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Good Morning All,
Please find attached the weekly report to the Secretary. I have attached both the word and Google Doc versions of the reports. If there are any issues, please let me know.

Thanks

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Gareth C. Rees

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Weekly Report to the Secretary 03-16-17

**WEEKLY REPORT TO THE SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

March 16, 2017

Office of the Solicitor

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Nothing to report.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS:

Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians v. Coachella Valley Water District (9th Cir.) - Winters Rights to Groundwater

On March 7, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a district court decision finding that the Agua Caliente Band has a federal reserved right to groundwater under the *Winters* doctrine. In March 2015, the district court issued a decision granting summary judgment to the Band and the United States on their claim that groundwater was impliedly reserved when the Band's Reservation was created. Defendants Coachella Valley Water District and Desert Water Agency have until April 21 to seek rehearing.

United States v. Bundy, et al. (D. Oregon)

This criminal prosecution was brought by the U.S. Attorney for Oregon against several defendants alleged to be involved in the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in early 2016. The prosecution was split into two trials, and the second trial against the remaining four defendants went to the jury last week. On March 10, the jury found each of the four defendants guilty of at least one felony charge. Two defendants were found guilty of depredation of federal property. A third defendant was found guilty of conspiracy and a fourth guilty of conspiracy and unauthorized possession of firearm. It is likely that sometime this week, the court will be ruling on misdemeanor charges also brought against the defendants. The Regional Solicitor's Office has followed this prosecution in order to answer questions posed to us by the prosecution team and to be able to advise clients on how to avoid and respond effectively to any such actions affecting Department of the Interior managed lands in the future.

United States v. Estate of E. Wayne Hage

On February 27, the District Court issued a final order resolving this trespass litigation. The Court held that Wayne Hage is liable for trespass damages in the amount of \$587,294.28 (\$555,040.50 of which is owed to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)) for repeated willful

trespass. The Court ordered Wayne Hage to remove any remaining livestock from Federal lands within 30 days and to file a sworn statement within 45 days of his compliance with this order. Defendants are “forever enjoined and restrained from placing any livestock that they own, possess or control” on lands owned by the United States within the State of Nevada that are managed by BLM or US Forest Service. On March 2, Defendants filed a Notice of Appeal. (b) (5) ACP

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

OTHER LITIGATION MATTERS:

Wyoming v. DOI (D. Wyo.) - Venting and Flaring Rule

On March 6, the court granted two motions for extending upcoming deadlines. The deadline for petitioners to file motions to amend and/or supplement the record has been extended to March 31. The deadline for petitioners to file their opening briefs has been extended 30 days to April 24.

United States of America v. Tomales Bay Oyster Co. LLC (N.D. Cal)

During the week of March 13, the Department of Justice (DOJ) will file a joint motion requesting that the court enter the Consent Decree in this case, which arose from an illegal trespass on National Park Service (NPS) land by defendant. Defendant illegally cut trees and vegetation on NPS land, causing injuries to park resources in violation of the System Unit Protection Act, 54 U.S.C. Section 100722, and California trespass statutes. Under the Consent Decree, Defendant will pay \$267,742 in damages, which will be used by NPS to restore the injured park resources, and a \$12,258 penalty to the US Treasury. No comments were received on the Consent Decree during the public comment period.

Cherokee Nation v. Interior (W.D. Okla.) – Tribe’s request for meeting to explore ADR/settlement pathways

The Tribe had asserted various broad breaches of trust duties with respect to the accounting and management of trust funds, lands, and natural resources. The time to respond to the Complaint is April 7. (b) (5) ACP, (b) (5) AWP

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

NON-LITIGATION MATTERS:

Keystone XL Pipeline Right-of-Way Application (ROW)

On February 8, Keystone submitted an updated application to BLM-MT for a Mineral Leasing Act ROW across federal lands in Montana. BLM anticipates issuing a decision on the application by the end of March or first week in April.

Notice of Intent to Sue FWS regarding Golden-Cheeked Warbler Under the ESA

The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has received a Notice of Intent to Sue (NOI) from the Texas General Land Office, represented by the Texas Public Policy Foundation, alleging violations of the Endangered Species Act, the Administrative Procedure Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in retaining the golden-cheeked warbler as an endangered species. The NOI alleges the Service wrongly denied a delisting petition in June 2016. The NOI further alleges that “failure to designate critical habitat is inconsistent with continued listing,” that the Service failed to consider the best available data in the 2016 finding, and that the FWS failed to comply with NEPA in making the listing determination in 1990. We are working with the FWS in preparing a response letter.

The 2017 White House Easter Egg Roll

The National Parks Branch, in conjunction with the General Law Division, is providing advice to President’s Park (White House) regarding multiple agreements necessary to facilitate the annual White House Easter Egg Roll, scheduled to take place on April 17.

Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Nothing to report

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

Through April 2, the National Cherry Blossom Festival will be held in the Tidal Basin area of the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The peak bloom timeframe prediction has been moved to March 19-22 due rapid shifts in weather patterns. Numerous events are planned by the NPS and its partner organization, the National Cherry Blossom Festival.

On March 22, the Burnett Oil Company will begin field surveying to identify routes for a seismic exploration for oil and gas within Big Cypress National Preserve. Exploration was scheduled for fall through spring, but unseasonably wet conditions have delayed the project. The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) has filed a lawsuit to block the Burnett Oil Company from proceeding with this operation; however, the court has yet to decide whether to grant injunctive relief to the plaintiffs.

On March 22 and March 23, Glen Canyon staff will meet with members of the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe, to discuss management of aquatic invasive species and tourist flights over Rainbow Bridge. A meeting with the Pueblo of Zuni Tribe was held February 1. The park negotiated a draft Voluntary Air Tour Management Agreement with air tour operators to reduce the number of flights over Rainbow Bridge, a sensitive cultural site for several tribes and the time of day and time of year during which flights may occur. The tribal consultations will provide feedback on the draft agreement.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Nothing to report

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

By March 17, FWS anticipates issuing a permit that allows eagles and eagle nests to be disturbed during construction of the Power Company of Wyoming's Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Phase I Wind Energy Project (CCSM). This permit is distinct from a separate permit FWS expects to issue that will allow for incidental take of eagles during operation of the wind project after it is constructed. The separate permit is expected to be issued in the coming months. FWS's decision to issue both permits was previously announced in January when the Record of Decision and final Environmental Impact Statement were released to the public. As a result, issuing this permit now is not expected to draw controversy and no outreach is planned.

Endangered Species Act Listing Actions

In March, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final determination on a proposed rule (published January 8, 2016) to downlist the West Indian manatee from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act. A notice of intent to sue in 60 days was filed by the Pacific Legal Foundation on January 9, 2017, for failure to issue a final determination within one year of the proposed rule. The downlisting will be controversial because the manatee is a large, docile marine mammal that engenders passionate advocacy in the Southeast. In 2016, there were a record number of boat strike mortalities. Consequently, some conservation groups do not want to see the species downlisted even though the action is warranted. Outreach is planned.

National Wildlife Refuge Actions

Water levels on the Bear River in Utah have continued to cause problems on the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, resulting in roads being closed. Water levels have risen to the point where they are flowing over the top of some of the dikes and structures, potentially causing damages to infrastructure. Damage assessment will begin as the water levels receded. Bear River flows have exceeded four times the normal rate for this time of year. The heavy snow pack has played a major role in this year's flood events, which are expected to continue for some time.

In March, FWS plans to announce nine projects on 12 national wildlife refuges across the United States are receiving more than \$3.74 million through the Cooperative Recovery Initiative (CRI). The CRI is an internal competitive grant program that funds on-the-ground conservation projects to help recover threatened or endangered species on national wildlife refuges and surrounding lands. These projects often provide related conservation benefits to other imperiled species and encourage partnerships with state and private groups. Outreach is planned.

National Park Service

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Nothing to report.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

During the week of March 19, and in April, five Kentucky superintendents will participate in meet-and-greets with all of their consulting Tribal Nations. The five superintendents represent Mammoth Cave National Park, Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park, Fort Donelson National Battlefield, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Obed Wild and Scenic River, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, and the Manhattan Site at Oak Ridge. The First Nations they are meeting with are: Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, The Chickasaw Nation, Eastern Shawnee Tribe, United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma, Cherokee Nation, Shawnee Tribe, and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation. These are not formal consultation meetings about specific projects.

On or about March 20, Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument anticipates instituting a temporary closure order that will restrict public access to an area where the public has reported incidents of stray bullets and ricochets. Recent public records have identified known stray

projectiles from a neighboring private shooting range that currently holds Department of Defense contracts and where high powered rifles are used. A briefing statement, communications plan, and press release are being developed.

On March 20, the Superintendent of Isle Royal National Park will be in Washington, DC, to provide planning updates to staff from the office of Rep. Jack Bergman (R-MI-1).

On March 21, Cabrillo National Monument will hold two public open houses in San Diego, California, to inform the development of the proposed Trails Management Plan.

On March 22, Cesar E. Chavez National Monument in partnership with the National Chavez Center is hosting our annual Cesar Chavez Day of Service. More than 700 students will come to the park to learn about Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers movement while working on various cultural landscape projects throughout the monument.

On or about March 22, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will release an Environmental Assessment for the development of the proposed Arizona Heritage Trail located on lands under the jurisdiction of both the Bureau of Reclamation and Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The NPS is a cooperating agency on this Environmental Assessment. The proposed trail is composed largely of existing routes, which limits environmental impacts, and the project has the support of nearby Bullhead City and Mohave County, Arizona.

