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Good Afternoon 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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Weekly Report to the Secretary 03-23-17

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

**March 23, 2017**

**Office of the Solicitor**

**Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

Nothing to report.

**Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

**SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS:**

By 33-page decision of March 17, the U.S. Court of Federal Claims ruled in favor of the Government in this (court-described) “pre-award bid protest involve[ing] a unique and complex procurement [implementing] a critical public safety recommendation made by the 9/11 Commission [to] build-out, deploy, and operate a nationwide public safety broadband network.”

***Noble Energy v. Zinke (Sup. Ct.) – Post-Breach Decommissioning Liability***

Plaintiff operator disputed a Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) order requiring it to permanently plug an exploratory well on the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), arguing that the government’s breach of the underlying lease absolved it of both its contractual and regulatory decommissioning obligations. The government prevailed before the trial court and the D.C. Circuit and Plaintiff petitioned for certiorari. On March 20 the court that it denied the petition, bringing the litigation to a final conclusion.

**Companion decisions regarding Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rulemaking for Navajo Generating Station (NGS)**

- ***Yazzie v. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, No.14-73100, 2017 U.S. App. LEXIS 4886 (9th Cir. Mar. 20, 2017) (challenge to merits of EPA rule regulating haze from NGS operations after 2019)***

The Ninth Circuit denied petitions from national and local conservation organizations alleging that the EPA haze rule for NGS was not stringent enough and did not reduce emissions quickly enough.

- ***Hopi Tribe v. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, No.14-73055, 2017 U.S. App. LEXIS 4888 (9th Cir. Mar. 20, 2017) (challenge to process of promulgating EPA’s 2014 rule regulating haze from NGS operations after 2019)***

The Ninth Circuit denied a petition by the Hopi Tribe challenging EPA’s 2014 haze rule for NGS

based on the Tribe's lack of involvement in a stakeholder group that offered, at EPA's request, a rulemaking proposal to reduce regional haze from NGS.

(b) (5) ACP, (b) (5) AWP

***Reoforce, Inc. v. United States (Fed. Cir.) – Favorable Temporary Taking Decision***

On March 17, the Federal Circuit issued a decision in the Government's favor and upheld the lower court's decision to dismiss Reoforce's claim of a \$48 million temporary taking of three mining claims. The decision reversed the Court of Federal Claims' (CFC's) finding that Reoforce lacked standing to bring a takings claim (which the Government did not dispute on appeal), but affirmed the CFC on the merits of its finding that there was no taking.

**NEW CASES:**

***Center for Biological Diversity v. U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and Fish and Wildlife Service (M.D. Fla.)***

On March 15, plaintiff environmental groups filed a complaint challenging the Section 404 permit for South Pasture Phosphate Mine Extension in Hardee County, Florida, and Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS or Service's) associated June 2014 Biological Opinion. The Service concluded that the project, which would affect about 7,500 acres of improved pastures, would not jeopardize the continued existence of three listed species. The Service also concurred with the Corps' "may affect/not likely to adversely affect" determination for three other species, including the Florida panther. The complaint alleges that both the Biological Opinion and concurrence are arbitrary and capricious.

***Double R Ranch Trust, et al. v. Kristin Bail, et al. (D.D.C.) - 2106 Western Oregon RMP challenge***

On March 10, the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, a rancher, and an industry trade association filed a new lawsuit challenging the Wild and Scenic River determinations in the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) 2016 Western Oregon Resource Management Plans (RMPs). Plaintiffs allege that portions of the Rogue River determined suitable in the RMPs for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System are not free flowing under the WSR, the protective management for these areas in the RMPs is arbitrary, and the determinations are inconsistent with BLM policy. Plaintiffs request vacatur and remand of the 2016 RMPs. The U.S. Answer is due 60 days from service, which has not yet occurred.

***BLM-AFRC v. United States, et al. (D.D.C.) - Cascade Siskiyou National Monument expansion***

On March 10, 2017, timber industry representatives filed a complaint raising Antiquities Act and Oregon & California Revested Railroad Lands Act (O&C Act) challenges to President Obama's January 12, 2017 Proclamation expanding the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument (CSNM).

This is the third lawsuit filed over the CSNM expansion.

**OTHER LITIGATION MATTERS:**

***In re Peabody Energy Corp. (D. Bankr. E. Mo.) – Coal bankruptcy***

(b) (5) ACP, (b) (5) AWP  
[Redacted text block]

***Wyoming v. Zinke (10<sup>th</sup> Cir.) – BLM’s Hydraulic Fracturing Rule***

The court granted BLM’s motion to postpone oral argument (previously scheduled for March 22), but ordered BLM to file a brief by May 15 on whether the appeal should remain stayed during the rulemaking to rescind the hydraulic fracturing regulation.

***WildEarth Guardians v. Zinke (D.D.C.) - 69 Species***

This case, a deadline challenge regarding 69 overdue 12-month findings, was previously stayed until March 31. (b) (5) ACP, (b) (5) AWP

[Redacted text block]

***NRDC v. US DOI (S.D.N.Y.) - Rusty Patched Bumble Bee***

In this case, plaintiff environmental group challenges the delay of effective date for the listing of the rusty patched bumble bee. (b) (5) ACP, (b) (5) AWP

(b) (5) ACP, (b) (5) AWP  
[Redacted]

**Alabama v. NMFS (S.D. Ala.) - Critical Habitat and Adverse Modification Challenge**

(b) (5) ACP, (b) (5) AWP  
[Redacted]

**NON-LITIGATION MATTERS:**

**Yellow Aster Mine Referral to DOJ**

(b) (5) ACP, (b) (5) AWP  
[Redacted]

**Diamond Pipeline Protest Camp (Former Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) Protesters)**

Protesters from DAPL have moved to the Diamond Pipeline and are establishing multiple camps in Oklahoma. The first camp is being coordinated by a tribal member from Creek Nation who was at DAPL and has set up near Creek Nation, but not on reservation land. The second camp is located on/near the Choctaw Nation. (b) (5) ACP, (b) (5) AWP

[Redacted]

**Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens Partnership Agreement**

The National Parks Branch is advising the National Park Service National Capital Region regarding a partnership agreement under which a private firm would donate the preparation of an environmental assessment, and the preparation of other statutory compliance documents, regarding the rehabilitation of Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens.

