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From: Rees, Gareth
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[Weekly Report to the Secretary 12%2F28%2F17.docx](#)

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 and Happy New year

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Gareth C. Rees

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Weekly Report to the Secretary 12/28/17

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

December 28, 2017

Office of the Solicitor

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Nothing to report.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

NEW CASES:

Nothing significant to report.

SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS:

(b) (5) ACP
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OTHER LITIGATION MATTERS:

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

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NON-LITIGATION MATTERS:

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(b) (5) ACP [Redacted]
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Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Jason Larrabee will be in the office.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Aurelia Skipwith will be in the office.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

Nothing additional to report.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Greg Sheehan will be on leave 12/26 - 12/29, and will be in the office January 8 - 12.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

Hot Topics

FWS received a court opinion from the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado on October 25, 2016, vacating the FWS withdrawal of a proposal to list the Graham's and White River beardtongues as threatened. The withdrawal was based largely on the implementation of a conservation agreement by land management entities across the range of the beardtongues in Utah and Colorado. The court directed that the parties meet to determine if the conservation agreement could be modified to satisfy the plaintiffs. The parties were unable to reach an agreement and filed a joint status report outlining their respective positions to the court December 15. The plaintiffs proposed a June 1, 2021, deadline for FWS to make a new final determination. FWS does not object to the proposed deadline and anticipates the final determination will be completed within a shorter timeframe in FY 2019.

The proposed Crocker wind farm (South Dakota) requests National Historic Preservation Act consultation, and letters requesting consultation, under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), for the proposed wind farm. The letters are expected to be mailed early next week to 15 Tribes and the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office. The project is located in the Waubay Wetland Management District and proposes to install up to 120 wind turbines and associated facilities. The project area crosses private lands that contain easements held by the FWS. The easements comprise approximately 14% of the anticipated project area. A recent cultural resource survey located one resource, a Euro-American rock pile, within easements lands.

FWS has been exploring the possibility of a partnership with Monsanto, and its subsidiaries, to use modern agriculture data tools to help landowners voluntarily manage their land to enhance pollinator habitat while maximizing production in their fields. Monsanto and FWS are

developing a Memorandum of Understanding to outline how we may be able to work together to: 1) provide accurate and useful information to farmers; 2) analyze data to determine the outcomes of conservation actions and make it easy for landowners to have access to conservation programs should they choose to participate; and 3) to explore the possibilities to use these tools for other cooperative conservation efforts across the country. DOI Solicitor's Office recently approved the MOU. FWS is currently developing a plan for signatures.

National Park Service

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Nothing to report.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

In December, the National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL), in partnership with the Washington Support Office (WASO) Transportation Branch, provided preliminary diagnostic and operational data summaries to WASO, the Intermountain Regional Office, and Zion National Park (ZION) on the Electric Bus Pilot Program operated at ZION from July to September 2017. The park worked with the provider to operate an all-electric, zero emission bus at the park for three months from July to September, 2017. Data also included comparison results from operating three existing propane-powered buses during the same time period. A draft report is being prepared by NREL for further review and discussion no later than the end of January 2018.

On December 18, a tractor-trailer crash on I-70 in Maryland caused a 3,000-gallon motor oil spill that reached Chesapeake and Ohio National Historical Park property. A Maryland Department of the Environment contractor in coordination with the responsible company has initiated cleanup work in a 200-yard section of the canal, at about the 120-mile marker near the Little Pool area, which is expected to take up to two weeks. Park access to this area will be coned off with limited access during cleanup.

The acting Intermountain Regional Office Director and Bureau of Land Management Utah State Director signed the Old Spanish National Historic Trail (NHT) Comprehensive Administration Strategy (CAS). The CAS will provide direction and agreement for joint administration, confirm route alignments, identify high potential sites and segments, and establish the official trail logo for the trail. The plan originally included an Environmental Impact Study, but after extensive evaluation the agencies agreed that a National Environmental Policy Act review was unnecessary. Congressionally designated in 2002, the Old Spanish NHT is jointly administered by the two agencies to commemorate trade and travel between the formerly-Mexican communities of Santa Fe, New Mexico and Los Angeles, California from 1829 to 1848.

On December 13, all backcountry areas within Wind Cave National Park were temporarily closed until further notice due to the Legion Lake fire, which was centered in Custer State Park, South Dakota, and has spread into the eastern side of the national park. Exceptions to the closure include Highways 385 and 87, Beaver Creek Road, associated turnouts, and the immediate area around the visitor center. An emergency closure order has been posted on the park's website and

the park is in coordination with the Great Plains Fire Public Information Group for fire updates. As of December 17 the fire was 54,000 acres and 90% contained.

On December 18, a termination notices for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Dog Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement and proposed rule was sent to the Federal Register. We anticipate it will publish in January 2018, as the Office of the Federal Register returned the notice to NPS for it to be broken into two separate announcements.

On or before December 29, the Blue Ridge Parkway anticipates completing environmental compliance and signing required right-of-way and construction permits for the Mountain Valley Pipeline. The pipeline would traverse both the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. All remaining concerns for the Blue Ridge Parkway under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act have been resolved. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has approved the pipeline project with final decisions by a number of other state and federal agencies still pending.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in coordination with Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA), is preparing a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Chesapeake Bay Crossing Study. The purpose of the Tier I study is to consider multiple corridors for providing additional traffic capacity and access across the Chesapeake Bay. The NPS has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in this project, and the FHWA and MDTA has invited the NPS to become a participating agency in the environmental review process and development of the Tier I EIS. A response from the NPS is due December 31.

