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**Subject:** Weekly Report to the Secretary - March 30, 2017  
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Good Morning All,

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

Thanks

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Gareth C. Rees

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[Weekly Report to the Secretary 03-30-17](#)

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

**March 30, 2017**

**Office of the Solicitor**

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## **Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks**

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

Nothing to report

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

On April 4, NPS and the U.S. Department of Treasury will host the unveiling of a new quarter featuring Frederick Douglas at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site in Washington, DC. David Motl, Acting Principal Deputy Director of the U.S. Mint, and Acting NPS Director Mike Reynolds will speak during the event at the national park. Washington, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser has also been invited.

In April, FWS will announce \$1.1 billion in revenues generated by the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration and Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration acts to states, territories and District of Columbia. The funding, which supports critical state wildlife conservation and recreation projects throughout the nation, is generated by excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, fishing equipment and motorboat fuels paid by the hunting, shooting, boating and angling industries. Department-level outreach planned.

In early April, FWS plans to announce nearly \$15 million in grants to 40 states for projects to support recreational boating through the 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.

On or around April 1, FWS will notify the public that the sea turtle nesting season is beginning along the Texas coast. Sea turtle nesting season runs from April –July. During that period FWS, the National Park Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and others will coordinate a response when a nesting sea turtle or sea turtle nest is found. NOAA Fisheries, Texas A&M University at Galveston, UT Marine Science Institute's ARK in Port Aransas, and Sea Turtle, Inc. on South Padre Island have often worked together to coordinate the response when a nesting sea turtle or nest is found. Outreach is planned.

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

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

Nothing to report

## **Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

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

FWS is ready to announce 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 98 boat strike mortalities, the highest number of strikes since the previous record of 97 was set in 2009. Consequently, some conservation groups do not want to see the species downlisted even though the action is warranted. Outreach is planned.

In early April, FWS plans to announce 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.

In early April, FWS plans to announce 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 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.

## **National Park Service**

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

On April 4, Acting Director Mike Reynolds will 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**

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.

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 or about April 7, the NPS will release for public review the Wetland Restoration Action Plan and Environmental Assessment (Plan/EA) for Catoctin Mountain Park, Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, and Monocacy National Battlefield. The purpose of the Plan/EA is to provide a comprehensive approach to restoring, enhancing, and/or protecting wetlands, waterways and riparian habitats.

On April 7, 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.

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.

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

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

On April 6-7, Acting AS-IA Black will attend the Federal Bar Association 2017 Indian Law Conference in Phoenix, AZ. He will participate on a panel.

### **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.

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

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

April 3-4: Acting Special Trustee, Deb DuMontier will be at OST Headquarters-West, Albuquerque, NM meeting with staff and hosting a town hall. On April 5-8, attend the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Federal Bar Association Indian Law Conference, Scottsdale, Arizona

### **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 one outstanding item for San Carlos, the "annual audit report to membership," has been provided to OST for review.

## **Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management**

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

Nothing to report.

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

On April 3, the public comment period for the BLM-NV Roadside Fuel Break Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project Programmatic Environmental Assessment will end. The project is intended to construct strategic fuel breaks across the Battle Mountain District to protect critical habitat, community infrastructure, life and property from wildfire. This project has and continues to be coordinated with Eureka, Nye, Esmeralda and Lander Counties as well as other Federal, state, local governments and tribes. The upfront coordination and consultation with these groups has lessened any potential controversy.

On April 3, BLM-NM Acting Deputy State Director for Minerals Michael Gibson will meet with the EPA and NM State Land Office on a proposed NM Land Steward Program for oil and gas operators that would focus on wellbore integrity, and incentivize operators to voluntarily submit related data.

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 Environmental Assessment (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 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, BSEE Acting Director Margaret Schneider is scheduled to attend the quarterly BSEE/US Coast Guard (USCG) Quarterly Principals' Meeting at USCG Headquarters in Washington, DC.

On April 4, BOEM and BSEE staff will attend a meeting of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Advisory Board, which is composed primarily of U.S. petroleum companies at Main Interior. Discussion topics will include the BOEM Five-Year Program, bidding, the U.S.-Mexico Transboundary Agreement, financial assurance, decommissioning cost reporting, BOEM Air Quality Rule, upcoming regulatory activity, environmental impact statements (EIS), Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), Flower Garden Banks Marine Sanctuary, and the National Ocean Policy.