On March 25, Prince William Forest Park in Triangle, Virginia, will host the 17.75K run presented by the Marine Corps Marathon. The course runs entirely within the park, and some areas will be temporarily closed to regular visitation during the race. The 17.75K distance commemorates the year that the Marine Corps was established.

Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs and the Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Indian Education

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

On March 22, Acting AS-IA Black will provide opening remarks and attend the Tribal Interior Budget Council (TIBC) meeting in Washington, DC. Mr. Black will provide remarks and participate in a brief Q&A for the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes (MAST) Impact Week General Assembly in Washington, DC.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

Indian Affairs has made selections for the 2017 Indian Affairs Student Leadership Summer Institute. Launched in summer 2016, the 10 week paid internship placed 17 Native undergraduate and graduate students in leadership offices across Indian Affairs. The program's mission is to engage and support the next generation of Native leaders in the federal government through an introduction to the government-to-government relationship between tribal nations and the United States. Indian Affairs received more than 60 applications for summer 2017. Hiring of the interns is currently on hold during the hiring freeze.

On March 13-17, the Reservation Economic Summit (RES) 2017 will take place in Las Vegas, Nevada. Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED) has co-sponsored and attended this event for the past 13 years. It is the largest annual gathering of Indian business persons in the U.S., allowing IEED staff the opportunity to meet with representatives of many tribes and Native business persons in a single venue and offer assistance with projects they may be interested in pursuing.

On March 16, the last Tribal consultation on the Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) for the Indian Trader regulations will be held via teleconference. The deadline for written comments is April 10, 2017.

On March 17, the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Collaborative Action (RACA) will be submitting Indian Affairs' semiannual regulatory agenda for submission to Exec Sec. Exec Sec then compiles all Bureaus' input for submission to OMB. The semi-annual regulatory agenda is a list of all regulations the Department expects to publish over the coming year.

BIE Negotiated Rulemaking on Accountability (25 CFR 30): The Every Student Succeeds Act requires BIE to use negotiated rulemaking to develop regulations for implementation no later than the 2017-2018 academic year and to define the standards, assessments, and accountability system for the schools funded by BIE on a national, regional, or tribal basis. A Federal Register notice to establish the committee is ready for publication.

On March 21, the BIA Regional Directors will meet in Washington, DC to provide updates on BIA issues and policies, and to discuss current events that may potentially impact the BIA.

On March 21-23, the Tribal Interior Budget Council (TIBC) will meet at the Washington Plaza Hotel, Washington, DC. TIBC provides a forum and process for tribes and federal officials to work together in developing annual budget requests for Indian programs in the Department of the Interior.

On March 21-24, the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes (MAST) Impact Week Meeting will be held in Washington, DC.

Office of the Special Trustee for American Indian (OST)

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Acting Special Trustee, Deb DuMontier and Budget Officer, Linda Chambers have been invited to present at the Tribal Interior Budget Council meeting, Washington, D.C. March 22-23, 2017.

Deputy Special Trustee (DST)–Field Operations, Jim James will be attending the BIA Regional Director’s Meeting, in Washington, D.C. March 21.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

OST is working on one tribal trust fund withdrawal application under the Reform Act from the San Carlos Apache Tribe. The only outstanding item for San Carlos at this time is the “annual audit report to membership.”

Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Nothing to report.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

On March 20, BLM-MT anticipates signing a Record of Decision for the Falkirk Federal Coal Lease-by-Application (LBA). Falkirk Mining Company submitted an LBA on November 13, 2013, covering 320 acres and approximately 3.4 million tons of in-place mineable coal. The EA is undergoing the final review by BLM-MT, the Office of the Solicitor, and the cooperating agencies.

On March 20, BLM-MT Western Montana Acting District Manager Joe Ashor, and Acting Missoula Field Manager Jodi Wetzstein will attend the Missoula County Rural Land Managers meeting in Missoula, MT. The meeting will include the Missoula County Commissioners and representatives from the Flathead and Lolo National Forests, USFS, and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. The BLM will provide a brief update to the group on the progress of the Missoula Resource Management Plan revision as well as current ongoing and planned projects for 2017.

As of March 20, BLM-WY continues bait wild horse gather operations in the Adobe Town Herd Management Area. The operation, which began on February 5, gathered 81 animals and released 62 released as of March 13. The goal is to gather 300 wild horses in order to place GPS collars on 30 wild mares in support of a research project with the University of WY and the USGS to study how wild horses in Adobe Town interact with their surrounding environment and movement patterns between WY and CO. This information will be helpful in developing future management plans; no animals will be permanently removed from the range as part of this gather.

On March 20-21, the North Slope Science Initiative (NSSI) Science Technical Advisory Panel will meet in Fairbanks, AK to discuss recommendations for the NSSI Oversight Group. BLM-AK State Director Bud Cribley will represent the BLM.

On March 21, Acting ASLM Rich Cardinale is scheduled to appear at a hearing before the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Interior, Energy, and the Environment to discuss the findings of recent GAO investigations into the Bureau's management and internal communication processes.

On March 21, the BLM's rule requiring online filing of permits for oil and gas drilling will become effective. The rule, which updates Onshore Order 1, was initially scheduled to become effective on February 9. It was delayed 60 days per the January 20 Executive Order instructing Federal agencies to temporarily postpone any regulation that had been published in the Federal Register, but had not taken effect. Although the rule is effective on March 21, industry

compliance will not be required until April 20, and the BLM will work with industry to address compliance questions and concerns.

On March 21, BLM-NV State Director John Ruhs will present an overview of the BLM's mission and scope for freshman legislators at a joint meeting of the Nevada State Senate Committee on Natural Resources and the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources, Agriculture and Mining.

On March 21 - 23, BSEE will hold its annual National Inspectors' Meeting in Lafayette, LA. Acting Director Margaret Schneider is scheduled to deliver remarks at the meeting on March 21.

On March 21, the BLM-MT Dillon Field Office will participate in a meeting on current Greater sage-grouse conservation management efforts with the USFS, USFWS, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Montana Natural Resources and Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Centennial Valley Association, Beaverhead County Commissioners, and Big Hole Watershed Committee. They will also discuss how to coordinate and support the efforts, information and resource needs of southwestern MT.

On March 21, OSMRE Western Region (WR) plans to publish a Notice of Availability for the Bridger Mine (WY) Mining Plan Modification Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) in local newspapers. OSMRE will receive comment on the EA for 30 days. The Bridger Mine is an underground mining complex located in Sweetwater County, WY. Bridger Coal Company employs 540 people, and estimates to produce 6.4 million tons of Federal coal per year at the Mine.

On March 21, OSMRE WR plans to publish in local newspapers a notice of availability for the Dry Fork Mine (WY) Mining Plan Modification Draft EA. OSMRE will receive comment on the EA for 30 days. The Dry Fork Mine is a surface mining complex located in Campbell County, WY, and employs 82 people. This mine plan estimates production of 6 million tons of Federal coal per year at the Mine.

On March 22, BLM-WO Senior Oil and Gas Compliance Specialist Michael Wade will give a presentation on how the BLM will go about reviewing and approving alternate methods of manual tank gauging during the Colorado Engineering Experiment Station, Inc. (CEESI) Measurement Solutions conference in Denver, CO.

On March 22, BOEM will hold Lease Sale 247 for the Central Planning Area (CPA) in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) in New Orleans, LA via livestream. CPA Lease Sale 247 will make 9,118 blocks in the GOM available for leasing consisting of approximately 48.53 million acres.

On March 22-31, BLM-CA will work with partners in the Bi-State area of eastern CA and western NV to augment the Parker Meadow sub-population of Greater sage-grouse in Mono County, CA. The Parker Meadows sub-population is currently facing extirpation due to low numbers, poor fertility rates, and limited recruitment associated with low genetic diversity. The population augmentation project was identified as a key conservation action in the 2014 Bi-State

Action Plan, which was developed by a diverse group of stakeholders committed to shared stewardship and conservation of Greater-sage grouse in the region. State and local partners in the augmentation effort include the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, NV Department of Wildlife, Mono County, and the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. Federal partners include the USGS, USFWS, Inyo and Toiyabe National Forests, and Natural Resource Conservation Service.

On March 23, BOEM plans to meet with the California Resource Committee regarding offshore renewable energy. This meeting is part of an effort by BOEM and the California Energy Commission (CEC) to hold a series of regional outreach meetings. Additional stakeholder outreach being organized by BOEM and the CEC will consist of monthly stakeholder sub-teams to coordinate outreach related to data collection and science, fishing, and coastal communities.

On March 23, the public comment period will end for the scoping period for a natural gas development proposal located approximately 12 miles north of Paonia, CO. Gunnison Energy, LLC's North Fork Mancos Master Development Plan proposal includes drilling up to 35 horizontal wells from four new well pads and one existing well pad over the next three years.

On March 23, the BLM-UT and BLM Eastern States Office (ESO) will hold an on-line oil and gas lease sale. BLM-UT will offer four parcels totaling 4174 acres in San Juan County. BLM-ESO will offer 21 parcels totaling 1186 acres in Wayne National Forest (OH). Bidding is not expected to be robust. The BLM-ESO sale may be controversial as the BLM received 14,000 comment letters in connection with the draft Environmental Assessment and 2,587 form letters during the protest period, requesting the sale be cancelled. In addition, the BLM received 13 protests. Members of the public expressed concern about parcels located in the Wayne National Forest, hydraulic fracturing, potential impact to water resources, and other environmental concerns. BLM-ESO is currently evaluating the protests received.