In January 2018, the NPS will publish a Federal Register notice announcing that the Department of the Interior (DOI) has authorized the preparation of a World Heritage nomination for the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks in Ohio. With nine component properties including those that form Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, and others managed by the State of Ohio, this series of geometric mounds is approximately 2,000 years old. The nomination file, which will take more than a year to draft, will be developed by local proponents in Ohio with guidance from the NPS. Upon completion and review, the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks will determine whether or not to submit the nomination to the World Heritage Committee.

In late December, depending on Departmental clearance, Golden Gate National Recreation Area will complete the Record of Decision for the Alcatraz Ferry Embarkation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. The selected alternative will rehabilitate historic structures for visitor use and ferry operations at Pier 31½ in San Francisco, supporting a commercial services concession that will begin in 2019. Final approval of a general agreement and associated draft leases for a long-term ferry embarkation site at Pier 31½ is expected in January 2018.

In or after December, the NPS expects to release the final plan/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address the presence of wolves at Isle Royale National Park. The publication of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency NOA of this final plan/EIS in the Federal Register will initiate a 30-day wait period before the Regional Director of the Midwest Region will sign the Record of Decision. The NPS preferred alternative would introduce between 20-30 wolves to the island over a 3-year time period. A decision is needed because the potential absence of wolves raises

concerns about possible effects to the current Isle Royale ecosystem, including effects to both the moose population and forest/vegetation communities. Over the past five years, the wolf population has declined steeply and at this time, natural recovery of the population is unlikely.

On January 1, 2018, the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument will close for 30 days to facilitate a comprehensive structural assessment of the facility. The complete closure of the house is due to the volume of items that will need to be moved to permit access to necessary locations, for measures to address lead paint remediation, and to identify structural data needed to develop proper plans for future architectural and engineering rehabilitation work. Details for announcing the closure are still being worked out.

On January 1, 2018, Golden Gate National Recreation Area is launching a required-reservation system for privately owned vehicles and concessioners at Muir Woods National Monument to improve visitor experience and enhance the protection of park resources. The contract requires the concessioner to make the reservation system accessible on mobile devices. Reservations will be required for all vehicles and shuttle riders beginning January 16.

On January 1, 2018, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park plans to implement a \$10 permit fee to anchor vessels overnight in Aquatic Park Cove using an online reservation through Recreation.gov. This system will provide boaters a convenient way to reserve a mooring in advance of visiting the park. The online registration system and overnight anchoring fee for boats in the Aquatic Park Cove will provide boaters a convenient way to reserve a mooring in advance of visiting the park. It also will allow the park to inform visitors entering the Cove about security issues, swimmer safety requirements, and environmental regulations. Through a comparability study conducted by the park of three different Bay Area sites that offer similar experiences, accessibility and amenities, the analysis showed that the park's present fee anchoring permits are below similar operations, and that even with the fee of \$10, the Aquatic Park Cove will remain one of the most affordable anchoring experiences in the Bay Area. Recreation.gov does not have an app, but its site is mobile responsive.

On January 1, 2018, Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area, in conjunction with the DOI's Aquatic Invasive Species initiative, will implement a Quagga/Zebra mussel-free self-certification program for boaters. The self-certification consists of educational information on the impacts of mussels, how boaters can prevent the transport of these highly invasive species into Lake Roosevelt and the Columbia River system, and a certification that the boat being launched meets launch requirements.

In January 2018, Arches National Park anticipates submitting a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) following the release of the Salt Wash Rehabilitation Project Environmental Assessment (EA) in mid-October 2017. The park is currently preparing the FONSI for Regional Director review. The proposed action will provide for a safer and better visitor experience and improve natural processes by reducing the flooding, sediment deposition, and closure of the Wolfe Ranch/Delicate Arch Viewpoint road, and improve the conveyance of water and sediment in three washes. The FONSI assesses impacts to hydrologic and geomorphologic processes, vegetation, visitor experience, and wilderness character and determines if there will be significant impacts to these resources from the proposed action. During the public comment

period, the park received nine public comment letters calling on the NPS to consider additional alternatives and suggested mitigation measures to manage impacts to wetlands, native vegetation and wildlife. The comments are addressed in the Errata Sheets attached to the FONSI, and resulted in minor changes to the EA. Additionally, the park consulted affiliated Tribes, the public, potential interested parties, and the State Historic Preservation Office during the planning process.

In January or February 2018, pending DOI approval, the NPS anticipates publishing an NOA in the Federal Register for the Draft Management Plan and Draft EIS for Saline Valley Warm Springs (plan/DEIS) in Death Valley National Park. The NOA will initiate a 60-day public comment period on the document during which public meetings will be held in the vicinity of the park. The plan/DEIS analyzes five alternatives for the management of the Saline Valley Warm Springs area, and is intended to provide a framework for natural and cultural resource management, administration and operations, and managing visitor access.

In early January 2018, Phase 2 will begin on the waterline project to upgrade and replace the aging system in and around the National Mall and Memorial Parks. This phase is expected to take approximately one year. Work area will include West Potomac Park, the Washington Monument (WAMO) grounds, Lincoln Memorial, Ash Woods Road, the area between Constitution Gardens and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the recreation fields near the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. A majority of the work will be horizontal drilling, with pits every 500 feet to pull the line; however, there will be open trenching around WAMO.

In early January 2018, Glacier National Park will issue a press release updating the public about the following two topics: (1) the park will announce that the Going-to-the-Sun Road Corridor Management Plan will be released as an Environmental Assessment in the fall of 2018, and (2) the park will announce a likely two-week construction related closure along the Going-to-the-Sun Road in mid-September 2018 due to routine pavement preservation.