## **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 time frame 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. Detailed information is at: [www.nps.gov/subjects/cherryblossom/plan-your-visit.htm](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/cherryblossom/plan-your-visit.htm)

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 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.

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.

In April, 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. Funding for the HPF is derived from Outer Continental Shelf oil lease revenues and grants will be used to support State led programs such as historic resource surveys and inventories, and local bricks and mortar preservation efforts. Historic Preservation Fund grants are awarded annually based on an apportionment formula to 59 historic preservation offices in the states, territories, and the District of Columbia.

In April, the NPS anticipates the announcement of the \$5.7 million in available Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant funding to Tribal Historic Preservation Offices. Grants are used

to support Tribal led programs such as cultural resource surveys and inventories, and Tribal preservation efforts. The tribal line item of the Historic Preservation Fund, administered by the National Park Service, supports two grant programs: Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) grants and Tribal Heritage Fund grants. These two grant programs provide much needed assistance to Native American communities interested in protecting their cultural heritage. In 2017, the NPS will award grants to 169 tribal historic preservation offices throughout the country.

In April, 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. The National Maritime Heritage Act established the National Maritime Heritage Grants Program within the Department of the Interior; the grants program is administered in partnership with the Maritime Administration (MarAd). It provides funding for education and preservation projects designed to preserve historic maritime resources and is funded through a percentage of the proceeds from the sale or scrapping of obsolete vessels of the National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF). All grants awarded must be matched on a 1-to-1 basis with non-Federal assets.

In April, 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. Congress established the Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program in 2006, authorizing a total of \$38 million in funding for the life of the program. Successful proposals are chosen through a competitive process that requires applicants to match the grant award with \$1 in non-federal funds or "in-kind" contributions for every \$2 they receive in federal money.

In April, 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. In mid-April or earlier, the NPS anticipates the announcement of the \$2,972,374 in the second package of Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant award funding. Grants will be used to protect 854 acres of Revolutionary and Civil War battlefields in Virginia, Mississippi, and New York. 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 or early April, 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 early April, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to designate as critical habitat approximately 36 stream miles of occupied habitat and 3,100 acres of unoccupied habitat for the meltwater lednian stonefly and approximately 1.5 stream miles of occupied habitat and 204 acres of unoccupied habitat for the western glacier stonefly. FWS will also reopen the public comment period for the proposed listing of western glacier stonefly and meltwater lednian stonefly as threatened species, located in Montana. Outreach is planned. The Office of the Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Park is still reviewing this package and has not approved it.

## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

Nothing to report

### **Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

#### **Hot Topics**

In late March or early April, 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, 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 March 29, FWS will host a kick-off meeting with partners to implement the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act, passed by Congress in December 2016. Partners include: four basin states (Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey), the Delaware River Basin Commission, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Delaware River Basin Coalition, the National Wildlife Federation, and several federal agencies including the National Park Service, Army

Corps of Engineers and Natural Resource Conservation Service. The new law charges FWS with creating a program to bring the collaborative work in the watershed under an umbrella strategy and eventually, as funding allows, implement a grant program. Senior FWS officials will join this partnership meeting in Philadelphia. Congressional and partner outreach is underway. Because a report is due to Congress in late May, this meeting was set as soon as possible to seek stakeholder input for program development.

### **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. The mine proposes mitigation actions to reduce impacts to eagles in the area. Outreach is planned.

### **Endangered Species Act Listing Actions**

In late March, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* revisions to the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife to correct errors. These revisions are technical in nature and involve no substantive changes to the List, or any applicable regulations. No outreach is planned.

In late March, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* technical corrections of scientific names and other information on the Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants for approximately 40 species through a direct final rule. The corrections are administrative in nature and involve no substantive changes to the Lists, or any applicable regulations. No 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 (PLF) on January 9, 2017, for failure to issue a final determination within one year of the proposed rule. FWS has updated PLF on the status of the final determination, and no lawsuit has yet been filed. 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, 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. 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, and simultaneously propose the two species for listing. 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 its finding for the Beaver Pond marstonia to the *Federal Register* by April 1. Outreach is planned.

## **National Park Service**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

From March 27 through 29, Acting Director Mike Reynolds will be in Denver, Colorado, at the Intermountain Region Senior Leadership Training. On April 4, speak at the ceremony for the release of the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site quarter, the 37th coin of the United States Mint America the Beautiful Quarters Program, in Washington, D.C.

### **Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

On 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 27, Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site may be used as the announcement location of the establishment of an airplane manufacturing site near Moton Field Municipal Airport in Tuskegee, Alabama. The Macon County Economic Development Authority (MCEDA) will be seeking a permit for the use of the Airmen Site as host for the announcement of the new project. This announcement is pending the final award of the contract by the United States Air Force. The Governor of Alabama as well as the Secretary of Commerce and members of the Alabama congressional delegation will be in attendance in support of MCEDA and the project.