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 Environmental Assessment. Mitigation fees for activities in BLM’s Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone, located north of Las Vegas, will fund the plan, EA, and restoration actions.

On April 4 - 6, BLM-AK State Director Bud Cribley will be the keynote speaker at the “Opportunities to Apply Remote Sensing in Boreal/Arctic Wildfire Management and Science Workshop” at the University of AK in Fairbanks. He will speak about how AK’s resource management agencies can benefit from science. The workshop, sponsored by the AK Fire Science Consortium, will discuss technology for remote sensing of vegetation moisture levels and real-time fire data.

On April 5, the House Natural Resources Federal Lands Subcommittee will hold a hearing on two bills of interest to the BLM: 1) H.R. 497, Santa Ana River Wash Plan Land Exchange Act (Rep. Cook, R-CA-8), which directs a land exchange between the BLM and the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District and lifts certain mining restrictions, and 2) H.R. \_\_, Morley Nelson Snake River Bird of Prey Expansion Act (Rep. Simpson, R-ID-2), which, among its provisions, modifies the boundaries of the conservation area to accommodate a right-of-way for two segments of the Gateway West transmission line. The BLM will not testify at the hearing.

On April 7, BLM-WY Casper Field Office will hold a public open house about the draft Muddy Mountain Coordinated Activity (Recreation) Management Plan, which will include a Natural Area, a Developed Area, and a Multi-Use Trails and Recreation Area. The plan encompasses approximately 1,260 acres in east central WY. As proposed, the Natural Area would be restricted to non-motorized recreational activities, but would include primitive camping, hunting and some commercial outfitting. The trail system inside the Natural Area accommodates hikers, mountain bikers and horseback enthusiasts. The Developed Area is the most popular area as it contains campgrounds and the Muddy Mountain Interpretative Nature Trail. If approved, the use firearms would be prohibited in this area. This plan is located in Natrona County. The congressional delegation is generally supportive and the county, city and recreationists are very interested in the overall management of this area.

On April 7, BLM-UT’s Price Field Office will release for public review and comment an EA that analyzes a recreation management plan for the Joe’s Valley Bouldering Area. The area currently lacks activity-level planning to manage recreation use, which is predominantly bouldering, camping, and hiking. The EA is a joint project with the Manti-La Sal National Forest in Central UT.

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 7 - 8, BLM-NM OK Field Office will host a wild horse and burro adoption in Sequin, TX. Pat Williams the BLM NM Wild Horse/Burro Program Lead will attend and be joined by other BLM staff. Approximately 35 horses and five burros will be available for adoption.

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.

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

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

- Who: DOI Office of Policy Analysis (PPA)
- What: Economics Conference
- When: April 5-8, 2017
- Where: Washington, DC
- Press: Closed
- Topic: The conference 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.
- Who: Office of Aviation Services (OAS), Director Bathrick
- What: Association of Unmanned Vehicle Systems International Northwest Drones and Robotics Conference
- When: April 6-7, 2017
- Where: Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA
- Press: Closed
- Topic: Director Bathrick will deliver the keynote address: "A Playbook for Success Lessons from the Drone Frontier." His presentation will chronicle DOI's ascendancy on the frontier of drone applications in domestic government use to a recognized leader in government drone program management and applications.

#### **Congressional Travel (Tentative)**

- Who: Senate Appropriations Staff Leif Foncesbeck and Chris Tomassi
- What: Site Visit to US Geological Survey (USGS) & Fish and Wildlife Sites (FWS) sites in Starkville, Mississippi
- When: April 6 -9, 2017
- Where: Starkville, MS
- Press: Not applicable
- Topics: USGS Cooperative Research Units and FWS Refuges
- Hearings: Not applicable

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

**Royalty Policy Committee.** The Federal Register Notice, announcing that the U.S. Department of the Interior is establishing and seeking nominations for the Royalty Policy Committee (Committee), is likely to be published during the week of April 2, 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. The Charter is currently with the Department's Executive Secretariat for pre-processing.

**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.

**Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting (CEAR).** The Department has won the CEAR Award for the 15<sup>th</sup> year which is awarded to Agencies which have submitted their annual Agency Financial Report and passed stringent review criteria. The Department will receive the award on May 24, 2017 at the JW Marriott in Washington, D.C., at the National Press Club. The Secretary and Acting IG will receive formal notices of the award from the Association of Government Accountants (AGA).