On or about January 2, 2018, the NPS will distribute to parks approved FY 2018 financial support under the Helium Stewardship Act of 2013, which provides federal support to public-private partnership cost sharing projects for deferred maintenance and to correct deficiencies in the NPS infrastructure. Twenty-nine park projects will benefit from \$20 million in Helium Stewardship Act funding, matched by partners by approximately \$29 million. Projects will rehabilitate and make accessibility upgrades to trails, historic facilities, and exhibits. These projects will result in reducing the maintenance backlog by approximately \$63 million as well as improving the visitor experience at these parks. The NPS anticipates local media coverage about the individual awards and projects.

On January 2, 2018, roof repair of the Lincoln Memorial begins. On September 19, a \$2.8 million contract for the work was awarded to Arrow DJB JV II, LLC of Upper Marlboro, and Maryland. Funded by the FY17 NPS appropriation, the work is expected to be completed in August 2018. The contract also includes repair of cracks in the white marble at the memorial's penthouse level, caused by the 2011 earthquake. This is the first phase of a \$25 million dollar restoration of the Lincoln Memorial that will include expanded exhibit and public use areas,

funded in part by an \$18.5 million donation from businessman and philanthropist David M. Rubenstein.

From January 2 to 15, 2018, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department will accept applications for volunteers to assist with the reduction of the elk herd at Wind Cave National Park as part of an effort to address Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD, which has been found present in the herd. CWD is a contagious neurological disease which affects the brain of deer, moose and elk resulting in abnormal behavior, loss of bodily fluids, and death. There are currently 260 elk in the park and park officials would like to achieve a herd size closer to the low end of the population objective, which is 232 animals. Park staff also recently fitted 24 elk in the park with GPS radio collars to help monitor for CWD. Eight volunteers will be selected by lottery from the applicants and will assist for two weeks beginning on February 5. Volunteers will be required to demonstrate advanced firearms proficiency and physical fitness to participate.

January 5, 2018 is the new deadline for public comments on alternatives for the Chesapeake and Canal Plan/EA. The NPS and Georgetown Heritage, the Business Improvement District (BID) for Georgetown, extended the comment deadline to ensure the public has ample opportunity to provide feedback. Early design concepts for Alternatives were presented at a public meeting on November 2.

January 5, 2018 is the new, extended deadline to submit comments on the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Grand Canyon National Park Expanded Non-native Aquatic Species Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. In addition to the open houses scheduled on December 6 and 7, the NPS also conducted an additional open house in Phoenix on December 12. The park released the EA for public comments on November 15, and announced the extension on November 30. The purpose of the plan is to provide additional tools to prevent, control, minimize, or eradicate potentially harmful, non-native aquatic species in the Colorado River and its tributaries from the Glen Canyon Dam downstream and through Grand Canyon National Park.

On January 8, 2018, Springfield Armory National Historic Site will hold a ceremony to formally recognize the NPS ownership as sole custodian of the Colonel J.B. Benton Small Arms Collection (BSAC). Benton was the founder of the Springfield Armory in 1871, and subsequently became Commanding Officer. The NPS and the U.S. Army Center for Military History (CMH) have a long, intricate history related to the BSAC. The NPS has cared for these objects for more than four decades in a world-class curation storage facility in compliance with the latest DOI standards and this ownership status has been questioned periodically by the CMH. Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA-1) will attend the ceremony as well numerous members from the CMH.

On January 8, 2018, Devils Postpile National Monument will initiate a National Environmental Policy Act public scoping process to update the park's 2005 Fire Management Plan to better address current ecological conditions at the park. A news release will be issued on January 4 announcing a January 17 public meeting. The comment period opens January 8.

On January 8, 2018, Olympic National Park will issue a news release initiating a National Environmental Policy Act public scoping process to update the park's 2005 Fire Management Plan. Public meetings are planned for late January or February.

On January 10, 2018, a public meeting will be held to begin the NPS development process of a foundation document to guide planning and management of Stonewall National Monument. The meeting will include a formal presentation on the foundation document process, an update on planning efforts to date, and an opportunity for the public to ask questions and submit comments. Anticipated meeting participants include members of the general public, neighbors, LGBTQ activists, local, state and federal elected officials and/or members of their staffs. A public comment period for the foundation document will be open from January 11 through February 11, 2018.

On or about January 11, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) and the Port of San Francisco will release the vision for the Alcatraz Ferry Embarkation Plan. The partnership will be authorized by a General Agreement between the National Park Service and the Port, as well as a lease between the port and the NPS ferry concessioner. The selected alternative will rehabilitate historic structures for visitor use and ferry operations at Pier 31½ in San Francisco, supporting a commercial services concession that will begin in 2019. Final drafts of the General Agreement and Lease will be complete also in January, and will go through an approval process with the City of San Francisco following certification of the California state-level environmental compliance document to be signed in March 2018. This will be subsequent to GGNRA completion of the Record of Decision for the Alcatraz Ferry Embarkation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. The selection of the current concessionaire was somewhat controversial and the approval of the agreement by the city may draw press interest.

In the next few weeks, the city of Charleston, South Carolina, will release an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a 30-day public comment for NPS approval of three replacement properties to satisfy the provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act and pursuant to a court settlement. The EA has been reviewed by the Southeast Regional Office and WASO LWCF staff. Two of the three replacement properties are near the lost outdoor recreation space and will serve the same community. The city believes this is non-controversial since the Department of Justice approved the settlement. Following this period, if no significant comments are received, a Finding of No Significant Impact will be signed by the Regional Director and these replacement outdoor recreation spaces would become subject to the provisions of the LWCF Act.