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, Rep. French Hill (R-AR-2) will hold a breakfast for local lawmakers to discuss projects at Theodore Roosevelt Island, a site within the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Possible projects include landscape restoration and improved visitor services. The Acting Superintendent and Chief of Staff plan to attend.

On March 29 and 30, the NPS will meet with FAA in Hawaii to discuss overflights at Hawaii Volcanoes and Haleakala National Parks. Over the two days, the NPS and FAA will also meet with air tour operators, interested stakeholders, and members or staff from the Hawaii State Legislature and possibly the Hawaii congressional delegation. The meetings are intended to help the NPS and FAA gather information and share perspectives about the unique challenges the parks face due to air tour activity.

On 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 including Washington State Governor Inslee and the Japanese Ambassador to the United States from D.C., Kenichirō Sasae, are expected to attend.

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 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 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 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 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.

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

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

Nothing to report.

### **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.

**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 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.

## **Office of the Special Trustee for American Indian (OST)**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

Acting Special Trustee, Deb DuMontier has been invited to speak at the DOI Self-Governance Advisory Committee meeting, Washington, D.C. March 29, 2017.

### **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 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, the Offshore Operators Committee (OOC) will host a day-long meeting on offshore oil and gas production safety systems and implementation of the BSEE Production Safety Systems Final Rule (Final Rule). The OOC was formed in the late 1940's and has evolved into the oil and gas industry's principal representative regarding regulation of offshore exploration, development, and producing operations in the Gulf of Mexico. BSEE Gulf of Mexico region senior staff will participate in the meeting and hold a session to answer questions about the Final Rule.

On March 28 - 29, Linda Schnee a Volunteer Program Specialist with the BLM's National Conservation Lands and Community Partnerships office, will host a two-day meeting in Washington D.C. for "volunteer.gov" stakeholders to review the newly designed volunteer.gov platform and help test the site's functionality. Volunteer.gov is the primary volunteer recruitment vehicle for Federal land management agencies.

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 - 30, BOEM will participate in the Gulf of Mexico Workshop on International Research (GOM-WIR) in Houston, TX. The purpose of the GOM-WIR is to bring together scientist from the U.S. (Federal and state level) and Mexico to identify knowledge gaps for future research opportunities. Specifically, the scientists will discuss baseline studies, effects studies, and environmental monitoring in the GOM. The Workshop will be hosted by the Harte Research Institute with sponsorship from BOEM, NOAA, and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

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, BLM-UT will release its September Oil and Gas Lease Sale EA for a 30-day public review and comment period to analyze potential impacts of issuing the leases. The comment period will close on May 1, 2017. A total of 14,943 acres, comprised of nine parcels, were nominated for potential leasing in Washington County in the BLM-UT Western Desert District.

On March 30, BLM-NM State Director Amy Lueders will address the NM Wildland Urban Interface Summit, where partners meet to discuss wildfire preparedness. The summit is an annual collaborative event hosted by the BLM, USFS, NM State Land Office, NM State Forestry, Forest Stewards Guild, Northern AZ University-SW Fire Consortium, Grant County, and the NM Association of Counties. Attendees include fire management professionals, emergency responders, local government officials and residents.

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. ID 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, BLM-UT and the American Conservation Experience will launch a new mobile app called "WildSnap" for monitoring wilderness study areas. Members of the public who collect data through the app are considered "citizen scientists" and will be able to upload photographs, field notes and GPS locations within the app.

By March 31, BLM-UT Cedar City Field Office will complete the Kanarra Creek land acquisition (40.78 acres in Iron County). The acquisition, which will be accomplished using Land and Water Conservation Fund money, will support the existing recreation activities such as hiking, backpacking, sightseeing, and canyoneering. Adjacent to this parcel is Kanarra Creek, which has stream segments that were found to be eligible as a wild and scenic river. The parcel contains riparian habitat as well as habitat for the Mexican Spotted Owl. The parcel is located adjacent to the Spring Creek Wilderness Study Area and if the parcel is acquired, public access will be secured. The acquisition is supported by Iron County.

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, 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 EIS by August 2017 as part of the litigation.

In late March, BLM-UT Moab Field Office will release an EA for public comment analyzing a proposal to renew a ten-year grazing permit in the Big Flat area east of Canyonlands National

Park in Grand County, UT. The EA analyzes the potential impacts of issuing permits to three permittees to graze livestock in three common allotments covering 131,939 acres of public land.

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.

## **Assistant Secretary Policy, Management and Budget**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

Nothing to report.

### **Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

#### **Dakota Access Pipeline and Keystone Pipelines - Standing Rock Sioux Reservation (SRSR).**

All DOI law enforcement personnel assets supporting the Standing Rock Operation were successfully redeployed to their home assignments on March 10, 2017. Contractors have cleared all trash and debris from the three areas of land managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Office of Justice Services have kept additional personnel on scene to assist local BIA law enforcement until March 31, 2017.

**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 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**Royalty Policy Committee, Week of March 20th or 27th, 2017.** The Federal Register Notice announcing that the Department of the Interior is establishing and seeking nominations for the Royalty Policy Committee (Committee) is likely to be published the week of March 20th or 27th, 2017. This Federal Advisory Committee will advise the Secretary on current and emerging issues related to the determination of fair market value and the collection of revenue from energy and mineral resources on Federal and Indian lands, including whether a need exists for regulatory reform.