**Internal Control and Audit Follow-up.** The Department has an annual goal of closing 85 percent of corrective actions scheduled for closure in the current FY to address issues raised in Office of Inspector General (OIG) and Government Accountability Office (GAO) engagements. As of March 24, 2017, the Department has closed 22 percent of open audit recommendations scheduled for closure in FY 2017.

**Year 2017 Small Business Accomplishments to Date:** As of March 23, 2017, the Department has awarded 51.40% 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 22.42% of its contract award dollars to small disadvantaged businesses and 14.86% of its contract award dollars to women-owned small businesses, exceeding the statutory goal of 5% for each. The Department awarded 2.52% of its contract award dollars to historically underutilized business zone small businesses and 3.43% of its contract award dollars to service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses. The statutory goal is 3% for each of these categories.

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

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

Acting PDAS/WS Kerry Rae and Special Assistant Scott Cameron will be in Washington, DC, participating in routine internal briefings. Kerry will co-chair a meeting of the Alaska Mapping Executive Committee at DOI on April 4. Scott will speak to a Western Urban Water Coalition meeting on April 6.

Scott Cameron will be coordinating on a weekly basis with an inside team of DOI bureaus and offices, an external team of other federal agency representatives from the National Invasive Species Council, and the Western Governors Association, in connection with the Secretary's June 2017 meeting with WGA in Whitefish, Montana, to discuss concrete state/federal actions to prevent zebra mussels from invading the Columbia River Basin.

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

On April 3, Reclamation will respond to Oregon Wild's 60-day Notice of Intent to Sue (NOI), received February 24, 2017. The NOI alleges that insufficient Lost River flows resulted in six killed and 20 stranded endangered suckers below Anderson Rose Dam in the spring of 2016. The response will be coordinated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Solicitor's Office. In addition to the letter, Reclamation may meet with Oregon Wild's officials in early April to negotiate a pre-agreement before litigation. Reclamation received a similar NOI from Oregon Wild in early 2016 and was able, through a letter and follow-up meeting, to prevent Oregon Wild from pursuing litigation. Media interest is not expected.

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.

The District Court of Montana has tentatively set a hearing date of April 5 in Great Falls on the United States' motion to dismiss and dissolve the preliminary injunction halting construction of the Lower Yellowstone Bypass Channel. The Bypass Channel best meets the purpose and need of improving pallid sturgeon fish passage and ecosystem restoration while continuing viable and effective operations of Reclamation's Lower Yellowstone Project.

During the first week of April, FEMA will release a report on estimated annual losses from



earthquakes in the United States. USGS data on earthquake hazards was used as a basis for this analysis. The last report was published in 2008 and the new estimate incorporates the most recent USGS earthquake hazard maps. USGS will work with FEMA on coordinated outreach on the report.

In early April, USGS is planning to release an assessment of continuous oil and gas resources in the Bossier and Haynesville Formations. The Bossier and Haynesville formations are some of the most productive natural gas fields in the United States. They lie underneath parishes of northwestern Louisiana and counties of northeastern Texas. Many of their resources require production techniques like hydraulic fracturing and directional drilling to produce. A news release is planned.

## **Office of Insular Affairs**

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

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.
- Joint Economic Management and Financial Accountability Committee (JEMFAC), which analyzes and considers the spending of Compact of Free Association funds in the Marshall Islands.
- 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.

### **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 13, FWS, NOAA and the State of Hawaii (Department of Land and Natural Resources and Office of Hawaiian Affairs) will highlight the value of partnership for conservation in Hawaii and the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument through a marine debris media event. The agencies are working together to remove tons of marine debris from Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial, Kure Atoll State Wildlife Sanctuary, and other atolls and islands in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. The marine debris event in Honolulu will be an opportunity to invite, media, partners, and congressional staff to walk through the tons of debris and interview agency spokespeople about what it takes to take care of public lands in the remote Pacific. The partners have expressed interest in inviting the congressional delegation to participate, in addition to congressional staff. Outreach is planned.

In mid-April, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park fire assessment review will be released. In February, a team of fire experts (federal and state) 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. The NPS has received tort claims related to this incident and expects additional lawsuits in the near future.