On March 24, BOEM plans to publish the Notice of Availability of the Draft Supplemental EIS for the Cape Wind Energy Project. The U.S. Court of Appeals vacated the 2009 Final EIS due to a deficiency in the determination that the sea floor could support wind turbine structures. BOEM is preparing a Draft Supplemental EIS that reanalyzes this issue. BOEM agreed to publish the Final Supplemental EIS by August 2017 as part of the litigation.

On March 24, BOEM plans to publish the Notice of Availability of the Draft Supplemental EIS for Gulf of Mexico Lease Sales 2018.

On March 25 - 26, the Arizona Game and Fish Department Outdoor Expo (Expo) will take place in Phoenix, AZ. BLM-AZ will host an information booth at the Expo, which aims to introduce modern and useful changes in the outdoor, fishing and hunting industries.

Assistant Secretary Policy, Management and Budget

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

- Who: Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Energy (DOE), Department of the Interior - Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), National Park Service (NPS), Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE), Department of Agriculture (USDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Forest Service, US Army Corps of Engineers
- What: Quarterly Federal Mining Dialogue (FMD) Meeting
- When: March 21, 2017
- Where: Conference Call
- Press: Closed
- Topic: Report out progress with data standards, best practices, watershed strategy, and cost recovery. Review revised information portal.

- Who: Office of Wildland Fire (OWF), Director Bryan Rice
- What: Incident and Area Commander Counsel Meeting & Wildland Urban Interface Conference
- When: March 21-23, 2017
- Where: Reno, Nevada
- Press: Closed
- Topic: Director Bryan Rice will provide the welcome remarks and sit on the Executive Fire Leadership Panel at the Incident and Area Commander Counsel Meeting. Director Rice will also attend the International Association of Fire Chiefs Wildland Urban Interface Meeting as a participant, which will run concurrently at the same venue.

- Who: Office of Policy Analysis (PPA) staff, US Geological Survey (USGS), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), US Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of Defense (DOD - Army), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Hawaii, Florida, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Ridge to Reefs
- What: U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) Watershed Partnership Initiative Working Group
- When: March 22, 2017
- Where: Conference call
- Press: Closed
- Topic: Capabilities of agencies and local jurisdictions to address watershed issues adjacent to coral reef ecosystems, social metrics for the Watershed Partnership Initiative, sharing lessons learned across watersheds. Plan for a watershed workshop for the next USCRTF meetings.

- Who: Office of Emergency Management (OEM), Director Lisa Branum
- What: White House National Security Council Domestic Resilience Group Policy Coordination Committee Meeting (DRG PCC)
- When: March 22, 2017
- Where: Eisenhower Executive Office Building (EEOB)
- Press: Closed
- Topic: The DRG will discuss incoming Administration priorities and get key policy updates for domestic response activities.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

ONRR Civil Penalties – Carrell Oil Company (Montana). Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR) anticipates issuing a civil penalty of about \$155,000.00 to Carrell Oil Company (Carrell). ONRR investigated Carrell for its knowing or willful failure to pay royalties on time for 13 Federal leases from March 2010 through July 2010. Since the State of Montana referred the case to ONRR, civil penalties are sharable. The penalty will support ONRR’s efforts to deter reporting and payment violations. Since Carrell is a small company with prior violations of the same type, ONRR computed the civil penalty using three times the royalty amount due.

ONRR Civil Penalties - Washakie Energies Co., Ltd (Wyoming). Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR) anticipates issuing a civil penalty of about \$98,936 to Washakie Energies Co., Ltd, (Washakie). ONRR investigated Washakie’s failure to submit Oil and Gas Operations Reports (OGORs) and found 149 violations on multiple Federal leases for the months of April 2015 through June 2016. ONRR issued a Notice of Non-compliance (NONC) to Washakie detailing the outstanding reports and provided a 30-day cure period to correct the violations. Washakie failed to comply during the cure period. As ONRR initiated this reporting enforcement case, the company’s penalty payments are not shareable with any State or Indian tribe, but the penalty will support ONRR’s efforts to deter reporting and payment violations. Since Washakie is a very small company with prior violations of the same type, ONRR computed the civil penalty assessment using the escalated rates of \$4 per day, per violation for the first 40 days and \$8 per day, per violation thereafter.

Internal Control and Audit Follow-up. The Department has an annual goal of closing 85% of corrective actions scheduled for closure in the current FY to address issues raised in Office of Inspector General (OIG) and Government Accountability Office (GAO) engagements. As of March 10, 2017, the Department has closed 20% of open audit recommendations scheduled for closure in FY 2017.

Year 2017 Small Business Accomplishments to Date. As of March 8, 2017, the Department has awarded 49.92% of its contract award dollars to small businesses. The Department-wide small business goal, which was negotiated with the Small Business Administration (SBA), is 53.5%. The Department awarded 23.00% of its contract award dollars to small disadvantaged businesses and 15.12% of its contract award dollars to women-owned small businesses, exceeding the statutory goal of 5% for each. The Department awarded 2.51% of its contract award dollars to historically underutilized business zone Small Businesses and 3.37% of its

contract award dollars to service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses. The statutory goal is 3% for each of these categories.

Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Acting PDAS/WS Kerry Rae and Special Assistant Scott Cameron will be in Washington, DC, participating in routine internal briefings. There are also numerous meetings with external stakeholders due to the National Water Resources Association annual federal water issues conference in DC.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

On March 21-22, a quarterly meeting of the National Geospatial Advisory Committee federal advisory committee is planned at Main Interior. This meeting will be followed by a March 23 meeting of the Federal Geographic Data Committee Steering Committee, also at Main Interior.

On March 22, new USGS research will be published analyzing livestock grazing records from Wyoming to investigate broad-scale responses of greater sage-grouse populations to livestock management. Scientists used 11 years of annual population counts of greater sage-grouse coupled with grazing records from BLM allotments across Wyoming. Researchers discovered that grazing can have both positive and negative effects on greater sage-grouse population trends, depending on the level of grazing and when it occurred during the growing season. The paper will be published in *Ecological Applications* and a news release is planned.

On March 23, Scott Cameron and Ryan Nichols will be briefed by the DOI Urban Team, a coalition of urban practitioners working at the local, regional, and national levels. The briefing will focus on the NPS urban agenda; USGS work in cities relating to flood control, water pollution monitoring, and green infrastructure; the FWS Urban Partnership program; and Reclamation's urban activities in the southwest.

On March 24, Reclamation intends to announce the initial water allocation to water service contractors North and South of the Delta. In this round, allocations will be made to the remaining Central Valley Project contractors who did not previously receive an allocation.

30-60 DAY LOOK-AHEAD

Office of the Solicitor

SIGNIFICANT LITIGATION DEADLINES FOR NEXT THREE WEEKS SEPARATELY REPORTED

Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

In late March, the NPS anticipates the announcement of the \$26.9 million in available Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant funding to States and Territory Historic Preservation Offices. Grants will be used to support State led programs such as historic resource surveys and inventories, and local bricks and mortar preservation efforts.

In late March, FWS plans to announce nearly \$15 million in grants to 40 states for projects to support recreational boating through the Service's Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) program. More than \$9 million of this will go to six states (California, Maine, Michigan, South Carolina, Texas, and Washington) for competitive grants, and the remaining \$5 million will go to 39 states, commonwealths, territories, and the District of Columbia for a smaller, non-competitive grant program. Funding is generated through the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund by excise taxes on sport fishing and boating equipment and tackle, motorboat fuels and import duties on fishing tackle, yachts and pleasure craft. Grants, which are matched by funding from project partners, support construction or renovation of tie-ups, utilities, fuel stations, pump-out and dump-stations, restrooms and additional sanitary amenities such as laundry and showers for recreational boaters. Outreach is planned.

In late March, the NPS anticipates the announcement of the \$5.7 million in available Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant funding to Tribal Historic Preservation Offices. Grants will be used to support Tribal led programs such as cultural resource surveys and inventories, and Tribal preservation efforts.

In late March, the NPS anticipates the announcement of the \$1.75 million in available Maritime Heritage project grant funding. These grants will be used for maritime heritage education and preservation projects related to the maritime heritage of the United States.

In late March, the NPS anticipates the announcement of the \$1.63 million in available Japanese-American WWII Confinement Camp preservation grants funding. These grants will be used to preserve and interpret confinement sites and their related historic resources.

In late March, the NPS anticipates the announcement of the \$623,038 in available Battlefield Land Acquisition grant funding. Grants will be used to protect 145 acres of Civil War battlefields in Virginia, West Virginia and Maryland. The NPS works with private landowners, battlefield friends groups, interested community groups, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, local, state, and tribal governments and Federal agencies for preservation projects and local acquisition of Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War battlefield land. Grants

are awarded several times throughout the year.

In late March, FWS plans to announce nine projects on 12 national wildlife refuges across the United States are receiving more than \$3.74 million through the Cooperative Recovery Initiative (CRI). The CRI is an internal competitive grant program that funds on-the-ground conservation projects to help recover threatened or endangered species on national wildlife refuges and surrounding lands. These projects often provide related conservation benefits to other imperiled species and encourage partnerships with state and private groups. Outreach is planned.