**Meeting with the Prime Minister of Denmark.** The Office of International Affairs (OIA) was contacted regarding a meeting between Secretary Zinke and the Prime Minister of Denmark in the U.S. Virgin Islands, to be held during events celebrating the Centennial of the transfer of the islands from Denmark to the United States. OIA is leading DOI's bureaus and offices to bring together information on DOI's interactions with counterparts in Denmark, as background for this meeting.

**National Preparedness Report.** In late March of 2017, the DOI National Preparedness Report (NPR) will be shared with the President. The DOI 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.

**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.

**Year 2017 Small Business Accomplishments to Date.** As of March 15, 2017, the Department has awarded 50.30% 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 22.90% of its contract award dollars to small disadvantaged businesses and 14.90% of its contract award dollars to women-owned small businesses, exceeding the statutory goal of 5% for each. The Department awarded 2.49% of its contract award dollars to historically underutilized business zone small businesses and 3.40% of its contract award dollars to service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses. The statutory goal is 3% for each of these categories.

**Internal Control and Audit Follow-up.** The Department has an annual goal of closing 85% of corrective actions scheduled for closure in the current fiscal year to address issues raised in Office of Inspector General (OIG) and Government Accountability Office (GAO) engagements. As of March 17, 2017, the Department has closed 21 percent of open audit recommendations scheduled for closure in FY 2017.

## **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 22, 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.

On March 28, the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee will hold an oversight hearing about U.S. minerals dependence on foreign countries. The hearing will be held in 366 Dirksen Senate Office Building at 10:00 a.m. USGS Associate Director for Energy & Minerals, Murray Hitzman, will serve as the DOI witness at the hearing.

On March 28, 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.

On or about March 28, the Department will announce 11 projects selected by Reclamation to receive \$568,662 for Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects, part of the WaterSMART grant program. The projects selected seek to conserve, better manage, or make more efficient use of water supplies. Funding awarded is leveraged with local and state funding to support \$1.3 million in efficiency improvements. This is the first award this year under the Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects Funding Opportunity Announcement. The funding opportunity is still open and applications will be accepted through April 27, 2017.

## **Office of Insular Affairs**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

On March 31, the Secretary will be in St. Thomas and St. Croix in the United States Virgin Islands for the centennial celebration of the transfer of the U.S. Virgin Islands from Denmark to the United States. The Secretary and the Prime Minister of Denmark, Lokke Rasmussen, are invited guests. Members of the advance team include Mr. Douglas Domenech, Acting AS-IN Nikolao Pula, and Mr. Basil Ottley (former USVI Senator and now OIA Policy Director).

**Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

Nothing to Report.

## **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**

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. Total project funding for CityArchRiver 2015 improvements, on both NPS land and adjoining city-owned land, is estimated at \$380 million, with the Department of Transportation (DOT) funding a large portion of the project. The CityArchRiver 2015 Foundation and the St. Louis Business Community funded the design competition, architectural and landscape design effort and construction, and the winning design concept was announced in 2010. In 2013, St. Louis City and County voters passed a sales tax initiative for the benefit of the national park and surrounding project area. The fundraising goal of \$250 million (\$221 million capital, \$29 million endowment) was reached in 2016. The project is supported by the bi-state Congressional delegation. 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, hoistway equipment, elevator cars, guide rails 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.

In mid-April, the NPS anticipates the announcement of \$15 million in Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership grant funding for approximately 25 projects. A total of 51 projects were submitted by states to acquire and develop outdoor recreation spaces. This competitive program supplements the annual LWCF apportionment to states by supporting projects for disadvantaged populations in urban areas.

On April 15, approximately 1,000 participants will attend a rally at Independence National Historical Park sponsored by Philadelphia Jobs With Justice. The organization is calling for President Trump to release tax documents. The NPS has issued a First Amendment permit for this activity.

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 Representative Wittman and Thompson), and representatives from federal and state wildlife agencies. The MBCC will meet to consider and approve land acquisition for the

National Wildlife Refuge System through the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (which includes Federal Duck Stamp funds) and to consider for approval \$39 million for 35 wetland conservation grants for projects benefiting migratory birds in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, recommended by the North American Wetlands Conservation Council. Approved grants and acquisitions will be announced via a news release on the day of the meeting. Outreach is planned.

On April 21, the 2017 Junior Duck Stamp National Art Contest will be held in Charleston, South Carolina. A panel of judges will review winning artwork from state contests held in all 50 states, Washington, DC, and several U.S. territories and choose one winner to appear on the 25th Junior Duck Stamp. Judges will also choose a winning conservation message, and second and third place artwork. Proceeds from Junior Duck Stamp sales fund conservation education programs for youth. Outreach is planned.

In May, the NPS plans to initiate public scoping to replace Grand Canyon National Park's trans-canyon pipeline. The trans-canyon pipeline serves the park's south rim supplying all water to facilities serving more than 5 million visitors and 2,500 residents annually. The cost to replace the pipeline is estimated at \$131.8 million dollars and construction is expected to begin in 2019. During the 30-day initial public scoping, the NPS will hold public meetings at the park's south rim and in Flagstaff, Arizona, and will consult with the park's 11 associated tribes.

## **U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service**

### **Hot Topics**

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. \$3.5 million in FWS grant funds helped 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.

### **Asian carp**

From April 17 through 24, a Chinese delegation of Asian carp specialists will be visiting state and federal sites. Visits are scheduled for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers' electric barriers near Romeoville, Illinois, in the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS); the FWS La Crosse Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, and the USGS Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center. The delegation will be briefed on Asian carp action plans and projects within the Great Lakes, the CAWS, the Illinois and Ohio Rivers, and Upper Mississippi River by representatives from FWS and the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee.