On January 12, 2018, the 14th annual reading of Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream Speech" will take place at the Lincoln Memorial, National Mall and Memorial Parks. Watkins Elementary in Northeast (Capitol Hill Group) will host the event and the speech will be read by 100 fifth graders in honor of Dr. King's birthday. Each student will read one line on the site where King stood during the August 28, 1963 March on Washington.

Through January 13, 2018, Everglades National Park is accepting written comments for the Old Tamiami Trail Modifications Environmental Assessment (EA). The park released the EA on December 14 for a 30-day public review. The EA evaluates options for modifying an original

5.7-mile segment of the trail located along the northern boundary of the park as proposed in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 2014 to facilitate hydrologic and ecologic restoration of the park.

On or after January 15, 2018, Mount Rainier National Park expects the Paradise Cellular Installation Environmental Assessment (EA) Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to be signed. The selected alternative would issue right-of-way permits to Verizon Wireless and T-Mobile, and potentially AT&T, to co-locate wireless communication facilities in the Jackson Visitor Center attic. The NPS received 893 comments on the EA, with approximately 70% opposed to the service. A news release will be issued.

On January 15, 2018, The MLK Memorial Foundation will hold a wreath laying ceremony in honor of the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. This is a permitted event coordinated by the Memorial Foundation. The park has requested a list from the foundation of DOI/NPS invitees to the event.

In mid- to late January, 2018, Blue Ridge Parkway and Great Smoky Mountains National Park staff will meet with Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians to discuss proposed placement of two cell towers near park lands. The Federal Communications Commission licensing process for towers requires applicants to complete the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 process for historic properties that may be affected. The proposed cell towers may be visible from the parks, including the Oconaluftee Administration Building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and other historic resources that are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register. More work would be needed after the mid- to late January meeting to determine if the towers would have an adverse effect on historic properties.

On January 17, 2018, Haleakala National Park will open a public comment period for its draft Environmental Assessment (EA) regarding sunrise visitor management at the summit of Haleakala. Overcrowding at the four sunrise viewpoints in the past few years has adversely impacted the health and safety of employees and visitors, as well as natural and cultural resources. In December 2016, the park implemented an emergency pilot reservation system. The overall response from visitors and the local community to this temporary reservation system has been positive. Public comments will be accepted through February 20, 2018.

On January 17, 2018, a public hearing will be held by the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDOH) concerning Meridian Energy Group, Inc.'s proposal to locate a petroleum refinery approximately 2.5 miles outside Theodore Roosevelt National Park in Billings County, North Dakota. Meridian Energy has received a zoning change and conditional use permit from Billings County, a water appropriation permit from the State Engineer, and NDDOH has issued them a preliminary construction permit for the Davis Refinery. The NPS has worked closely with the NDDOH and Environmental Protection Agency during the air permitting process. The NPS Air Quality Division is undertaking its own impact modeling to inform any official comment. The public comment period to NDDOH on issuing the final permit to construct began December 8, 2017 and ends January 26, 2018.

On January 18, 2018, the Northeast Regional Office and Morristown National Historical Park staff plan to sign and release the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Morristown National Historical Park Vegetation and White-tailed Deer Management Plan Environmental Assessment (EA). The FONSI will allow the park to manage invasive plants; deer browse, which are the leaves, twigs and buds of woody plants that deer consume; and possibly use canopy thinning to encourage forest regeneration. Responses to public comments on the EA will be included as an appendix to the FONSI. Exact dates for release will depend on final review process.

On January 24, 2018, the first in a series of public meetings to develop a management plan for Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument will take place. The meeting will take place at Eastern Maine Community College in East Millinocket, ME. Park winter use will be the focus of the public meeting which will include an overview and welcome by the superintendent; a summary of potential winter uses by lead planner of the Musson Group, a planning consultancy specializing in land use and community planning, economic development, permitting and project management; and, breakout sessions to further discuss potential uses. The meeting will be announced early January via press release, www.nps.gov/KAWW, and e-newsletter.

On January 26, 2018, the draft air tour management agreement for Glen Canyon / Rainbow Bridge will close after a 45-day public review. The agreement and FAQs are available through the park's PEPC page. The park has sent letters to congressional offices and the air tour operators and has issued a press release. The NPS, the Federal Aviation Administration, and seven commercial air tour operators intend to sign the agreement, once complete, to manage air tours over Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Rainbow Bridge National Monument to ensure protection of resources and visitor use and enjoyment without compromising aviation safety.

On January 26, 2018, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) will be issuing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Columbia Gas Eastern Panhandle Expansion Project. The proposed project being analyzed includes building an 8-inch gas transmission pipeline that would, in part, cross under Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park and the Potomac River near Hancock, Maryland. To streamline the review process, the NPS is participating in the EA as a Cooperating Agency. The park has received a draft for internal review. The pipeline has attracted much public attention, and the superintendent has received over 550 emails requesting the park deny any right-of-way permit requests for a gas line crossing. No decision will be made until the EA process is complete. The 90-day Federal Authorization Deadline is April 26, 2018.

In late January 2018, the final rule to allow bicycle use on a portion of the East Shore Trail at Rocky Mountain National Park is expected to be published in the *Federal Register*. The East Shore Trail is an existing hiking and equestrian trail that runs north/south along the east shore of Shadow Mountain Lake near the town of Grand Lake, Colorado. A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed in February, 2015, that approved bicycle use on a two-mile segment of the trail. Rerouting trails along the East Shore to safely accommodate bike use triggered the rulemaking process per the NPS Bicycle Rule policy. The proposed rule was published in the

Federal Register in December 2015. Substantive comments received during the proposed rule public comment period were addressed.