On or about March 27, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park fire assessment review will be released. On February 6, a team of fire experts convened at Great Smoky Mountains National Park to conduct an independent review of the 2016 Chimney Tops 2 fire that started in the park on November 23. The purpose of the review team is to assess the facts leading up to and during the Chimney Tops 2 fire within the boundaries of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, as well as make recommendations on any planning, operational, or managerial issues which can be addressed locally, regionally, and/or nationally to reduce the chances of a similar incident in the future.

On March 31, the Virgin Islands will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the sale and transfer of the islands from Denmark to the United States for \$25 million in gold. On March 31, 1917, the sale and transfer took place at the site now designated as Christiansted National Historic Site. In late March, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* draft population assessment reports for the Southern Beaufort Sea and Chukchi-Bering seas populations of polar bear in Alaska, and open a 90-day public comment period. Outreach is planned.

In late March, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final determination on a proposed rule (published January 8, 2016) to downlist the West Indian manatee from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act. A notice of intent to sue in 60 days was filed by the Pacific Legal Foundation on January 9, 2017, for failure to issue a final determination within one year of the proposed rule. The downlisting will be controversial because the manatee is a large, docile marine mammal that engenders passionate advocacy in the Southeast. In 2016, there were a record number of boat strike mortalities. Consequently, some conservation groups do not want to see the species downlisted even though the action is warranted. Outreach is planned.

In late March, NPS will release the Final Environmental Impact Statement Notice of Availability for the permanent replacement of the Scorpion Harbor pier within Channel Islands National Park. The existing pier is a flatbed railcar that was installed as a temporary facility in 2000, and is now rapidly deteriorating. Over 55,000 people come ashore at the Scorpion pier annually for recreational activities including hiking, picnicking, camping, kayaking, and swimming.

In April, FWS plans to announce proposed changes to the red wolf recovery program in North Carolina. Red wolves are listed as endangered and have been released under a special “nonessential experimental” designation under the ESA. The program is highly controversial and has been under review in recent months. Accordingly, FWS plans to publish a notice of intent that it will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement in conjunction with a proposed rule to shrink the existing experimental population boundary to encompass only the Dare County

Bombing Range and Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, where stable packs exist on federal lands. FWS expects to make a final decision on the proposed action by December 2017. Public scoping meetings are also being scheduled as a means of engaging the public in the process. Outreach is planned.

On April 6, the NPS will commemorate the centennial of the U.S. entry into World War I by launching a website sharing stories about the impacts of the war on the home front. Highlights will include stories about battle preparation at military parks such as Gettysburg National Military Park, the role of women in the war effort, and the ultimate passage of the 19th amendment at the new Belmont-Paul Women's Suffrage National Monument. In addition, the NPS has partnered with the American Battle Monument Commission to produce an NPS handbook, *World War I Remembered*, for publication in early April.

In April, Grand Canyon National Park will start Public Scoping for the Trans-canyon Waterline Replacement project. The scoping is proposed to last for 30-days and there will be two public meetings, one at the South Rim and one in Flagstaff with dates to be determined. The park will contact its current list of stakeholders and interested parties. There will be two potential options presented and the park may carry one, both, or a third possible path forward to the Environmental Assessment.

April 15 to 23 is National Park Week. During this annual celebration, the NPS hosts special programs in parks and conducts additional media outreach across the country. This year's theme is *Parks 101*, to continue to introduce the public to lesser known sites and highlight ways to explore and recreate in parks. Additional highlights will include entrance fee free weekends, National Junior Ranger Day on April 15, and Park Prescription Day on April 23.

In mid-April, FWS plans to announce the latest iteration of its *Banking on Nature* report, which provides data and an analysis demonstrating the economic benefits of national wildlife refuges for communities across the country. This report highlights the economic impact of recreational visits (e.g., ecotourism) and the economic payback from Refuge System spending within neighboring communities. The peer-reviewed report, which examined national wildlife refuges last in 2015, found the 48.5 million visitors to the Refuge System generated nearly \$2.7 billion in consumer spending, supporting 39,149 full-time and seasonal jobs, and providing more than \$885 million in income to people living in local communities. Outreach is planned.

On April 26, the regular meeting of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC) will be held at the Department of the Interior, in the South Penthouse. The Secretary of the Interior is the chairman of the Commission, which includes members of Congress (Senators Cochran and Heinrich, and Congressmen Wittman and Thompson), and representatives from federal and state wildlife agencies. The MBCC will meet to consider Migratory Bird Conservation Act (MBCA) land acquisition proposals for several national wildlife refuges, and North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) wetlands conservation grant proposals for projects benefiting migratory birds in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. Outreach is planned to announce approved proposals.

Within the next 30-60 days, FWS expects to send to the *Federal Register* its annual proposal for administering tribal hunting, fishing and gathering rights for several federally-recognized Tribes in the Great Lakes region under multiple treaties. The proposal has been compiled in consultation with the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, which represents 11 tribes in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. FWS has informed the Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan DNRs of the agency's support for these proposed regulations. A final decision will not be made until after public comments are reviewed and would not take effect until the fall 2017 hunting season. The proposal is expected to be controversial due to the inclusion of several new techniques for tribal members to take waterfowl. Stakeholders have been engaged, and no general outreach is planned.

On April 29, the NPS will host a ceremony for the reopening and rededication of the Poplar Grove National Cemetery at Petersburg National Battlefield. The ceremony will include participation by a variety of local, state, and national government leaders, military, civic and Native American organizations including descendants of the soldiers buried in the cemetery. This ceremony will conclude a \$4.2 million renovation project of the cemetery and includes one of the largest single orders of headstones (6,100 stones) ever for a national cemetery.

U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service

On April 24-25, the University of California at Santa Barbara will host a groundbreaking ceremony and press event for the Devereux Slough North Campus Open Space Project. FWS has contributed \$3.5 million in grant funds to help acquire and restore this former golf course into a productive coastal slough/natural area. Due to the significant role of FWS grant programs in the restoration project, FWS officials will play a role in the groundbreaking and press event. Outreach is planned.

In April, FWS plans to send the 2016 Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) report to Congress. WRRDA includes direction from Congress to FWS to lead a multiagency effort to slow the spread of Asian carp in the Upper Mississippi River and Ohio River basins, in coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey. Specifically, WRRDA calls for FWS to develop and deliver a report to Congress summarizing all activities and expenditures (both federal and nonfederal) related to Asian carp prevention efforts in the two watersheds, as well as describing any observed changes in the range of Asian carp in Upper Mississippi River and Ohio River basins. Notable changes from the 2015 report include updates on a slight range expansion of silver carp, the movement of juvenile Asian carps in the sub-basins and additional information on the status of black carp. As in previous years, the 2016 report will be made available to the public on AsianCarp.us. The report also outlines research that could improve the ability to control the spread of Asian carp, and quantitative measures proposed for use in documenting progress in controlling the spread of Asian carp. Potentially controversial due to the slight range expansion of silver carp. No public outreach is planned; outreach to Congress will be conducted.

FWS is nearing completion of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the R-Project, a 225-mile long, 345-kilovolt transmission line that runs through the Nebraska Sandhills. The R-Project

will be constructed and operated by Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD). The NPPD is applying for an incidental take permit for the endangered American burying beetle by developing a Habitat Conservation Plan. Currently, FWS is preparing the notice of availability, with a desired publication date of May 3, 2017. NPPD has expressed concern about this timeline and has contacted DOI leadership about expediting the notice.

Eagles

In late March, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice of intent to prepare a joint Environmental Impact Statement with BLM relating to expansion of the Hycroft Resource and Development Incorporated gold mine. FWS is seeking public input on the environmental impacts of issuing permits to remove or disturb golden eagle nests at the mine in northern Nevada. Outreach is planned.

Endangered Species Act Recovery Actions

In April, FWS plans to announce proposed changes to the red wolf recovery program in North Carolina. Red wolves are listed as endangered and have been released under a special “nonessential experimental” designation under the ESA. The program is highly controversial and has been under review in recent months. Accordingly, FWS plans to publish a notice of intent that it will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement in conjunction with a proposed rule to shrink the existing experimental population boundary to encompass only the Dare County Bombing Range and Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, where stable packs exist on federal lands. FWS expects to make a final decision on the proposed action by December 2017. Public scoping meetings are also being scheduled as a means of engaging the public in the process. Outreach is planned.

Endangered Species Act Listing Actions

In late March, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final rule to delist two Australian parrot species (scarlet-chested parakeet and the turquoise parrot) due to recovery. Both parrots are native to Australia. No outreach is planned.

By March 31, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a revised 90-day finding on a petition to delist the Bone Cave harvestman (a cave invertebrate) found in Texas. In June 2015, FWS published a not-substantial 90-day finding on the petition, but a disc of supplemental information was overlooked and not considered in that finding. This revised finding results from a voluntary court-ordered remand and settlement agreement; the court-ordered date is March 31. This issue has received media attention in recent months, driven by a rancher who has taken issue with the species’ listing on his land and a conservative think tank. Although the species lives in caves underground, it is affected by groundwater flows and withdrawals by landowners. The decision will likely generate media coverage and stakeholder engagement. Outreach is planned.

By March 31, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a 12-month finding on the status of two freshwater mussel species: yellow lance, and Atlantic pigtoe. The species are located in North Carolina and Virginia. FWS is required by settlement agreement to submit the finding for the yellow lance to the *Federal Register* by March 31. Outreach is planned.