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.

### **Endangered Species Act Recovery Actions**

On June 7, FWS plans to formally recognize Fort Hood as the recipient of FWS's Military Conservation Partner Award. FWS presents the Military Conservation Partner Award annually to a military installation whose efforts represent significant conservation accomplishments achieved in partnership with FWS and other conservation agencies. The U.S. Army Garrison Fort Hood Military Installation encompasses 218,824 acres in Bell and Coryell Counties in Texas. Fort Hood is one of the Army's premier installations and the largest installation in square mileage in the continental U.S. It conducts the full range of mission-related training activities and also manages the largest known populations of the endangered golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo. Outreach is planned. The ceremony is open to media.

### **Endangered Species Act Listing Actions**

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. To make this date, the target to the *Federal Register* is March 31. Outreach is planned.

In late April, FWS will reopen the comment period on the proposed rules to list and designate critical habitat for the Guadalupe fescue, downlist Tobusch fishhook cactus from endangered to threatened, downlist Kuenzler hedgehog cactus from endangered to threatened, and delist gypsum wild-buckwheat. In order to meet the statutory deadline for the Guadalupe fescue rules, the target date for submitting to the *Federal Register* is April 21, 2017. Stakeholder outreach is planned.

In late April, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to list the island marble butterfly, found in Washington, as endangered. Outreach is planned.

In mid-April, FWS will make 90-day petition findings for five species: desert tortoise (Mojave population), Florida black bear, sturgeon chub, sicklefin chub and tricolored bat. Outreach is planned.

In late April, FWS will send to the *Federal Register* a final listing determination for the i'iwi, a

Hawaiian bird. FWS is required by settlement agreement to submit the final rule for the i'iwi to the *Federal Register* by September 20. Outreach is planned.

### **Endangered Species Act Critical Habitat Actions**

In early April, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to designate as critical habitat approximately 36 stream miles of occupied habitat and 3,100 acres of unoccupied habitat for the meltwater lednian stonefly and approximately 1.5 stream miles of occupied habitat and 204 acres of unoccupied habitat for the western glacier stonefly. FWS will also reopen the public comment period for the proposed listing of western glacier stonefly and meltwater lednian stonefly as threatened species, located in Montana. Outreach is planned. The Office of the Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Park is still reviewing this package and has not approved it.

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. Outreach is planned.

In late April, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a revised proposed critical habitat rule for slickspot peppergrass as a result of new information becoming available, and will request any other new information regarding population status, trends, or threats, and on any other areas appropriate for designation as critical habitat. Outreach is planned.

### **National Wildlife Refuge Actions**

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.

In April, FWS anticipates making a draft Environmental Assessment for the Valle de Oro NWR in Albuquerque, New Mexico, available for public comment. The nearby Kirtland Air Force Base (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. Senator Heinrich (D-NM) and Representative Michelle Lujan-Grisham (D-NM-1) and potentially Senator Udall (D-NM) are interested in this issue.

### **Migratory Bird Management Actions**

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 and approve land acquisition for the National Wildlife Refuge System through the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (which includes Federal Duck Stamp funds) and to consider for approval \$39 million for 35 wetland conservation grants for projects benefiting migratory birds in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, recommended by the North American Wetlands Conservation Council. Approved grants and acquisitions will be announced via a news release the day of the meeting. Outreach planned.

On April 21, the 2017 Junior Duck Stamp National Art Contest will be held in Charleston, South Carolina. A panel of judges will review winning artwork from state contests held in all 50 states, Washington, DC, and several U.S. territories and choose one winner to appear on the 25th Junior Duck Stamp. Judges will also choose a winning conservation message, and second and third place artwork. Proceeds from Junior Duck Stamp sales fund conservation education programs for youth. Outreach is planned.

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. No outreach is planned.

### **Marine Mammal Protection Act Actions**

As required by the Marine Mammal Protection Act, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice of the U.S.-Russia Polar Bear Commission's determination to maintain the annual harvest limit for the Alaska-Chukotka polar bear population adopted in 2010. No outreach is planned.

In late April, 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.

### **Other**

In May, FWS will begin work on the Bradford Dam removal project, located on the border of Westerly and Hopkinton, Rhode Island. Following construction of a bypass channel, in-river work to remove the dam will start in July. The project is supported by federal funding for Hurricane Sandy recovery. The work will restore fish passage and natural river flow to 31 miles of the Pawcatuck River and protect local communities from risks of flooding and dam failure.

Outreach is planned.

## **National Park Service**

On April 5, Morristown National Historical Park will distribute a newsletter on the progress and next steps for the park's Vegetation and Deer Management Planning process. The newsletter will announce the change in the National Environmental Protection Act pathway from an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to an Environmental Assessment (EA) due to the NPS finding that none of the alternatives considered have the potential to result in significant adverse environmental impacts.

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 a NPS handbook, *World War I Remembered*, for publication in early April.

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 new subsistence regulation, 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 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.

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.

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 within close proximity 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 and NPS are expected to attend.

On or about April 20, the NPS will open the public comment on an updated draft edition of National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural

Properties and the new, “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 International Peace Park (established in 1932). The Canadian government may participate in the announcement; this year marks Canada's national 150<sup>th</sup> 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 NPS will host a ceremony for the reopening and rededication of the Poplar Grove National Cemetery at Petersburg National Battlefield, Virginia. The ceremony will include participation by 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.

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.