In mid-April, the NPS will announce the establishment and status of work of an independent review team commissioned to evaluate any impact the use of personal email by NPS staff may have had on the planning and rulemaking process for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Dog Management Plan. In the course of the planning and rulemaking process, questions arose concerning whether NPS staff may have used personal email to assist external stakeholders in submitting comments on the plan. The evaluation is being conducted by an independent and impartial team of three non-NPS federal agency employees with expertise in environmental planning and review, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and rulemaking procedures. The review team has not yet determined any findings or conclusions, and dog management planning – a long-standing controversial issue in the San Francisco area – is on hold pending the results of this review.

In late April, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final rule removing gray wolves in Wyoming from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife. Pursuant to the

favorable decision by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals reversing a prior judgment vacating FWS' September 10, 2012 final delisting rule, FWS will need to publish a final rule again to remove the gray wolf in Wyoming from the List. If plaintiffs do not move for rehearing, the target date for submitting to the *Federal Register* is April 24. Outreach is planned.

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

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

### **Asian carp**

From April 17 through 26, 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 non-federal) 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**

In April, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice initiating a NEPA evaluation of potential revisions to the existing nonessential experimental population designation of red wolves in North Carolina. This notice announces our intention to revise the experimental population rule and the initiation of a public scoping process to identify issues and concerns,

potential impacts, and possible alternatives to the proposed action. Outreach is planned.

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**

In mid-April, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a 12-month finding on a petition to list the San Felipe gambusia, a Texas fish. 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. As part of this batched finding, FWS is publishing a correction to the 90-day finding for leopards which clarifies the range and the entity FWS is evaluating in its status review. Outreach is planned.

In late April, FWS will reopen the comment period on 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.

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

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.

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.

In early May, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to designate 463.5 river miles of critical habitat for the Texas hornshell in New Mexico and Texas.

In early May, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to designate 12.28 acres (4.97 hectares) in one unit as critical habitat for the Sonoyta mud turtle in Arizona.

### **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.

Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM) has requested an opportunity to watch members of FWS' partner Rocky Mountain Youth Corps in action. The demonstration is tentatively planned to occur either April 18 or 19, on Valle de Oro NWR outside of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Through FWS, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps has recruited several youth ambassadors whose mission is to inspire their community to learn about, and get out and appreciate, the wealth of public lands and recreation opportunities that the Middle Rio Grande region has to offer. The Senator is an Americorp alum and will be meeting with this graduating class. They will likely be engaged in a restoration or conservation activity.

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. Of interest to Senator Heinrich (D-NM) and Representative Michelle Lujan-Grisham (D-NM-1) and potentially to Senator Udall (D-NM).

### **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 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.

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 11-14, the Cape Krusenstern National Monument and Kobuk Valley National Park subsistence resource commissions will meet at the Northwest Arctic Heritage Center in Kotzebue, Alaska. The commissions develop and make recommendations on the subsistence program to NPS-Alaska and the DOI Secretary, and are authorized under Title VIII, Section 808, of the Alaska Lands Act, PL 96-487. The meetings are open to the public and typically have little media attention.

On April 12, Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) will visit Appomattox Court House National Historical Park for a courtesy visit. He will tour the park and receive updates on park projects and issues since the 150th anniversary of the surrender; he will also be briefed on deferred maintenance issues.

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 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 16, a NPS ranger (individual still to be determined) will throw out the first pitch at the Seattle Mariners home game at SAFECO Field. Five Junior Rangers will also take the field for the ceremonial first pitch of National Parks Day. General information about the NPS, sites in Washington State, and Every Kid in a Park will also be provided.



On April 17, the NPS will release for public review the White-tailed Deer Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (Plan/EA) for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The purpose of the Plan/EA is to manage white-tailed deer populations and to reduce the threat of Chronic Wasting Disease in deer using integrated tools and strategies. The alternatives include use of sharpshooters by park staff or contractors and limited capture and euthanasia.

