these monuments. Will you take into consideration the economic benefit and widespread support of Nevada's monuments before making a decision?

Answer:

Yes, public comment is an essential component of the Department's process to develop recommendations on monuments currently under review and thank you for your letter stating your position on the monuments under review in Nevada. In this review, we have sought input on all levels, from locals on the ground and county commissioners to Governors, Tribal leaders, and Members of Congress, and will take all this information into consideration before making a recommendation.

Question 8: If the Administration's proposed budget cuts were implemented, how would they impact the review process moving forward?

Answer:

The proposed budget would not impact the current review process.

Question 10: How will we maintain visitation as sites like Gold Butte and Basin and Range when the Administration's budget aims to cut over 1200 staff positions?

Answer:

Across the Department, 2018 funding for land management operations is reduced by approximately seven percent, which will impact staffing levels. However, the budget also prioritizes funding non-recurring infrastructure projects that will help address the

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke

deferred maintenance backlog. In the long run, this will create a better experience for visitors and staff by ensuring that facilities are safe, functional, and can be operated more efficiently.

Question 11: As you know, Nevada's public lands are critical to the character and economy of my state. Outdoor recreation brings \$14.9 billion in consumer spending to Nevada, with well over half the population recreating outside each year. At Lake Mead alone, visitors spent over \$312 million in 2016. Without question, parks are a boon to local economies with over 330 million visits and nearly \$35 billion to the national economy last year. Despite this growth, and the need for federal support, I see that the administration's budget slashes funding for the National Park Service. Why cut funding when parks are so clearly beneficial to our national economy?

Answer:

I am a strong supporter of the National Parks. The President's budget proposes to balance the Federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes our maintenance backlog and focuses on taking care of the assets we currently own.

Question 12: How long do you think the current infrastructure will last with an increased number of visitors?

Answer:

National parks are a national treasure, and providing access to these federal lands for a range of activities is of critical importance to the Administration. I believe that it is important to get our children and grandchildren out to our parks and public lands to experience our collective heritage. By focusing on priorities to ensure that we take care of the assets we currently own, as this budget does, we make sure that these lands will be maintained and available for future generations.

Question 14: For nearly 40 years, LWCF has funded land acquisition, conserved threatened and endangered species, and provided critical grants to states. Just in Clark County, Nevada, there are 89 projects that received 13 million dollars of LWCF funding and have improved our natural areas and local economies, including conservation of recreation areas, local trails, and wildlife refuges. The Administration's budget proposes a cut from \$400 million to \$64 million – that's a decrease of more than 80 percent for a fund that has benefitted conservation and recreation in every state. Do you believe these cuts will destabilize conservation and our rural local economies? How would your agency be able to administer this program with these cuts?

Answer:

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 20, 2017 Hearing
The President's Budget Request for the U.S. Department of the Interior for FY2018
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Zinke**

In recent years, a large portion of the Department's LWCF portfolio has focused on projects to acquire new lands both on federal lands and through grants to States. The President's budget proposes to balance the Federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. Land acquisition is an area where the Department has flexibility to defer expenditures. In addition, as I pointed out in the hearing, the LWCF program is funded by off-shore royalties and revenues, which dropped significantly throughout the last administration. In order for programs like LWCF to operate successfully, we must prioritize our revenue portfolio as well, which this budget does.

Question 19: President Trump's proposed budget would eliminate the Interior's National Heritage Areas Program, cutting nearly \$20 million from the program. National Heritage Areas are large lived-in landscapes with strong rooting in rural communities and towns. Since 2012, the Great Basin Heritage Area Partnership in White Pine County, Nevada has provided substantial funding and support to the Ely Renaissance Society, the Ely Shoshone Tribe, the Nevada Northern Railway, the White Pine Public Museum, and others projects totaling \$280,736. Those funds have been matched from local stakeholders with non-federal funding and labor valuing \$1.9 million for White Pine County residents. Why has the Administration proposed to eliminate funding to this program?

Answer:

National Heritage Areas provide economic and cultural benefits, and are good examples of the benefits of partnerships. The President's budget proposes to balance the Federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long.