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

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Nothing to report.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

On December 28, 2017, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs (PDAS-IA) Tahsuda will be announcing the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Director’s selection of Charles Addington as the new BIA Office of Justice Services Director.

Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

Nothing to report.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

Update – FAS Vote at UN to Support U.S. and Israel – The Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau all voted last Thursday, December 21, against the United Nations General Assembly resolution calling on countries to avoid moving their embassies to Jerusalem. The three island nations were among 9 total countries supporting the U.S. Each of these three freely associated states has consistently held a greater than 90% voting rate in favor of U.S. measures at the United Nations, particularly with respect to Israel and is not unusual.

Update – POTUS Signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Acts on December 22 - The final law did not include a provision introduced by American Samoa Congresswoman Amata Radewagen to extend the American Samoa Economic Development Credit critical to support continued investment of the tuna cannery industry in American Samoa. She had proposed an extension of six years rather than two. The credit had previously been extended for an additional two years under the PATH Act of 2015 (P.L. 114-113, Section 173), and expires this year. Under the new law, the corporate tax rate is reduced from 35% to a flat 20%.

Press Releases and Other Actions

Update Brown Tree Snake Funding – ASIN released a partial payment of \$147,140 for Brown Tree Snake interdiction work at the commercial ports of Guam. Funding was provided to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services a partner in ongoing efforts to control this invasive species.

Ongoing Grant Funded Projects

Household Income and Expenditure Survey in USVI – Last conducted in 2005, the HIES is funded by OIA to allow the USVI to accurately update the Territory’s Consumer Price Index and Gross Domestic Product. While the decennial Census provides detailed demographic, personal and household data, there is a need for income and expenditures data. Under current law, the Census Bureau is not required to collect such data for the U.S. territories. OIA provides funding to the University of the Virgin Islands to carry out the survey and related work.

Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

ASLM Joe Balash will be in Washington, D.C. attending regularly scheduled meetings.

ASLM Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Kate MacGregor will be in Washington, D.C. attending regularly scheduled meetings.

ASLM Deputy Assistant Secretary Casey Hammond will be in Washington, D.C. attending regularly scheduled meetings.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

In early January, BOEM plans to publish the Draft Proposed Program (DPP) for the 2019 – 2024 National OCS Oil & Gas Program. Publication of the DPP is the second step in developing the new Program; it follows a Request for Information that was published on July 3, 2017, in response to which BOEM received over 815,000 comments.

On January 2, OSMRE Western Region plans to submit the Bridger Mine Mining Plan decision document to OSMRE Headquarters for review and approval by the ASLM. Bridger Coal Company's Bridger Mine is an underground mine located in Sweetwater County, WY that employs 540 people. If the modification is approved, production is estimated to be 2.24 million tons per year.

On January 3, the GAO will conduct a phone interview with the BLM-CA Bakersfield Field Office oil and gas staff regarding an audit it has been conducting on the office's oil and gas well inspection and enforcement procedures. This audit is a continuation of the 2015 audit, and includes reviews of records analyses and verification, as well as the following types of inspections: production; drilling; abandonment; work-over; environmental; and idle/orphan wells.

On January 4, BOEM plans to publish an RFF in the Federal Register seeking input on a proposed path forward for renewable energy leasing offshore of the Atlantic Coast. The RFF describes the process and factors used by BOEM to identify and forecast areas along the Atlantic Coast where future leasing should be focused and development is most likely.

On January 6 - 8, BLM will host a meeting at its Colorado River District/Lake Havasu Field Office in Lake Havasu, AZ to develop an interagency strategy to contain the spread of quagga mussels from the Lower Colorado River. In its June report to the Western Governors Association Development, the Department identified this strategy as one of its top priorities.

Assistant Secretary Policy, Management and Budget

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

On January 2-5, 2017, Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, Scott Cameron will be in Washington, DC, and participating in routine internal briefings.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

The turnstiles for the Main Interior Building E-street entrance are scheduled to be delivered December 29, 2018. Installation will begin on Friday, January 5 and finish on Saturday, January 6. After the installation there will be functional testing, with the goal of having the C Street and E Street turnstiles to be fully operational by the beginning of February.

On Dec. 31, 2017, Grants.gov launched the Grants.gov Workspace online environment, which provides a fast, easy and secure method for applicants to complete financial assistance applications online. The Grants.gov Workspace replaces the legacy process that required applicants to submit a package of PDF forms. The Grants.gov Workspace has also includes functionality for applicants who are collaborating on applications. Forms can either be completed online within a web browser or downloaded individually and uploaded to Workspace. The new Workspace environment is already receiving favorable reactions from customers.

For Hurricane's Harvey and Irma, the Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC) is coordinating DOI efforts for the Natural and Cultural Recovery Support Function (NCR RSF). For Hurricane Harvey, the OEPC's Field Coordinator continues to develop the Recovery Support Strategy, with support from subject matter experts deployed by, the National Park Service. For Hurricane Irma, two OEPC staff members continue to serve as part of FEMA's interagency recovery team at the Joint Field Office in Orlando. Current efforts are focused on developing the Recovery Support Strategy to identify actions and resources recover impacted natural and cultural resources. For Hurricane Maria, OEPC is coordinating DOI efforts related with Emergency Support Function #10 (Oil and Hazardous Materials) and #11 (Protection of Natural and Cultural Resources), and the Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery Support Function. Missions Assignments have been received and DOI staff have been deployed to Puerto Rico to support the State Historic Preservation Office of Puerto Rico and the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and to support and coordinate the long-term recovery of natural and cultural resources. NPS and USFWS staff are serving as Field Coordinators, leading the NCR RSF, in U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, respectively.