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 19, after the 90-day evacuation notice period has expired and if the leaseholder has not removed their property, the Blue Ridge Parkway will work through the US Attorney's office in Roanoke and the federal court system to vacate a Blue Ridge Parkway Agricultural Leaseholder at mile post 149 in an area known as Hodges Farm. For several years, Parkway managers have been aware of and actively addressing issues related to deficiencies with on-site barn structures and the health and condition of horses boarded at this location. Over the last decade, the NPS and Floyd County Animal Control Office, Roanoke Valley Horse Rescue and others have documented concerns regarding the condition of the farm and the health of the animals, including fire hazards, structural issues. Poor conditions resulted in the euthanizing of two horses. A series of steps, including inspections and correspondence outlining terms to correct the conditions, have taken place in the past year in close cooperation with the Solicitor's Office and other local and state agencies. In mid-September, the Solicitor's Office issued a letter to the leaseholders stating that negotiations were ending based on the prolonged period of inactivity or unwillingness to meet required conditions in order to maintain the lease. In December 2016, a new series of animal welfare complaints were received; through a site visit of the barns and property, the NPS confirmed the worsening conditions. The evacuation notice was sent on January 19. Evacuation procedures would include enforcing applicable trespass laws and removing the property from the agricultural lease program. The NPS will have assistance and support from Roanoke Valley Horse Rescue in this process. Actions related to this have raised very minimal media attention and the congressional delegation has expressed general support.

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.

From April 28-30, Manzanar National Historic Site will host the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Manzanar Pilgrimage Weekend in partnership with the Manzanar Committee. In 1942 the U.S. Army leased 6,200 acres at Manzanar from Los Angeles to establish a center to hold Japanese Americans during World War II. 2017 marks the 75th Anniversary of Executive Order 9066, which ordered the Japanese internment; it is also the 25th anniversary of Congress establishing this park. Expected attendance at the event will be over 2,000 visitors with media coverage by Al Jazeera and Japanese television (NHK) and network affiliates from CA and NV. As part of the event, Manzanar National Historic Site will host its second annual Naturalization Ceremony with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Additional media interest is anticipated closer to the event.

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.

In late April, 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 April, 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 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.

On May 4, Lava Beds National Monument will be hosting a visit for staff of Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) including meetings with Discover Klamath and Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway, two local area organizations that support a proposed change to the park's name to Lava

Beds National Park. These organizations have committed to building strong local and regional support to encourage Senator Feinstein in sponsoring legislation that would elevate Lava Beds to park status.

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.

- **Pueblo of Santa Clara Liquor Ordinance; Amendments:** This notice announces that BIA certifies that the Tribe has amended its liquor control ordinance.
- **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 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 registered to attend)
- 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**

During the week of April 10, OSMRE expects to submit Canyon Fuel Company’s Skyline Mine Mining Plan Decision Documents to the ASLM for review and approval. This is an underground coal mine in Carbon and Emery Counties, Utah, which employs approximately 320 people. The mine plan estimates production of 3 to 4.5 million tons per year at the mine.

On April 10 - 11, the National Academy of Science, 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, DC. 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 12-13 House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee member Rep. Amodei (R-NV-2) and Ranking Member Rep. McCollum (D-MN-4) will visit BLM-NV offices in Reno and Winnemucca to discuss wild horses and burros, and fire rehabilitation.

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 under consideration 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, at the request of the House Natural Resources Federal Lands Subcommittee, the BLM/DOI, DoD, House Armed Services Committee, and House Natural Resources majority and minority staff will meet to discuss the military land withdrawal process. Topics will include an overview of current military land withdrawals and how they are used; upcoming renewals/expansions involving the DOD; DOD perspective on the current withdrawal process, including opportunities and challenges; and ideas on how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the process, while balancing military requirements with oversight, review, and environmental stewardship.

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 - 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 24 - 28, BLM-WY State Director Mary Jo Rugwell plans to conduct courtesy visits with members and staff of the WY congressional delegation in Washington, DC, to discuss public land management issues in the State, including oil and gas development, wild horses, coal and trona mining, Greater sage-grouse, and the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative.

On April 24 - 28, BLM-CO State Director Ruth Welch plans to conduct courtesy visits with members and staff of the Colorado congressional delegation in Washington, DC, to discuss public land management issues in the State, including oil and gas development, wild horses, coal, volunteer and youth partnerships, resource management planning, and partnerships at Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, Browns Canyon National Monument and the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area.

On April 26, BLM plans to issue the Boardman to Hemingway Record of Decision. 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 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 26, 2017, BSEE Headquarters and Gulf of Mexico and Pacific Regions are scheduled to receive a briefing on Predictive Pipeline Fault Analytics at MIB. The briefing will be given by representatives from Deloitte.

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.