By April 1, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* 12-month findings on petitions to list the

Beaver Pond marstonia, a freshwater snail found in Georgia, and the San Felipe gambusia, a Texas fish. FWS is required by settlement agreement to submit the finding for the Beaver Pond marstonia to the *Federal Register* by April 1. Outreach is planned.

By April 7, FWS plans to publish in the *Federal Register* a final listing determination on the headwater chub and roundtail chub, both native to Arizona and New Mexico. FWS has a court-ordered settlement agreement to publish the final determination by April 7. This listing determination involves merging two species of chubs into one taxa, which will likely be opposed by some conservation groups. Outreach is planned.

In mid-April, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice reopening the comment period on proposed rules to downlist Tobusch fishhook cactus, found in Texas, and Kuenzler Hedgehog cactus, found in Arizona, from endangered to threatened, and to remove Gypsum wild-buckwheat, located in New Mexico, from the ESA due to recovery. These three plant species have shown significant recovery due in part to collaborative conservation efforts with partners. FWS will also reopen the comment period on a fourth proposed rule to list the Guadalupe fescue, found in southwest Texas and Mexico, as an endangered species and to designate its critical habitat. The comment period for each proposed rule will be 30 days in order to publish a legal notice and to give all interested parties further opportunity to comment on the proposed rules. In order to meet the statutory deadline for the Guadalupe fescue rules, the target for submitting to the *Federal Register* is April 14. Stakeholder outreach is planned.

In mid-April, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to list the island marble butterfly as endangered. Outreach is planned.

In mid-April, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* 90-day petition findings for five species: desert tortoise (Mojave population), sturgeon chub, sicklefin chub, Florida black bear and tricolored bat. The tricolored bat is found in 35 states, Canada, Mexico and Guatemala. The species is being threatened by white nose syndrome and loss of habitat. The not-substantial finding for the bear may also garner media attention since it was petitioned by conservation groups largely upset about a state-regulated hunting season for the bear. Outreach is planned.

In late April, FWS will send to the *Federal Register* a final listing determination for the i'iwi, a Hawaiian bird. Outreach is planned.

In early May, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to delist the Deseret milkvetch, found in Utah, due to recovery. Outreach is planned.

Endangered Species Act Critical Habitat Actions

In mid-April, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice reopening the comment period on a proposed critical habitat designation for the black pine snake. FWS will also hold two public information meetings during the open comment period. This is a reopening of a comment period to allow for additional stakeholder input and is not expected to generate controversy. Outreach is planned.

National Wildlife Refuge Actions

In late March, FWS plans to publish in the *Federal Register* a Notice of Availability for three Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs) for Grays Harbor NWR (Hoquiam, WA), Black River Unit of the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually NWR (Olympia, WA) and Camas NWR (Hamer, ID). FWS engaged with the public and appropriate state, local, tribal and federal agencies in developing these plans over the past several years. The CCPs will guide the management of these national wildlife refuges for the next 15 years. These CCPs are not considered controversial. Very limited, local media outreach is planned.

In April, FWS anticipates making a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Valle de Oro NWR in Albuquerque, New Mexico, available for public comment. The nearby Kirtland Air Force Base's (KAFB) has concerns about potential bird strikes on aircraft whose flight paths cross over the urban refuge. Of primary concern are proposed habitat restoration plans for seasonal wetlands. KAFB believes restored habitat may attract more large birds (geese, cranes and ducks) and increase collision risks. FWS is meeting with KAFB and intends to continue coordinating with the Federal Aviation Administration and KAFB throughout this process to minimize these concerns. Of interest to Senator Heinrich (D-NM) and Representative Michelle Lujan-Grisham (D-NM-1) and potentially to Senator Udall (D-NM).

In the next 30-60 days, FWS plans to publish a notice in the *Federal Register* announcing the Record of Decision for the final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Impact Statement for the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge in Vermont. The approved CCP will guide long-term management of the refuge. Local outreach is planned.

Marine Mammal Protection Act Actions

In late March, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* draft population assessment reports for the Southern Beaufort Sea and Chukchi-Bering seas populations of polar bear in Alaska, and open a 90-day public comment period. Outreach is planned.

National Park Service

On March 28, the Presidio Trust, KQED, and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy will host a public preview of the PBS Nature documentary *Yosemite* at the Presidio of San Francisco, CA. National Park Service Principal Climate Change Scientist Patrick Gonzalez will serve on a panel discussion following the film.

Between March 28 and April 13, the Cape Krusenstern National Monument Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC), the Kobuk Valley National Park SRC, and the Gates of the Arctic National Park SRC will be holding public meetings. The purpose of a SRC is to devise and recommend to the Governor of Alaska and the Secretary a program of subsistence hunting within Alaska national parks and monuments where subsistence is authorized.

On March 29, Representative French Hill (R-AR-2) will hold a breakfast for his local Congressional colleagues to discuss projects at Theodore Roosevelt Island, a site within the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Mr. Hill is on the advisory board for the Teddy Roosevelt Association. NPS staff from the park and the regional office will attend.

On or about March 30, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (Seattle, Washington, location) will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the forced evacuation of 276 Japanese Americans from Bainbridge Island, Washington, under Executive Order 9066. The park will commemorate the day through social media and participation in events at the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial, which is administered as part of the NPS in conjunction with Minidoka National Historic Site. Regional media attention and attendance by local, state, and federal elected officials including the Washington state Governor and representatives Japanese consulate are expected is expected.

On March 30, Assateague Island National Seashore will hold a scoping meeting in Berlin, Maryland, for a new Environmental Assessment to relocate campsites at its Oceanside Campground that are being repeatedly damaged by coastal storm events. The purpose of the proposed project is to develop a flexible, resilient on-island relocation strategy for campsites threatened by sand deposition and encroachment from the adjacent dune system. In addition, Assateague State Park (which is located within the national park boundary) has also released its plan to relocate campsites on the island.

In March, the NPS anticipates signing two Tribal Historic Preservation Office Memoranda of Agreement with the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes (Oklahoma), and the Oklahoma and the Burns-Paiute Tribe (Oregon). These agreements do not automatically confer federal funds, but give Tribes standing to take on certain responsibilities pursuant to 54 USC 302702 (commonly known as Section 101 of the National Historic Preservation Act). The NPS has the responsibility under 54 USC to administer the Tribal Historic Preservation Program and certify Tribal Historic Preservation Offices.

In March, the NPS and U.S. Forest Service Learning Review Board will release the Strawberry Fire Fatality and Safety Review Report. The Strawberry Fire was started by lightning strike and burned 4,700+ acres in Great Basin National Park in August 2016.

In March, the NPS will begin a 30-day internal review period on a draft Policy Memorandum to develop and communicate guidance on conducting body-worn camera programs. The goal is to enhance transparency in police-community contacts, to provide evidence, and to document the actions of officers while performing their duties.

In late March, the NPS will release a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a Mountain Goat Management Plan at Olympic National Park. The purpose of the EIS/plan is to allow the NPS to reduce or eliminate impacts to park resources from exotic mountain goats, while reducing potential public safety issues associated with the presence of mountain goats in the park. Public meeting are tentatively scheduled for the week of April 24 pending public release of the draft Environmental Impact Statement.

In late March, the Record of Decision on the Platte River Mouth Restoration and Access Plan/Environmental Assessment will be released by Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. The Plan/EA evaluates the environmental impacts of three alternatives addressing the dredging and/or restoration of the riverbanks.

In late March, the NPS will release a peer-reviewed report on projections of sea level rise and storm surge for 118 and 79 coastal parks (respectively). The results are intended to inform park planning, and adaptation and mitigation strategies for lands managed by the NPS. In recent years, the NPS has provided data to parks on a case-by-case basis for localized planning, but this report is a summary of the full analysis that is now complete.

In late March, the NPS expects to release the Grand Canyon National Park Bison Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for public comment. The draft EA considers options - including capture/removal, localized fencing of sensitive resources, and sharpshooting by skilled volunteers in conjunction with Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) - for reduction in the size of the bison herd on the North Rim of the park causing damage to sensitive natural and cultural resources. The AGFD, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and the Intertribal Bison Council are cooperating agencies on this effort.

In April, Everglades National Park will complete another important General Management Plan implementation project: installation of Florida Bay access corridor markers and signs to protect significant shallow-water and wilderness resources while enhancing access. This project supports the park's forthcoming Boater Education Program and establishment of shallow-water protection zones in Florida Bay.

On or about April 1, the NPS will issue new information on the care and treatment of historic decorative metal ceilings and walls. The NPS Technical Preservation Services office develops technical preservation guidance and information on preserving and rehabilitating historic buildings, and its Preservation Brief series is widely used by historic building owners, design professionals, construction trades, non-profit organizations, local historic preservation commissions, federal agencies, state and local governments, and the general public.

On April 4 or 11, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, in conjunction with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), will hold a re-opening ceremony for the Carl Hayden Interagency Visitor Center at Glen Canyon Dam. An invitation will be forthcoming for the Secretary of the Interior.

On April 6, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Glacier Bay National Park will hold a government-to-government meeting in Yakutat with the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe. The annual meeting will cover topics such as regulations, wilderness stewardship, NPS staffing and tribal elder and youth visits to the park. Yakutat is the site of a NPS district ranger station that serves portions of both parks. These meetings do not typically yield media coverage or congressional delegation interest.