For the California Wildfires, the Office of Environmental Policy (OEPC) headquarters and San Francisco are coordinating with Emergency Support Function #11 and DOI bureaus to monitor the wildfires in California. The OEPC San Francisco Office is working closely with her partners to ensure natural and cultural resource concerns are addressed. Issues in regard to the Southern Californian fires have focused on California Condors and issues related to the Northern California fires have focused on support for tribes.

A new Government Accountability Office (GAO) audit is “Promoting Effective Asset Management (Job Code 102243).” Per request from the Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and Senator Thomas Carper, GAO plans to review: (1) how select Federal agencies are conducting real property asset management and what lessons can be learned from agencies implementing ISO 55000 standards; and (2) opportunities to improve Federal agencies’ real property asset management. The entrance with the Office of Acquisition and Property Management and the National Park Service is not yet scheduled.

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) Exit Conference/Pending Report is “Promoting Effective Asset Management (Job Code 102243).” In response to a request from Senator Claire McCaskill, Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, and Senator Thomas Carper, GAO will evaluate (1) how selected Federal agencies are conducting real property asset management and the lessons that can be learned from those that are implementing ISO 55000 standards; and (2) what opportunities exist to improve Federal agency real property asset management. An entrance conference will be scheduled in January.

A new Office of Inspector General (OIG) audit is “Evaluation of DOI Sexual Harassment (2018-WR-006).” The OIG is starting an evaluation regarding the progress the Department has made in addressing sexual harassment. Specifically, the OIG will review: (1) policies, procedures, and guidelines the Department has instituted to address sexual harassment; and (2) efforts and/or initiatives the Department has taken to address sexual harassment. The entrance conference is on January 9, 2018.

An Office of Inspector General (OIG) Exit Conference/Pending Report is “Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation (ONHIR) (Job Code 101923)” – December 19, 2017, with staff from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Office of the Solicitor, and the Office of Policy, Management and Budget. In response to a request from the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs; Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources; Senator John McCain; and Representative Lamar Smith, GAO reviewed (1) the extent to which ONHIR completed its statutory relocation responsibilities; (2) how ONHIR responded to administrative appeals over time, including the extent to which any changes in eligibility have been made and communicated to Hopi and Navajo families; (3) steps ONHIR has taken to close out its functions, and to what extent these functions could be transitioned to other Federal or tribal entities; (4) the status of ONHIR’s efforts for engaging with homebuilding contractors and the extent of coordination with other Federal agencies in implementing grazing regulations and rangeland management assistance and competing infrastructure projects; and (5) the financial condition of the Navajo Rehabilitation Trust Fund and the status of revenues and expenses experienced by the Fund. ONHIR is an independent agency responsible for assisting Hopi and Navajo Indians impacted by the relocation that Congress mandated in 1974 for members of the tribes who were living on each other’s land.

The Government Accountability Office’s (GAO’s) Statement of Facts is a comprehensive history of ONHIR’s operations and unfinished/ongoing work. During the December 19 exit conference, GAO noted that, while there are no proposed recommendations directed to the Department, GAO plans to issue ONHIR recommendations to improve the transition plan defining and transferring unfinished or ongoing responsibilities to successor entities. These responsibilities include: (1)

appeals and eligibility; (2) housing, including home building, warranty, and other ongoing housing defects; (3) administration of the New Lands, which was taken into trust in Arizona pursuant to the Settlement Act as amended; (4) management of the Padres Mesa Demonstration Ranch; and (5) management of 20 leases, for which the tribe should have been the lessor. Comments on the Statement of Facts are due to GAO January 4, 2018.

A recent draft Office of Inspector General (OIG) Report is “U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Fish and Wildlife, From April 1, 2014, Through March 31, 2016 (2017-EXT-051).” The OIG audited costs claimed by the New York State Department (State) of Environmental Conservation, Division of Fish and Wildlife, under grants awarded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The FWS provided the grants to the State under the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. The audit included claims totaling approximately \$171 million disbursed over 19 grants that were open during the State fiscal years (FY) that ended March 31, 2015, and March 31, 2016. The OIG found the State did not: (1) report losing control of real property purchased with grant funds and license revenue; (2) reconcile its real property records with FWS’ real property inventory; (3) perform a biennial equipment inventory; (4) follow Federal requirements for sub-award administration and reporting; (5) accurately report grant performance accomplishments at a wildlife management area; and (6) report barter agreement transactions on Federal Financial Reports. The OIG issued the draft report December 18, 2017, with nine recommendations. The response is due February 1, 2018.

A recent final Office of Inspector General (OIG) Report is “SEMIANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS For the period ending September 30, 2017.” As required by the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, the OIG summarized its work completed between April 1, 2017, and September 30, 2017. The report included summary data and highlights from audits, investigations, contract, and grant audits, and management advisories from the second half of FY 2017.

On August 23, 2013, the Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR) published in the *Federal Register* a direct final rule (78 FR 52431) amending its regulation on the service of official correspondence. ONRR indicated that, if ONRR received significant adverse comments, ONRR would withdraw the rule and publish a Direct Final Rule repealing the regulatory amendment and restoring the former regulatory language governing Service of Official Correspondence. During the public comment period, ONRR received significant comments opposing the rule. More recently, ONRR received a letter dated October 6, 2016, from API Energy requesting that we immediately publish a notice withdrawing the previously published direct final rule. In an effort to respond to API’s concern, ONRR is publishing this rule to repeal the previous amendment and to restore the former regulatory language governing service of official correspondence. This rule is currently routing through the Department for surname, and ONRR intends to publish this rule by January 5, 2018.

Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel

The week of January 1, Deputy Assistant Secretary Andrea Travnicsek will be in Washington, DC, attending a number of various internal meetings and briefings.