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, Lieutenant Governor Reeves, and Secretary of State Hoseman.

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

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 Energy and Economic Development has organized the first-ever conference of Native American owned banks, which will take place in Scottsdale, Arizona on May 18-19 at the Salt River Pima – Maricopa Tribe’s Courtyard by Marriott. DCI Zone Managers will participate in breakout sessions, and Federal Reserve and Office of the Comptroller of the Currency representatives will be on hand to help attendees understand the benefits and advantages of DCI Loan Guarantee and Insurance program.

**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):** On Friday, December 9, 2016, the Department published the advance notice of proposed rulemaking to solicit comments on potential regulatory revisions to the Indian Trader regulations (25 CFR part 140) and announced Tribal consultation for February and March 2017. A notice with details on the venues for Tribal consultations was published in the Federal Register February 8. The last of a series of Tribal consultations held throughout the country was held on March 16. The comment period ends on April 10, 2017. If this rule is revised, revisions 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.

***Federal Register Notices Expected to Be Ready for OS Review***

- **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.
- **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.
- **Paperwork Reduction Act Notices (60-Day Notices of Renewals/Revisions of Information Collection Requests):**
  - IDEA Part B/Part C Child Count (OMB Control No. 1076-0176)
  - Haskell and SIPI Application Form (OMB Control No. 1076-0114)
  - Financial Assistance and Social Services (OMB Control No. 1076-0117)

**Office of the Special Trustee for American Indian (OST)**

- April 5-8: 42<sup>nd</sup> 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 April 3 - 7 and 10 - 12, Rich Estabrook, a Petroleum Engineer with the BLM's Division of Energy, Minerals and Realty Management, will participate in public/industry outreach meetings to answer questions on Onshore Orders 3, 4 and 5 in Salt Lake City, UT, Billings, MT, and Roswell and Farmington, NM.

On April 4, the 30-day public scoping period ends for the EA on BLM-WY proposed wild horse gathers 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 achieve Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) for the three HMAs in order to comply with a 2013 Consent Decree that was entered in *Rock Springs Grazing Association v. Salazar*. An estimated 1,029 wild horses will be removed. The proposed gather is expected to take place in the fall of 2017.

On April 4, BLM-OR Northwest District staff will participate in "Rural Oregon Day." This event is sponsored by the Oregon Rural Development Council. The attendees will be statewide elected officials and rural stakeholders. One of the goals of the event is raise awareness for BLM programs and how the BLM contributes to the State's rural economy.

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 7, OSMRE Mid-Continent Region plans to make available the Farrell-Cooper Mining Company's Bull Hill #2 mine (OK) draft EA and unsigned Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). OSMRE will receive comments on the EA for 30 days. This is a new mine plan for a surface mine that will employ approximately 34 people. The mine plan estimates production of 192,000 tons of Federal coal per year at the mine.

On April 8, OSMRE Western Region (WR) plans to publish in local newspapers a Notice of Availability for the Bridger Mine (WY) Mining Plan Modification Draft EA. 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 it will produce 6.4 million tons of Federal coal per year at the Mine.

On April 8, 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, that employs 82 people. The mine plan estimates production of 6 million tons of Federal coal per year at the Mine.

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 for 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. Mr. Richardson routinely works with universities to provide Federal insights on wildland fire operations and fire use.

On April 13, BOEM plans to hold a public meeting in San Luis Obispo County 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. An additional meeting is planned with the California Fish and Game Commission on April 27.

On April 13, BLM-OR Northwest District will host a public meeting in Springfield to obtain comments on the Thurston Hills Non-Motorized Trails and Forest Management Project. Developed in partnership with OR's Willamalane Park and Recreation District, this project proposes fuels reduction treatments that may reduce the threat of wildfire in the wildland-urban interface and improve habitat conditions for fire-dependent species. Actions considered include burning of meadows; under burning stands that include oak or ponderosa pine; conifer pruning; thinning of small-diameter conifers; piling and burning of slash; removal of small-diameter material for biomass; and mastication of brush and slash.

In mid-April, BLM-NV plans to issue the final Dixie Meadows Geothermal Project EA and 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 18, BLM plans to issue the Boardman to Hemingway Record of Decision (ROD). The BLM received the Biological Opinion on February 28 from the National Marine Fisheries Service. BLM-OR land use plan amendments are being handled concurrently and the decision

will be issued simultaneously with the ROD for the EIS and approval to issue a right-of-way grant. The ROD will be set up for ASLM approval and will be submitted in advance for review.

On April 18 - 20, the Society for Petroleum Engineers will hold its Health, Safety, Environment, & Social Responsibility Conference in New Orleans, LA. The purpose of this conference is to bring together experts from industry, government, and academia to share insights about health, safety, security, and environmental challenges facing oil and gas exploration and production. BOEM Gulf of Mexico Regional Director Celata will speak at the Conference.

On April 19 - 21, BOEM will participate in the 2017 International Offshore Wind Partnering Forum (IPF) in Annapolis, MD. The purpose of the IPF is to bring together offshore wind experts and leaders to develop relationships that drive innovation in the U.S. offshore wind industry. BOEM's Office of Renewable Energy Programs will participate in several panel discussions and Acting Director Cruickshank will speak at this event.

On April 20, BLM will begin requiring the oil and gas industry to comply with its rule requiring online filing of permits for oil and gas drilling. The rule, which updates Onshore Order 1, became effective on March 21. The BLM will continue to work with industry to address compliance questions and concerns.