On April 8, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial will celebrate the official opening of the renovated Gateway Arch grounds, part of the CityArchRiver project to better connect downtown St. Louis, the national park and the Mississippi River. The NPS Regional Director will be speaking at the event.

On and about April 15, the NPS will issue a Solicitation of Request for Proposals to modernize the primary elevator system at Carlsbad Caverns National Park. The modernization will replace the motors and controllers, hoist way equipment, elevator cars, guiderails and steel hoist cables.

In addition, an emergency rescue apparatus, which includes an auxiliary motor, auxiliary battery backup and a single car rescue system, will be installed to improve elevator safety operations. The contract is expected to be awarded in May 2017 and be completed in May 2018.

On April 15, the NPS will hold a community dedication ceremony with local partners for the recently established Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument. Informal invitations have been extended to NPS leadership and an invitation to the Secretary of the Interior is forthcoming. This event is still in the planning stage and official notification is expected soon.

On April 19, there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony at Edison National Historic Site to celebrate the installation of electric vehicle charging stations in and close to NPS sites across the country. BMW has agreed to donate \$2 million to the NPS for installation of up to 100 Electric Vehicle Charging Stations. The installation at Edison National Historic Site will be completed prior to the ceremony and representatives from the National Park Foundation, BMW (donor) and NPS are expected to attend.

On April 19 - 21, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park will host the Council of American Maritime Museums (CAMM) annual conference. CAMM is an organization of 88 institutions across the United States working toward the preservation and interpretation of North America's maritime heritage.

In late April, the NPS anticipates issuing a federal register notice and posting on the NPS website for public comment an updated draft edition of National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties as well as a newly developed companion document, Frequently Asked Questions about Bulletin 38. These updated guidelines have been compiled by the National Register and National Historic Landmark Programs in collaboration with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

On or about April 22, Glacier National Park, along with its sister peace park, Waterton Lakes National Park (Canada), will announce its provisional designation as the world's first transboundary dark sky park. The dark sky designation overlays the entire International Peace Park (est. 1932), and there is interest from the Canadian government to participate in the announcement. This year also marks Canada's national 150th anniversary. The park is coordinating with Waterton Lakes National Park for event planning. Invitations will be extended to DOI and NPS leadership.

On April 29, the Arizona Cardinals will live broadcast two NFL draft picks from the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park. This may draw some media attention, especially in sporting news. The Cardinals will bring notable figures, possibly including Arizona Governor Ducey and/or current and former Cardinals players, to announce the picks. A commercial filming permit will be issued and all associated activities will be monitored by the Grand Canyon National Park Office of Communications.

On May 4-5, the NPS will participate in the board of directors meeting for Alaska Geographic, the non-profit cooperating association for the NPS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management in Alaska. The association operates several book stores and carries out

education programs. The association has been financially challenged in the last three years, and is closing five NPS sales locations in late 2017. The Public Lands Alliance will present recommendations for longer-term financial sustainability at the meeting.

On May 13, the NPS will hold a community dedication ceremony with local partners for the recently established Freedom Riders National Monument in Anniston, Alabama. Informal invitations have been extended to the NPS leadership, and an invitation to the Secretary of the Interior is forthcoming. This event is still in the planning stage and official notification is expected soon.

On May 20, Glacier Bay National Park will host a totem pole raising ceremony with significant participation by Hoonah Tlingit and other clan members. The park expects about 300 people to participate, and the events are open to the public. Two poles will be placed in front of Huna Shuka Hit, a facility dedicated to anchoring the Tlingit in their homeland and interpreting Tlingit culture to the public. Also to be announced is a *healing pole* describing the evolving relationship of the NPS and Hoonah Tlingit which will be completed in 2018.

On May 27, Vicksburg National Military Park along with the leaders of the Sons of Union Veterans and the Sons of Confederate Veterans of Missouri will rededicate the park's restored Missouri Monument commemorating the sacrifices of Union and Confederate Soldiers. The event will include a living history program by the 3rd US Colored Cavalry and the annual Memorial Day concert. Invitees include the Missouri congressional delegation, Senators Cochrane and Wicker, Congressman Thompson of Mississippi, Mississippi Governor Bryant, and other state officials.

Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs and the Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Indian Education

Representative Amodei (NV-02) seeks a briefing regarding CFR Judge serving Te Moak Tribe in Nevada. The Congressman would like a short briefing on how the seating process works and how the BIA can respond to the following questions presented by the group:

1. Is Judge Ronald McGee properly seated and has BIA followed the correct procedure in appointing justices? According to the recent Appeals Court decision it is this group's opinion that Justice McGee is not properly seated and has never been. They want BIA to recognize that Judge McGee has never been permanently approved and therefore BIA needs to begin the process of finding a permanent judge that the tribe can confirm the right way.
2. If the judge was not properly seated, the group would like clarification on whether all cases heard by Judge McGee are now null and void or not?

On Wednesday, March 29, and Thursday, March 30, 2017, the Self-Governance Advisory Committee March quarterly meeting will take place at the Embassy Suites Convention Center in Washington, DC.

On April 10-14, the BIE will host a "BIE Reform Implementation" meeting on the Haskell campus in Lawrence, KS.

All required Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act consultations and meetings with Tribes, water users and adjacent irrigation projects have been completed. BIA is continuing to work on details of the WIIN ACT implementation, including the Implementation Plan that is due to the Congress on April 15, 2017.

On April 18-20, the National Tiwahe Conference will take place in Tucson, AZ. The BIA National Tiwahe Coordinator is assisting the Pascua Yaqui Tribe in hosting the conference. The Tiwahe Initiative Conference will give updates to the tribes and introduce the Federal partners; discuss the phase 1 implementation (Fort Belknap, Pascua Yaqui) and phase 2 implementation (Association of Village Council Presidents, Spirit Lake Tribe, Red Lake Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe) planning, and technical assistance.

On April 23-27, the Self-Governance Communication and Education Consortium (SGCE) Annual Consultation Conference will take place in Spokane, WA. The Secretary of the Department of the Interior and the Assistant Secretary –Indian Affairs are invited to attend as speakers on Monday, April 24, 2017.

Indian Electric Power Utilities (25 CFR 175): This proposed rule would not make any substantive changes to the regulations, but would revise the regulations to be in plain language. The regulations affect only a limited number of Tribes because there are only three BIA electric power utilities: Colorado River (serving the Colorado River Indian Tribes Reservation), Mission Valley Power (serving the Salish & Kootenai Tribes, Flathead Indian Reservation), and San Carlos Irrigation Project (serving Gila River Indian Community). The proposed rule is awaiting AS-IA signature.

Indian Trader Regulations (25 CFR 140): This rule would comprehensively update Part 140 to modernize the implementation of the Indian Trader statutes consistent with the Federal policies of Tribal self-determination and self-governance. The advance notice of proposed rulemaking to solicit comments on potential regulatory revisions and announcing consultation for February and March 2017 was published on Friday, December 9. A notice with details on the venues for Tribal consultations was published in the Federal Register February 8. Tribal consultations are being held throughout the country from February 23 through March 16.

Federal Register Notices Expected to Be Ready for OS Review

- **Liquor Control Ordinance – Cowlitz Indian Tribe:** This notice announces that the Cowlitz Indian Tribe enacted a Tribal liquor control ordinance. The ordinance cannot take effect until the Department’s notice publishes in the Federal Register.
- **2016 Rate Adjustments for Indian Irrigation Projects:** This notice announces the 2016 adjusted irrigation assessment rates to recover the costs to administer, operate, maintain, and rehabilitate BIA-owned/operated irrigation projects operated by BIA.
- **2017 Proposed Rates for Indian Irrigation Projects:** This notice announces the proposed 2017 adjusted irrigation assessment rates to recover the costs to administer, operate, maintain, and rehabilitate BIA-owned/operated irrigation projects operated by BIA.

- **Advisory Board for Exceptional Children:** Two notices are expected to be ready for OS review: a notice of an upcoming meeting of the Advisory Board, and a request for nominations of individuals to serve on the Advisory Board. As of September 2017, there will be eight slots available; members serve staggered two-year terms.
- **Tribal-State Gaming Compacts – Crow Creek & Rosebud:** These two notices announce that the State and Tribe have amended their existing Tribal-State gaming compacts.
- **Trust Acquisitions for Cherokee Nation, Chickasaw Nation, and Wilton Rancheria:** Five Federal Register notices announcing trust acquisitions that were finalized in the last Administration are pending approval for publication. The Department’s regulations require publication of notice of the acquisitions in the Federal Register.
- **HEARTH Act Approval for Swinomish Indian Tribal Community:** This notice announces that BIA has approved the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community (Swinomish) leasing regulations under statutory authority specific to the Tribe. With this approval, the Tribe is authorized to enter into leases of Tribal trust lands without BIA approval.