In late April, OSMRE WR plans to submit a mine plan modification for Twentymile Coal Company's Foidel Creek Mine. This is a mining plan modification for a surface coal mine located in Routt County, CO, which is expected to produce approximately 3 million tons of coal per year, and employ 320 people.

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.

On May 5, the BLM-NV project proposal submission period will close for Southern NV Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) Round 17 project proposals. Local governmental entities may seek SNPLMA funds for parks, trails, and natural areas in portions of Carson City, Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine counties. Federal agencies may seek funds for capital improvements,



conservation initiatives and restoration projects in eastern NV. Federal, State and other agencies may seek SNPLMA funds for hazardous fuels reduction in the Lake Tahoe Basin, the Carson Range and the Spring Mountain Range. Federal agencies may seek funding for acquisition of environmentally sensitive land statewide.

From May 6 - June 3, BLM-AK is expecting planned intermittent maintenance shutdowns to the 800-mile Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. Several short-duration shutdowns throughout the summer are also expected, with an “emergency shutdown” test in September. BLM-AK’s Branch of Pipeline Monitoring will be on hand to observe the tests and repairs by pipeline manager Alyeska Pipeline Service Company.

On May 15 - 19, BLM-NV State Director John Ruhs plans to conduct courtesy visits with members and staff of the NV congressional delegation in Washington, DC, to discuss public land management issues in the State, including energy development, grazing and rangeland health issues, mining, the wild horse and burro program, fire management and special legislation implementation.

In mid-May, BLM-UT anticipates issuing a Decision Record (DR) on an EA concerning mixed trail use in the Recapture Canyon area, located east of Blanding in San Juan County. The DR 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**

**Policy Coordination Meeting.** The Office of International Affairs (OIA) will continue to represent DOI in a series of upcoming classified Policy Coordination Committee (PCC) meetings on Cuba, hosted by the National Security Council (NSC). The purpose of these interagency meetings is to develop a recommendation to NSC regarding the USG’s current contact policy with Cuba. DOI engages with Cuba on a number of topics including conservation of marine and terrestrial protected areas, natural hazards, and potential impacts from development of offshore oil and gas resources.

**U.S. Border Security Infrastructure Planning, South Texas, April 5-6, 2017.** Interagency Borderlands Coordinator Jon Andrew will attend Borderland Management Task Force Meetings in South Texas and coordinate with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Border Patrol on tactical border security infrastructure planning.

**U.S. Border Security Infrastructure Planning, Southern California, April 11-12, 2017.** Interagency Borderlands Coordinator Jon Andrew will attend Borderland Management Task Force Meetings in Southern California and coordinate with Bureau of Land Management (BLM),

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and U.S. Border Patrol on tactical border security infrastructure planning.

**2017 Earth Day Celebration, Rawlins Park (in front of the Main Interior Building, E Street), April 19, 2017.** The Department of the Interior, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the General Services Administration (GSA) will hold the 2017 Earth Day Celebration in Rawlins Park on April 19, 2017 (Rain Date: April 20) from 11:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M. This year's theme is "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle." There will be a truck to collect and recycle personal computers and electronic equipment.

**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.

**UCLA Indian Data Governance Workshop, Los Angeles, CA, May 18-19, 2017.** The Office of Policy Analysis (PPA) is working with UCLA and others to develop an agenda and invitation list for a workshop to address Indian data issues.

#### **Government Accountability Office (GAO) Entrance Conferences**

**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) the process Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) uses to award grants under the WSFR program; (2) the processes in place to oversee grants awarded under the WSFR program; and (3) the oversight challenges within the WSFR program. The entrance was held on March 20.

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

**Wildland Fire Risk Reduction: Multiple Factors Affect Federal-Nonfederal Collaboration,**

**but Action Could Be Taken to Better Measure Progress (GAO-17-357).** Per requests from Congressman Peter DeFazio, Ranking Member Raul Grijalva of the House Committee on Natural Resources, and Ranking Member Alan Lowenthal of the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, House Committee on Natural Resources, GAO reviewed the factors that affect the collaboration among Federal and non-Federal stakeholders to reduce wildland fire risk to communities. GAO issued the draft report on March 17, 2017, with recommendations to the Department and the Forest Service to work with the Wildland Fire Leadership Council, the interagency body charged with overseeing and implementing the National Cohesive Wildlife Fire Management Strategy. The Department's comments are due to GAO on April 14.