On April 20 - 23, BOEM will participate in the 2017 National Ocean Sciences Bowl (NOSB) in Corvallis, OR. The purpose of NOSB is to bring together a diverse group of several hundred high school students for finals competition. This event is co-sponsored by BOEM, BSEE, NOAA, NASA, and the Office of Naval Research, Science and Technology, among others.

On April 21, BLM and "fishingcommunity.org" (FCO) will co-host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fletcher's Boathouse Shad Fishing Gala in Washington, D.C. This fishing event, which is designed for disabled, wounded, and injured veterans and their families, is part of the BLM/FCO Fisheries for Veterans Project. The Project uses America's public lands and fishing resources to revitalize and reconnect American communities and heroes. Fisheries for Veterans Project activities are free of charge and open to all veterans and their family members.

On April 21 - 23, BLM-OR Burns District will participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual High Desert Horse Expo, OR's largest equine event. The event will feature over 125 booths, clinicians, demonstrations, educational workshops and competitions.

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.

On April 28, BOEM Plans to publish the List of Restricted Joint Bidders in the *Federal Register* for the period from May 1, 2017, through October 31, 2017. Pursuant to its regulations, BOEM is required to publish semi-annually a list of entities restricted from bidding jointly with any

other entities on the List in Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas lease sales.

In late April, OSMRE 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. Following the OTC, on May 5, BSEE will hold its annual International Standards Workshop in Houston, TX. 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.

On 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, OH.

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.

By May 22, BOEM plans to publish the Final Notice of Sale for Cook Inlet Sale 244 in the *Federal Register*. The proposed sale is scheduled to occur on June 21 in Anchorage, AK.

## **Assistant Secretary Policy, Management and Budget**

**FY 2018 Budget.** The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is targeting mid-May for the release of detailed budget submissions to Congress. The Office of Budget (POB) will continue to finalize all detailed funding levels through Departmental leadership and OMB.

**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, 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.

**Paris Auction of Native Hawaiian Cultural Heritage, April 5-7, 2017.** Another Paris auction of numerous Native Hawaiian items will be held. Office of International Affairs (OIA) is coordinating with DOI's Office of Native Hawaiian Relations and the State Department to review the provenance and sensitivity for Native Hawaiians of the items, and plan options for U.S. government support if and when Native Hawaiian organizations seek to engage.

**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.

**U.S. Border Security Infrastructure Planning, April 11-19, 2017.** DOI Interagency Borderlands Coordinator Jon Andrew will attend Borderland Management Task Force Meetings in South Texas and San Diego and coordinate with U.S. Border Patrol on tactical border security infrastructure planning.

**International Conference on Arctic Science, Reston, VA, April 24-27, 2017.** The conference is organized by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP), one of six Working Groups of the Arctic Council and will bring together a diversity of experts across the circumpolar Arctic to discuss how Arctic science is being translated into action. Office of Policy Analysis (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, 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).

**Association of Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) Conference, Dallas, TX, May 8-12, 2017.** Office of Aviation Services (OAS) Director Mark Bathrick will serve as the government representative on a *Remote Sensing for Commercial and Government Operations* panel at this annual conference. AUVSI represents more than 8,100 individual members and 600 corporate members from 60+ countries involved in the fields of government, industry and academia, with a typical annual attendance exceeding 7,000 attendees.

### **New Government Accountability Office (GAO) Audits**

**Gun Safety and Public Health (Job Code 100898).** Per request from Ranking Member Patty Murray of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and Senators Tammy Baldwin, Richard Blumenthal, Sherrod Brown, Benjamin Cardin, Thomas Carper,

Richard Durbin, Dianne Feinstein, Kirsten Gillibrand, Mazie Hirono, Tim Kaine, Edward Markey, Robert Menendez, Christopher Murphy, Jack Reed, Charles Schumer, Elizabeth Warren, Sheldon Whitehouse, and Ron Wyden, GAO will review: (1) public and nonprofit programs that promote the safe storage of personal firearms at the national and local levels; and (2) safe storage programs. The entrance conference has not been scheduled.

**U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) (Job Code: 101810).** Per request from Representative Chaffetz, GAO will review: (1) process U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) uses to award grants under the WSFR program; (2) processes in place to govern WSFR grants; and (3) oversight challenges within the WSFR program. The entrance conference has not been scheduled.

### **GAO Entrance Conferences**

**Long Island Sound Restoration Efforts (Job Code 101350).** Per request by the Chair and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, GAO will review: (1) roles of Federal, state, and other groups in restoring the Long Island Sound; (2) Federal funds spent to date; and (3) progress in restoring the Long Island Sound and work remaining. The entrance conference with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services and U.S. Geological Survey staff was March 16.

### **GAO Exit Conference/Pending Reports**

**Security on the National Mall (100800).** Per request from Ranking Member Bennie Thompson of the House Committee on Homeland Security, GAO reviewed: (1) the facility security protection responsibilities of the Federal agencies which protect Federal employees and the visiting public on the National Mall; (2) whether these agencies follow Interagency Security Committee standards, such as undertaking risk assessments to develop baseline facility protection countermeasures; and (3) the extent to which these agencies implemented countermeasures that result from risk assessments. The entrance conference with the Office of Law Enforcement and Security (OLES) and the U.S. Park Police was March 14.

**CIO Certification of Incremental Development for Major IT Investments (101036).** Per request from the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and its Subcommittees on Information Technology and Government Operations, GAO reviewed: (1) agencies' reported use of Information Technology incremental development and the factors affecting delivery rates; and (2) agencies' policies and procedures for the Chief Information Officer certification of incremental development in accordance with the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act. The exit with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) was March 15.