Office of the Special Trustee for American Indian (OST)

- March 27: Native Youth Empowerment Symposium, Isleta Pueblo, New Mexico
- March 28-29: National Indian Land Conference, Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico
- March 29: DOI Self-Governance Advisory Committee meeting, Washington, D.C. (Acting Special Trustee, Deb DuMontier invited to present)
- April 5-8: 42nd Annual Federal Bar Association Indian Law Conference, Scottsdale, Arizona (Acting Special Trustee, Deb DuMontier attending)
- April 19: “2017 Indian Wills Continuing Legal Education Seminar”, Missoula, Montana (Acting Special Trustee invited to present)
- April 24: “2017 Annual Tribal Self-Governance Communication and Education Tribal Consortium Leadership, Spokane, Washington (Acting Special Trustee invited to speak)
- April 24-25: Native American Finance Officers Association, San Francisco, California (DST-TS, Doug Lords)
- April 25-26: Land Buy Back Program Listening Session and Partners Meeting, Tulalip, Washington (Acting Special Trustee, Deb DuMontier and DST-FO, Jim James invited to attend)
- April 26-27: OST Field Site Visits to Yakama and Colville Agency Offices/Staff (Acting Special Trustee, Deb DuMontier)

Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management

On March 28, BLM-CA will host a public workshop on a proposed amendment to the Headwaters Forest Reserve Management Plan that would allow increased levels of forest restoration activities. The Headwaters Forest Reserve is a 7,400-acre tract near Eureka, containing stands of ancient redwood trees, some estimated to be 1,500 years old. The BLM and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife jointly manage the reserve to protect habitat for

special status fish and wildlife species.

On March 28, BSEE officials will attend a forum of the Offshore Operators' Committee (OOC) to discuss implementation of BSEEs regulations on production safety systems.

On March 29, BLM-NV Las Vegas Field Manager Gayle Marrs-Smith will give a presentation at an outreach meeting of the Moapa Valley Town Advisory Board that explains how the new Gold Butte National Monument designation will not affect existing uses. Rural stakeholders in the area requested the meeting.

On March 29 - April 1, the Project Archaeology National Meeting/Society for American Archaeology Annual Meeting will take place in Vancouver, B.C. BLM-WO Archaeologist Jeanne Moe will chair a research symposium on archaeology education.

On March 30, the 90-day public comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Sagebrush Focal Area Proposed Mineral Withdrawal will close. This proposed mineral withdrawal was part of the Greater sage-grouse Land Use Plan Amendments. Idaho Governor Butch Otter, the National Mining Association and the American Exploration Mining Association have requested an extension of time for the review and comments on the Draft EIS.

On March 31, BSEE will host a Gulf Region Youth Technology Challenge in Baton Rouge, LA. This event follows the successful Youth Technology Challenge in Houston, TX and will be followed by a similar event for the Pacific region in Bakersfield, CA on April 5.

On March 31, BLM plans to issue the Boardman to Hemingway Record of Decision (ROD). The Biological Opinion (BO), which is being drafted by the National Marine Fisheries Service, is a necessary precursor to the ROD. BLM received the BO on February 28. Oregon Plan amendments are being handled concurrently and that decision will be issued simultaneously with the ROD for the Environmental Impact Statement and Approval to issue a right-of-way grant.

In late March, the BLM-UT Cedar City Field Office will complete the Kanarra Creek land acquisition (40.78 acres in Iron County) that will support recreation activities such as hiking, backpacking, sightseeing, and canyoneering. The property is being purchased with Land and Water Conservation Fund money and is located adjacent to the Spring Creek Wilderness Study Area. The acquisition is supported by Iron County.

In late March, OSMRE's Mid-Continent Region plans to make available the Farrell-Cooper Mining Company's Bull Hill #2 mine (Le Flore County, OK) draft EA and unsigned FONSI. OSMRE will receive comments on the EA for a minimum of 30 days. This is a new mine plan for a surface mine which will employ approximately 34 people. The mine plan estimates production of 192,000 tons of Federal coal per year at the mine.

On April 1, BLM-CA will hold a dedication ceremony for the Luke Sheehy Memorial Fitness Park. The park is located in the BLM's Swasey Recreation Area, near Redding Point, CA, and was built in honor of Luke Sheehy, a smokejumper and former BLM hotshot firefighter who died in the line of duty.

On April 4, the 30-day public scoping period ends for the BLM-WY environmental assessment on a proposed wild horse gather in the Salt Wells Creek, Adobe Town and Great Divide Basin Herd Management Areas (HMAs). The Rock Springs and Rawlins field offices propose to gather and remove wild horses to the low Appropriate Management Level (AML) from the three HMAs to comply with the 2013 Consent Decree that was entered in *Rock Springs Grazing Association v. Salazar*. An estimated 1,029 wild horses would be removed (584 from Salt Wells Creek, 210 from Adobe Town, and 235 from the Great Divide Basin HMA). The proposed gather is expected to take place in the fall of 2017.

On April 4 - 5 and 11 - 12, BLM-NV will hold open house meetings for the Piute-Eldorado Valley Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) Management Plan to discuss the Plan and the subsequent EA. Mitigation fees for activities in BLM's Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone, located north of Las Vegas, will fund the plan, Environmental Assessment, and restoration actions.

On April 10 - 11, the National Academy of Science (NAS), in furtherance of a BSEE initiative to examine bolt and fastener failures in subsea safety equipment, will hold a public workshop to bring together non-oil and gas industries, other Federal agencies, and academia to discuss the issue.

On April 10 - 13, Tami DeFries, BLM Fire and Aviation Program Advisor, and Jolie Pollet, Division Chief of Planning and Fuels Management at the National Interagency Fire Center, will travel to Winnipeg, Canada to participate in the Canadian Wildland Fire Community's National Forum on Gender and Diversity Issues.

On April 12, BLM-CO Fire Management Officer Todd Richardson will participate in a panel discussion for a University Corporation for Atmospheric Research congressional briefing on fire weather, data and wildland fire coordination at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center in Washington, D.C. The University Corporation for Atmospheric Research hosts congressional briefings on various issues throughout the year. Richardson routinely works with universities to provide insight on wildland fire operations and fire use.

In mid-April, BLM-NV plans to issue the final Dixie Meadows Geothermal Project EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The project area consists of approximately 22,021 acres of public land within the Carson City District. The project proponent (Ormat) seeks approval to drill several types of wells (temperature gradient wells, test observation wells, and production wells) at up to 20 specific locations located approximately 75 miles northeast of the Fallon, NV.

On April 17, the Offshore Energy Safety Institute (OESI) – a joint initiative between BSEE and the Texas A&M University – will hold a forum on Best Available and Safest Technology (BAST) and real-time monitoring (RTM) technologies.

On April 26, BLM-CA groundwater monitoring and response implementation coordination meetings will begin with Ormat Technologies Inc., the Mammoth Community Water District, U.S. Geological Survey, Inyo National Forest, and the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control

District for the Casa Diablo IV geothermal development project. Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Rep. Paul Cook have expressed interest in the project. Ormat provides alternative and renewable energy technology and is located in Reno, Nevada.

In late April, OSMRE's WR plans to publish a Notice of Availability in local newspapers for the Cordero Rojo Mine (WY) Mining Plan Modification Draft EA, initiating a 30-day public comment period. Cloud Peak Energy's Cordero Rojo Mine is a surface mine located in Campbell County, WY. The mine employs 383 people, and produces approximately 20 million tons of coal per year.

On May 1 - 4, the Offshore Technology Conference (OTC) will be held in Houston, TX. The OTC is the largest oil and gas industry conference in the world, with over 100,000 attendees annually. BSEE staff typically speaks at this event; the Bureau will also have booth space for stakeholder engagement throughout the week.

From May 4-10, BLM's National Conservation Lands and Community Partnerships will participate in two important trail-related events, the National Trail Administrators' Roundtable (May 4 - 6) and the American Trails Biannual International Trails Symposium (May 7 - 10). Both events will take place in Dayton, Ohio.

On May 5, BSEE will hold its annual International Standards Workshop in Houston, TX, following the close of the OCT. The workshop promotes collaboration and knowledge-sharing among BSEE, international regulators, and standards organizations and is designed to improve performance, safety, and operational efficiency worldwide.

In mid-May, BLM-UT anticipates issuing a ROD on an EA concerning mixed trail use in the Recapture Canyon area, located east of Blanding in San Juan County. The ROD would lift an 1871-acre closure order in Recapture Canyon that was issued in 2007 and designate certain trails for all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use, while protecting important riparian and cultural areas. This area became the focus of national media attention in May 2014 when a group staged an unauthorized ATV ride to protest the closure of Recapture Canyon to AVTs. The BLM is currently reviewing options regarding route designations.

Assistant Secretary Policy, Management and Budget

National Preparedness Report. In late March of 2017, the DOI National Preparedness Report (NPR) will be shared with the President. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has received the final NPR from the White House National Security Council's Domestic Resilience Group Policy Coordination Committee and is working toward Departmental concurrence on the NPR prior to being submitted to the President.

White House Council on Native American Affairs - Environment/Climate/Natural Resources (WHCNAA-ECCNR) Subgroup Meeting, March 29, 2017. The WHCNAA-ECCNR Subgroup will hold its monthly meeting. The meeting will focus on lessons learned and opportunities to advance tribal recommendations. Office of Policy Analysis (PPA) staff will participate and co-lead along with Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Environmental Protection

Agency (EPA).

FY 2016 DOI Solid Waste Report. This report is due to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) on March 31, 2017 and includes data on amounts of non-hazardous waste disposal and recycling to establish an annual waste diversion rate. Solid waste data had previously been reported to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and CEQ in the annual Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan but CEQ requested this separate report this year.

Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Settlement. On April 4, 2017, per the terms of the 2016 Deepwater Horizon Consent Decree, BP is scheduled to make the first of 15 annual payments to the DOI Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) Fund. This \$489,655,172 payment will be allocated among seven sub-accounts - Open Ocean, Region-wide, and one for each affected State (AL, FL, LA, MS, and TX). These and all future settlement funds will be disbursed as directed by the co-trustees in accordance with publicly-reviewed restoration plans.