Week Ahead Announcements and Actions

California Wildfire Response Activities

In response to the ongoing California wildfires, the USGS continues collecting and distributing imagery at the request of State and Federal partners. The USGS sent one scientist to California to provide technical assistance to NASA in ground calibrating remote sensing data and imagery that can be used to help define extent and severity of burned areas, as well as help map the makeup of smoke plumes from active fires and ash and debris left behind after the fires. The USGS also continues partnering with FEMA, State, and local partners to develop increased monitoring for potential debris flows following wildfires that occurred earlier this year in Northern California and Orange County. USGS scientists have provided some media interviews regarding the increased risks of erosion, debris flows, and other hazards to local communities impacted by wildfires. Two USGS employees previously evacuated but have returned to their homes. There are no reported impacts to USGS facilities or assets at this time; however, some field work has been suspended or delayed due to the fires

The Bureau of Reclamation deployed staff to Northern California to assist the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through Emergency Support Function 3 of the Stafford Act. Reclamation will provide staffing for QC/QA missions for debris removal. Staff will be deployed for 29 days.

Due to the Thomas Fire spreading rapidly northwest towards Santa Barbara County, a secondary Incident Command Post has been set up at Lake Cachuma Recreation Area. Reclamation is in contact with the U.S. Forest Service, Casitas Municipal Water District and Santa Barbara County Parks for updates. Reclamation staff will participate in coordination meetings with the Incident Command Team via phone conference and in person as necessary. If the fire is reasonably contained, Reclamation staff may perform a site visit of both Lake Casitas and Lake Cachuma, Dec. 25 through Jan. 7.

Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority

Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) requested Reclamation be the owner's representative during efforts to rehabilitate the spillway at Guajataca Dam. This would include reviewing final designs for permanent repairs that the U.S. Corps of Engineers will be preparing once the temporary repairs are constructed. The Bureau of Reclamation intends to work directly with the U.S. Corps of Engineers as a reviewer of their designs for the permanent repairs. Reclamation will also likely be involved with the risk analysis of the entire project.

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

Nothing to report.

U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service

On or around January 8, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice of availability of the draft revised stock assessment report for the northern sea otter stock in Washington State and open a 90-day public comment period. This action is not expected to be opposed. FWS will notify the state and outer coast tribes, and post the document on the Washington Fish and Wildlife Office website.

On January 9, FWS, NOAA and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (the Hudson River Natural Resource Trustees) plan to release an injury determination report that concludes PCBs released by General Electric have caused repeated and prolonged exceedances of state and federal water quality standards and contaminated surface water resources of the Hudson River for decades. The report is the latest demonstration of the Trustees' measurement of natural resource injuries from General Electric's release of PCBs to the Hudson River from its manufacturing facilities in Hudson Falls and Fort Edward, New York. The Trustees are planning coordinated outreach through a joint news release and congressional notifications.

FWS is conducting community involvement activities under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (Superfund) for a contaminated area on Crab Orchard NWR in Illinois, a former military ordnance and industrial area. In April 2017, FWS held an open house to share information on potential cleanup alternatives for tenants and farmers who use the refuge. On September 3, FWS published a legal notice in the local paper announcing the availability of the Administrative Record, and has developed a community involvement plan. On January 6, FWS will announce a public comment on the proposed cleanup alternatives and will host an open house and public meeting at the refuge on January 24 to provide information and receive input on the proposed cleanup. Public comments will be accepted through February 5.

On January 17-18, FWS plans a meeting with representatives from the five range state fish and game agencies, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and other partners to discuss coordination on lesser prairie-chicken issues. The meeting is in Arcadia, Oklahoma, and is invitation-only.

On or around January 26, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice announcing the availability of comprehensively revised boundaries for the first batch of Coastal Barrier

Resources System (CBRS) units included in the Hurricane Sandy Remapping Project, affecting 112 existing and 36 proposed new units in Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New Jersey. The notice will announce a 120-day public comment period and also advise of upcoming public meetings to be held via webcast. Landowners, state and local officials (and their representatives in Congress) will likely support the removal of certain areas from the CBRS and similarly oppose the addition of such areas to the CBRS. Taxpayer groups, recreational interest groups and conservation groups will likely support the additions to the CBRS. Outreach will include a news release and FAQs, as well as stakeholder and congressional outreach.

FWS Southwest Region is proactively reaching out to state agencies to discuss Secretarial Order 3356, and seek additional opportunities to support and expand hunting and fishing on refuges in the Southwest. Currently the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) has been the most responsive to outreach. On November 9, FWS leadership met with ODWC to discuss several potential hunting and fishing opportunities that could occur on Refuges in Oklahoma. A follow up meeting with ODWC is planned in January. FWS will continue to reach out to Texas, Arizona and New Mexico as well as Oklahoma to explore more opportunities.

FWS and partners will conduct the annual Mexican wolf population survey and capture, weather conditions permitting from January 22 through February 2. The Mexican Wolf Recovery Program is a multi-agency cooperative effort among FWS, Arizona Game and Fish Department, U.S. Forest Service, USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services and the White Mountain Apache Tribe, as well as in consultation with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Survey flights will occur on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation, Apache and Gila National Forests in eastern Arizona and western New Mexico, and possibly on some areas immediately outside the forests. The count is not open to the public. Limited media opportunities may be arranged, when possible.

