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INTERIOR
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DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

TO: White House Cabinet Affairs Communications

FROM: Heather Swift & Megan Bloomgren

SUBJECT: Communications Update

Inquiries

- CNBC, The New Yorker, POLITICO Europe, Argus – REQUEST – Comment on claims made by Senators Cardin and Luger that the U.S. is withdrawing from the international Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). – RESPONSE - "The Department remains committed to the principles and goals of EITI including transparency and good governance of the extractive sectors and are institutionalizing and mainstreaming EITI goals into how the Department manages its revenues. No decision has been made on applying for validation under the EITI standard and the U.S. is not even scheduled to begin the validation process until April of 2018 (per the EITI International Board schedule published regularly). The United States has led the global initiative in providing revenue-related data and information from the extraction of oil, natural gas, coal and other minerals on federal land in an interactive, open-source data portal and regularly engaging with other implementing countries to share our best practices."
- Associated Press, E&E News, Reuters, Bloomberg – REQUEST – Requesting comment on the Trump Administration “allowing” the rusty patched bumble bee to be listed on the endangered species list after the 60 day regulatory review. – RESPONSE - "FWS previously delayed the effective date of the final listing determination for the rusty patched bumble bee under the Endangered Species Act from February 10, 2017 to today (March 21, 2017) to allow for standard review. Fish and Wildlife Service scientists have noted that the brief delay is not expected to have an impact on the conservation of the species since FWS is still developing a recovery plan to guide efforts to bring this species back to what they believe is a healthy and secure condition. We will work with stakeholders to ensure collaborative conservation among landowners, farmers, industry, and developers in the areas where the species is native."

Top Stories

- **AP:** [Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Is Put on Endangered Species List After ...](#)

- **Native Times:** [Tribal group says elimination of Bears Ears would be tragic](#)
- **The Hill:** [Watchdog piles on criticism of offshore drilling regulator](#)
- **Washington Post:** [The endangered listing for the rusty patched bumblebee is finally ...](#)

Top Issues and Accomplishments

- Preparing to support Coal/Climate EOs
- FYIs – The Department will issue press releases this week on the following American Energy activity
 - March 20-23 - DOI will release a number of small coal lease sales in Utah, Ohio, ND.
 - Offshore oil/gas sale
 - Offshore wind energy
- Today the endangered species listing of the Rusty Patched Bumblebee went into effect. The effective date was delayed for the Priebus memo. This was a very controversial delay, DOI is being sued by two environmental groups about it.
- Launching a “*Travels with Z*” blog on our website that is Secretary Zinke’s travel blog going to America’s public lands and his work on the front lines improving land management for multiple use (energy, recreation, conservation, economy)

Daily Clips

Proposed Budget Cuts Receive Bipartisan Pushback.

[Morning Consult](#) (3/21, Fitzpatrick) reports that “lawmakers in both parties are complaining about the energy and environmental agenda laid out in the Trump administration’s budget blueprint last week.” Democrats blasted “a wide array of proposed cuts, while Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) said Republicans would detail their own priorities in due time.” The article notes that Democrats were “more aggressive in criticizing the proposed \$1.5 billion in budget cuts for the Department of the Interior.” According to the article, “twelve Democratic senators sent a letter on Tuesday to President Donald Trump expressing ‘dismay’ at the cuts, which they called ‘deeply disappointing.’” The letter takes aim at “a number of measures, including funding for climate change resiliency, for fighting wildfires in national forests and for the National Park Service.”

The [Great Falls \(MT\) Tribune](#) (3/21) reports that Sen. Jon Tester said, “We have to do better for our rural communities and we have to do better for Montana.” He said that the proposed budget “would hurt Montana’s outdoor economy and the state’s way of life.” Meanwhile, Sen. Steve Daines “said he will push to have some of the proposed cuts restored.” However, Daines “added that the budget also includes positive provisions such as streamlining operations in federal bureaucracy and increased funding for energy development on federal land.”

Trump Under Pressure To Undo Obama National Monument Designations.

[McClatchy](#) (3/21) reports that “powerful Republican congressmen and governors are pressing President Donald Trump to take an unprecedented step: Reverse his predecessor’s creation of several national monuments under” the Antiquities Act. According to the article, “White House officials are reviewing the requests and haven’t yet signaled whether Trump will challenge Obama’s use of the Antiquities Act.” The article notes that “no president has ever attempted such a reversal, and legal experts doubt it could succeed.”

Report: Interior’s Science Centers May Waste Millions On Duplicative Research.

The [Daily Caller](#) (3/21, Bastasch) reports that “science centers that were supposed to be the ‘cornerstone’ of the Department of the Interior’s ‘climate change response strategy’ don’t have the proper controls in place to prevent wasteful spending, according to an internal audit.” The inspector general’s office “found Interior Department’s climate science centers (CSC) and landscape conservation cooperatives (LCC) could be wasting millions of taxpayer dollars on duplicative research grants.” Investigators said “that these science centers did not regularly coordinate research within the Interior Department and did not share their climate data with Climate. Data.Gov as required by federal law.”

Rusty Patched Bumblebee Listed As Endangered.

The [AP](#) (3/21, Flesher) reports that the rusty patched bumblebee on Tuesday “became the first officially endangered bee species in the continental U.S., overcoming objections from some business interests and a last-minute delay ordered by the Trump administration.” Its listing means the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will formulate a recovery plan for returning the species to “a healthy and secure condition,” the U.S. Department of Interior said. It added, “We will work with stakeholders to ensure collaborative conservation among landowners, farmers, industry, and developers in the areas where the species is native.”

Congress Approves Bill To Lift Limits On Hunting In Alaska Refuges.

The [AP](#) (3/21, Daly) reports that Congress has “approved a bill that would allow aerial hunting of grizzly bears and killing of bears and wolves near dens on federal lands in Alaska.” In a 52-47 vote, the Senate “gave final legislative approval Tuesday to a measure that repeals an Obama-era rule on hunting on Alaska’s 16 national wildlife refuges.” The House approved the measure last month, and it now goes to the president.