DOI Economics Conference, April 5-7, 2017. The conference, organized by the Office of Policy Analysis (PPA), is an opportunity for the Interior economics community to convene on current issues of interest, collaborate across bureaus, identify key economics research challenges that are important to DOI's programs and activities, and build community.

Association of Unmanned Vehicle Systems International Northwest Drones and Robotics Conference at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA, April 6-7, 2017. Office of Aviation Services (OAS) Director Mark Bathrick is providing the keynote presentation for this event.

International Conference on Arctic Science, April 24-27, 2017. The Office of Policy Analysis (PPA) will participate in the International Conference on Arctic Science in Reston, VA. The conference will bring together a diversity of experts across the circumpolar Arctic to discuss how Arctic science is being translated into action. The conference is being organized by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP), one of six Working Groups of the Arctic Council. PPA staff will participate on a panel on April 26, to provide an overview of Arctic resilience initiatives that PPA has led during the U.S. chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

DOI Annual Emergency Management Council Offsite in Boise, ID, April 24-28, 2017. Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Director Lisa Branum will host the annual Emergency Management Council Offsite, which is attended by upwards of 75 DOI bureau and office emergency managers. The council offsite is intended to provide a dedicated forum to address strategic emergency management issues with a particular focus on engagement with the wildland fire community at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC).

GAO Entrance Conferences

Financial Rewards for Reporting Illegal Activities Related to Plants, Wildlife, and Antiquities (101657). In response to Ranking Member Ron Wyden of the Senate Finance Committee, GAO will review: (1) key conservation protection statutes authorizing the payment of financial rewards to people who report illegal activities related to plants, wildlife, and antiquities; (2) which Federal agencies are authorized to pay financial rewards under these statutes and the effectiveness of these payments as enforcement tools; and (3) the monetary value of items seized and other funds collected (fines and penalties) through enforcement actions under

these statutes. The entrance conference was March 8, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Office of the Solicitor.

Horse Welfare (Job Code 101429). In response to the Chair of the House Agriculture Committee and the Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, GAO will review: (1) changes and trends in the U.S. horse market since 2010; (2) impact of the prohibition on the US Department of Agriculture funding for horse slaughter inspection on horse welfare, as well as the impact on states, local governments, and Indian tribes; (3) number of abandoned and unwanted horses in the U.S. and the associated environmental impacts; and (4) current capacity of animal welfare organizations and shelters to accept and care for unwanted and abandoned horses. The entrance conference was March 8, with the Bureau of Land Management's Wild Horse and Burro Program and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Recent Draft GAO Reports (Per GAO, distribution is highly restricted.)

Oil and Gas Development: Improved Collection and Use of Data Could Enhance BLM's Ability to Assess and Mitigate Environmental Impacts (GAO-17-307). In response to Ranking Member Grijalva of the House Committee on Natural Resources, GAO reviewed BLM's application of requirements in oil and gas leases to mitigate the environmental impacts of development. Specifically, GAO reviewed BLM's: (1) process to approve requests for exceptions to lease and permit requirements; (2) public involvement in the development of lease and permit requirements and in the approval of exception requests; and (3) implementation and assessment of best management practices. GAO issued the draft report March 3, with six recommendations to BLM, including developing a policy for tracking and documenting exceptions and clarifying guidance on the collection and use of data related to permit requirements. The Department's comments are due to GAO on March 31.

Recent Final GAO Reports

Federal Real Property: Government-wide Building-Disposal Data Generally Reliable, but Opportunities for Further Improvements Exist (GAO-17-321). In response to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management, and the Chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, GAO reviewed and assessed the reliability and reporting of government-wide building disposal data for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 and steps the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the General Services Administration (GSA), and three selected agencies (Interior, Agriculture, and Energy), have taken to improve disposal data. GAO issued the final report on March 2. No further action is required since there are no recommendations to the Department.

Contractor Whistleblower Protections Pilot Program: Improvements Needed to Ensure Effective Implementation (GAO-17-227). In response to a congressional mandate in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2013, GAO reviewed a pilot program on the protection of Federal contractor employees from reprisal for disclosure of certain information (i.e., "whistleblowers"). The pilot program applies to 14 executive departments, including DOI. GAO issued the final report on March 2, with recommendations to DOI's Inspector General to improve whistleblower protection policies and guidance and communication with contractors.

The DOI response is due May 20.

OIG Entrance Conferences

Evaluation of Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Background Checks (Assignment 2017-WR-024). The Office of Inspector General (OIG) will conduct an evaluation to determine whether Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) employees and other individuals who have regular contact with children at Indian education facilities, have required background checks. Indian education facilities include those that are BIE and non-BIE operated. The entrance conference was March 2.

OIG Exit Conference/Pending Reports

Evaluation of Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Rural Water Supply Projects (Assignment 2016-WR-026). The exit conference was March 7, with the OIG and Bureau of Reclamation. The OIG discussed their preliminary findings related to the Great Plains Region and outlined the potential recommendations. The report will be issued late March for a 45-day comment period.

Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

In March, USGS will announce a new report on critical minerals for the United States. This publication presents resource and geologic information for 23 mineral commodities currently viewed as important to the national economy and national security of the United States, many of which are sourced entirely outside of the United States. The report provides information on mineral environmental issues, as well an in-depth look at each commodity's use, distribution of deposit types, and current status of production, resources, and reserves. The individual commodity chapters serve as an update to the 1973 commodity chapters of USGS Professional Paper 820, United States Mineral Resources. A news release is planned.

In March, USGS will release an updated status assessment for Florida manatee populations. The Scientific Investigations Report describes how this subspecies of the West Indian manatee is faring and the probability for population declines over the next 100 years. In January 2016 the USFWS published a proposed rule to reclassify West Indian manatees from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act. A final rule is due to be issued in March 2017. This report provides critical supporting information for the USFWS determination for manatees. USFWS has been briefed on the report's findings. A news release is planned.

In March, Reclamation will launch the Reclamation Water Information System that is a pilot version of a Reclamation-wide system for viewing, accessing, and downloading Reclamation's data via a centralized data portal. Rollout materials are being developed.

In March or April, USGS will announce a new national-scale assessment of the distribution, occurrence, and character of brackish groundwater resources. Brackish groundwater can serve as a potential resource to help water-stressed regions stretch their limited freshwater supplies. The last national-scale map of brackish groundwater was completed in the 1960s. A news release is planned.

In April, USGS will announce a new Scientific Investigation Report which explores drought frequency and intensity in the U.S. over the past half century. Responding to concerns that climate change will lead to deeper or longer droughts, and perceptions of worsening droughts in the western U.S., scientists compared streamgage data from 1951-1982 with data from the same gages in 1983-2014. Changes in drought frequency, duration or severity were identified in 4 of 9 ecoregions. Parts of the Southeastern U.S., Texas and California had more frequent droughts from the 1980s onward, while the Central Plains and the Northeast had less frequent droughts. A news release is planned.

In the first two weeks of April, Reclamation and the National Park Service will have a reopening ceremony at Glen Canyon Dam Carl Hayden Visitor Center to highlight all new museum exhibits in the visitor center, which were completed late last fall. Reclamation is preparing an event invitation for the Department.

In the coming weeks, USGS will announce a new assessment of undiscovered potash resources of the Pripyat Basin of Belarus and the Dnieper-Donets Basin of Ukraine. The study was undertaken because potash is a critical mineral resource for agricultural production, and these deposits are in a geopolitically sensitive area of interest. A technical announcement is planned.

In the coming weeks, USGS will announce a new update report on Pacific walrus demographics. USGS walrus research has focused on demographics, habitat use, sea ice projections, and energetics, and this update will add to this body of knowledge by providing the results of a population dynamics model that synthesizes population size, age structure, reproductive rates, and harvest for the period 1974-2015. The research, conducted in collaboration with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the USFWS, shows that the walrus population has halved in that amount of time. However, the population decline lessened over time, and the odds that the population is still decreasing are roughly equal to the odds that it is stationary or possibly increasing. On September 30, USFWS is required to make a listing decision on the Pacific walrus. The USGS role is to provide objective science to help inform the decision. The findings will be published in *Marine Mammal Science* and a news release is planned.

TBD: In the coming weeks, Reclamation will announce the signing of the Record of Decision for the Long-Term Plan to Protect Adult Salmon in the Lower Klamath River Project located in Humboldt County, California. The selected alternative (Alternative 1) includes supplemental flows from Lewiston Dam to prevent a disease outbreak in the lower Klamath River in years when the flow is projected to be less than 2,800 cubic feet per second. The Long-Term Plan will establish a 13-year direction through 2030. A news release is planned.

In the coming weeks, a USGS-authored paper will be released about the potential release of mercury into the environment from thawing permafrost. The embargoed paper will be published in the journal *Nature*, and a news release is planned. *Nature* may also issue a news release.

In the coming weeks, USGS will announce a new Scientific Investigation Report that presents monitoring data collected by 74 organizations at almost 1,400 sites to provide a nationwide look at changes in the quality of our rivers and streams in the 40 years since passage of the Clean Water Act. For the first time, these data can be viewed and analyzed side-by-side, giving users a

comprehensive, nationwide view of changes in water quality based on 51 water-quality constituents and 38 aquatic-life metrics and spanning four decades. A news release with possible Secretary rollout is being planned.