### **Recent Final GAO Reports**

**National Park Service (NPS): Concessions Program Has Made Changes in Several Areas, but Challenges Remain (GAO-17-302).** Per requests from Senator Murkowski and Senator Enzi, GAO reviewed and identified that the National Park Service (NPS) has taken steps to address the ongoing challenges related to inadequate concessions staff qualifications, contracts under extension, and lack of accountability. GAO issued the final report on March 20, 2017, with three recommendations to the NPS: 1) NPS review and adjust its process to help ensure timely and accurate reporting of financial data from concessioners; 2) finalize its guidance and make it public; and 3) develop performance goals with targets and timeframes in its commercial services strategic plan. The Department's 60-day letter addressing the recommendations are due to GAO and the Congressional requesters by May 19, 2017.

**Oil and Gas Management: Stronger Leadership Commitment Needed at Interior to Improve Offshore Oversight and Internal Management (GAO-17-293).** Per requests from Jason Chaffetz, Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform House of Representatives, Rob Bishop, Chairman, Raúl Grijalva, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources, House of Representatives, and Blake Farenthold, Chairman, Subcommittee on the Interior, Energy, and Environment Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives, GAO examined what efforts the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) leadership has made in implementing key strategic initiatives to improve its offshore safety and environmental oversight and internal management. GAO issued the final report on March 21, 2017, with four recommendations, including that senior Department leadership establish a mechanism for BSEE management to obtain and incorporate input from bureau personnel who can affect the bureau's ability to achieve its objectives; and address leadership commitment deficiencies within BSEE, including the implementation of internal management initiatives and ongoing strategic initiatives in a timely manner. The Department's 60-day letter is due on May 22.

### **Recent Draft Office of Inspector General (OIG) Reports**

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Texas, Texas Parks, and Wildlife Department, From September 1, 2012, Through August 31, 2014 (Report No. 2015-EXT-008).** The OIG found that the State of Texas (state) complied, in general, with applicable grant accounting and regulatory requirements. The OIG questioned costs and discovered funds to put to better use totaling \$1,594,033 due to

improper oversight and procurement practices. The OIG also determined that the state potentially diverted license revenue by transferring \$8.9 million from an account dedicated to the management of fish and wildlife to a deferred maintenance account not protected by the state's Fish and Wildlife Code. Several annual performance reports that the state submitted to the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) were missing key information, and the state did not report its sub-awards for posting on a website designed to promote transparency in Federal spending. The OIG issued the draft report on March 15, 2017, with 24 recommendations. The response is due to the OIG on May 1.

### **Recent Final OIG Reports**

**Climate Effects Program Coordination (Report No. 2015-ER-034).** The Department operates eight Climate Science Centers (CSCs) and 22 Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs). CSCs are managed and funded through USGS, and LCCs through the FWS with several other bureaus in support. The OIG evaluated whether the CSCs and LCCs coordinated their programs and used available tools to prevent duplication of science effort. The OIG reviewed coordination not only within the Department but also throughout the greater scientific community via Climate.Data.gov. The OIG found inadequate policies for coordination of research, inadequate data sharing both within and outside the Department. The OIG issued the final report on March 17, 2017, with three recommendations to coordinate more effectively the research grant programs at the CSCs and LCCs and further share information with Federal, state, local, and private-sector partners.

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

On April 13, Reclamation will launch the Reclamation Water Information System that is a pilot version of a Reclamation-wide system for viewing, accessing, and downloading Reclamation's data via a centralized data portal. Rollout materials are being developed.

In early April, 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 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 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, Acting Assistant Administrator for EPA Office of Water Mike Shapiro will brief OS Appointees Scott Cameron and Ryan Nichols on the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, a

coalition of 14 federal agencies working with communities in 19 cities to restore urban rivers and the lands that surround them.

In April, W&S, USGS, FWS, and NPS will join U.S. EPA and thirteen other federal agencies for its annual executives meeting for the Urban Waters Federal Partnership. The executives will discuss how their respective agencies will continue to support the partnership and its collaborative approach to addressing local community priorities in the 19 cities, as well as determine whether to approach other federal agencies to join UWFP.

In April, 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.

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 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.

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.

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 28, AS-IN Pula expects to attend the Micronesian Chief Executives Summit in Guam to discuss the Compacts of Free Association and prospects after 2023 when U.S. Compact funding terminates.