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

**Federally Owned Vehicles: Agencies Should Improve Processes to Identify Underutilized Vehicles (GAO-17-429).** Per request from The Honorable Jason Chaffetz Chairman, The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight and Government

Reform House of Representatives, GAO analyzed government-wide data on light trucks and passenger vehicles purchased through the General Services Administration (GSA) from fiscal years 2011 through 2015. GAO issued the draft report on March 10, 2017, with recommendations to the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol and the U.S. Department of Agriculture with limited mention of the Department in the draft report. Comments, if any, are due to GAO on April 3.

### **Office of Inspector General (OIG) Entrance Conferences**

**Verification Review (Assignment No. 2017-EAU-033) - BIA Needs Sweeping Changes to Manage the Osage Nation's Energy Resources (CR-EV-BIA-0003-2013).** The OIG will verify implementation of nine recommendations (1, 3, 6, 9, 14, 16, 17, 18, and 21) made in the evaluation report issued October 2014. The purpose of this engagement is to determine whether actions taken to remediate the conditions identified in the report were sufficient to close the recommendations. The entrance was held on March 14.

**Inspection of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Compliance with IPERA for FY 2016 (Assignment No: 2017-FIN-036).** The OIG initiated an inspection of the Department's compliance with the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act (IPERA) for FY 2016. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular No. A-123, Appendix C, *Requirements for Effective Estimation and Remediation of Improper Payments*, requires that each Agency OIG review the improper payment reporting in its annual Agency Financial Report to determine compliance with IPERA. The entrance was held on March 14 with staff of the Office of Financial Management (PFM).

### **OIG Exit Conference/Pending Reports**

**Evaluation of Health, Safety and Security at U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) TRIGA Reactor Lab (Assignment 2016-WR-076).** The OIG evaluated health, safety, and security issues at the USGS Training, Research, Isotopes, and General Atomics (TRIGA) Reactor Lab located in Lakewood, Colorado. The evaluation was performed to determine: (1) whether USGS manages the TRIGA reactor and related facilities in accordance with established health and safety regulations and best practices; (2) USGS' compliance with Federal security clearance requirements for accessing the TRIGA reactor and related facilities; and (3) the security threat or risk of any unauthorized access to the facilities. The exit conference was March 16.

### **Rules and Regulations for Publication in 2017**

**Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Consolidated Federal Oil & Gas and Federal & Indian Coal Valuation Reform.** The Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR) published the Consolidated Federal Oil & Gas and Federal & Indian Coal Valuation Reform final rule (2017 Valuation Rule) on July 1, 2016, effective January 1, 2017. On December 29, 2016, industry filed three lawsuits challenging the 2017 Valuation Rule. ONRR stayed the Rule via Federal Register Notice (82 FR 11823) on February 27, 2017, pending resolution of the court proceedings. Subsequently, on March 14, 2017, three public interest groups filed motions in Wyoming Federal District Court to intervene in the litigation brought by industry on behalf of

the Department of Interior.

In the next two weeks, ONRR plans to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeking comments from stakeholders and interested parties on potentially repealing the 2017 Valuation Rule. ONRR will simultaneously publish an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeking comments regarding the valuation provisions in the 2017 Valuation Rule, in the event that the rule is retained, and regarding possible changes to the regulations in place prior to the 2017 Valuation Rule, in the event that the 2017 Valuation Rule is repealed. Because the 2017 Rule and the two upcoming Notices affect Tribes with coal production, ONRR is proactively seeking comments on the Notices from affected Tribes, and will conduct formal Tribal Consultation where requested. Both Notices give commenters 30 days to submit comments. Executive Secretariat (Exec Sec) is working with the Office of Management (OMB) and the Office of the Solicitor (SOL) on next steps.

### **Assistant Secretary for Water and Science**

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.

On April 4, USGS will host a briefing at the Capitol about research and collaboration to address harmful algal blooms (HABs). The briefing, sponsored by Representatives Marcy Kaptur and David Joyce, will include speakers from the USGS, NOAA and Suez North America, an American water service company, discussing regional collaboration on HABs research, early detection and mitigation and the economic impacts of HAB outbreaks. The briefing will be held at 3:00 p.m. in the Capitol, room HC-8.

On April 4, 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 early 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 was completed in the 1960s and has served as the primary source of information on the national distribution of brackish groundwater. 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 mid-April, Reclamation will launch two prize competitions. These competitions invite problem solvers to develop new or improved methods and applications. During this round, one competition will look at corrosion of infrastructure in the field and the other is for development of a data app for the consistent collection of information in the field. Videos describing the competitions are prepared and will be used in the launch.

In the coming weeks, 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 the coming weeks, 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 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.

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 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.

### **Office of Insular Affairs**

On April 3, AS-IN Nikolao Pula will travel to San Francisco for four semi-annual meetings with representatives of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands:

- Joint Economic Management Committee (JEMCO), which analyzes and considers the spending of Compact of Free Association funds in the Federated States of Micronesia - 1½ days.
- Joint Economic Management and Financial Accountability Committee (JEMFAC), which analyzes and considers the spending of Compact of Free Association funds in the Marshall Islands – 1½ days.
- Trust Fund Committee, which makes investment decisions for the Trust Fund for the People of the Federated States of Micronesia. The Trust Fund has an approximate valuation of \$410 million.
- Trust Fund Committee, which makes investment decisions for the Trust Fund for the People of the Marshall Islands. The Trust Fund has an approximate valuation of \$260 million.