FWS has completed a Draft Recovery Plan for the Southern California Distinct Population Segment of the Mountain Yellow-legged Frog. The recovery plan is expected to be announced for public comment and review at the end of January and is designed to help southern populations of this species in three Recovery Units through a set of recovery strategies with associated objectives and measurable criteria. The Recovery Units include San Bernardino Mountains, San Gabriel Mountains and San Jacinto Mountains. The draft plan includes input from partners including the San Diego and Los Angeles Zoos, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Forest Service. This is not controversial. Planned outreach includes congressional and stakeholder notifications and a press release to media.

In January and February, several border projects involving FWS are anticipated to begin. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will need access to water from a FWS-owned well on Buenos Aires NWR in Arizona for a road repair project. The Border Patrol & Air and Marine Program Management Office (BPAM PMO) plans a road construction project for a 66-mile portion of the Presumido Canyon Road through the Baboquivari Mountains in Arizona. CBP will update existing communications and surveillance towers on and adjacent to the Buenos Aires NWR.

FWS and the Marine National Monuments office have completed a public scoping process to evaluate ways to protect seabirds from predation by invasive house mice at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial, located in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. Midway is the largest Laysan albatross colony in the world and more than 3 million birds from 29 species nest on Midway's three islands. All of them are potentially vulnerable to mouse predation. The mice have been documented eating seabirds while they are nesting, resulting in injury and death. Due to their extreme dedication to raising their young, the birds won't leave the nest if attacked. FWS is preparing a draft environmental assessment that will evaluate alternatives to protect seabirds from mouse predation. The draft Environmental Assessment (EA) should be ready for public comment in mid-February. Outreach is planned to include local public notifications through the web and social media, when the draft EA is published, and notifications to members of Congress in Hawaii, with targeted stakeholder outreach.

In February, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice seeking public review and comment on a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) describing the potential effects of issuing a proposed Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for construction and development activities in Thurston County, Washington. UPC, LLC developed a draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and applied for a 15-year ITP. The project development site is 127 acres, and the conservation site is 64 acres. Species covered in the HCP include the threatened Olympia subspecies of the Mazama pocket gopher and the threatened Oregon spotted frog. This is not controversial. This HCP is a single-site developer and independent from the HCP that FWS briefed ASFWP on on November 17. This applicant would like to move forward with development in advance of the completion of the Thurston County HCP.

Endangered Species Act Listing/Delisting Actions

Pending approval by the Department, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to delist the Fosskett speckled dace, an endemic fish species in Oregon, from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife due to recovery. FWS will also make available the draft post-delisting monitoring plan. This action will likely only receive local and regional interest. Oregon Desert Fishes Working Group (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, FWS) has been engaged and is supportive of this action. FWS will conduct outreach to local and regional media, Congressionals and stakeholders. FWS does not expect opposition to this proposal. The Department has prioritized this action to be published by December 31.

Pending approval by the Department, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* the final delisting determination for Eureka Valley evening-primrose and downlisting, to threatened from endangered, of the Eureka dune grass. These are two plant species that occur in Death Valley National Park, California. The primary partner and stakeholder is the National Park Service who supports the actions. Some environmental groups opposed delisting the two species. However, in response to new information, we are no longer delisting Eureka dunegrass and are instead reclassifying it to a threatened species which may reduce the level of concern among the interested parties. Planned outreach will include a news release and notifications to stakeholders and members of Congress. This action is a Secretarial priority with a due date of December 30.

On or around December 28, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final listing determination and designation of critical habitat for the Black Warrior waterdog, an amphibian in Alabama. FWS is designating 659 river miles as critical habitat. Much of this critical habitat has already been designated for other listed species. The costs of critical habitat are expected to be low. Stakeholders include Bankhead National Forest, the state of Alabama, Alabama Forestry Commission, National Alliance of Forest Owners, National Council for Air and Streams, Tennessee Valley Authority, Warrior-Tombigbee Waterways Association, Weyerhaeuser, Sierra Club, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, and the Center for Biological Diversity. FWS received several substantive comments expressing concern about the inclusion of unoccupied critical habitat. After reevaluating whether each proposed critical habitat unit was essential for the conservation of the species, FWS determined the unoccupied units did not meet that criterion. Removal of the unoccupied units in the final rule will reduce the level of concern among the interested parties. Planned outreach will include a news release and notifications to stakeholders and members of Congress. FWS is required by settlement agreement to publish the determination in the *Federal Register* by January 4; therefore, it needs to be submitted by December 28.

On or around December 29, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposed listing determination for the Panama City crayfish, found in Bay County, Florida. Interested stakeholders include local governments (Bay County Commissioners, City of Panama City, City of Callaway, City of Lynn Haven and City of Springfield), the St. Joe Development Company and the Center for Biological Diversity. There may be some opposition from developers concerned that listing this species could have a negative impact on the development of new residential and commercial properties in the area. Planned outreach will include notifications to local stakeholders, a news release to local media, and social media posts. FWS is required by settlement agreement to submit the determination to the *Federal Register* by December 29.

On or around December 29, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* 12-month findings on a petition to list the beaverpond marstonia and a petition to delist the southwestern willow flycatcher. For the beaverpond marstonia finding, FWS does not anticipate opposition by stakeholders except for the petitioners; however, it is likely the petitioners will pursue media attention due to the conclusion that the species is extinct. For the southwestern willow flycatcher finding, FWS anticipates interest from the petitioners. Planned outreach includes separate news releases for each species, with supporting FAQs, and notifications to stakeholders and members of Congress. FWS is required by settlement agreement to submit the finding for the beaverpond marstonia to the *Federal Register* by December 31.

On or around December 29, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposed listing determination on the Barrens topminnow, found in Tennessee. This action is not expected to be opposed and media coverage is expected to be neutral. Interested stakeholders include Center for Biological Diversity (petitioner), Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and local landowners. Planned outreach includes a news release to all interested parties and the media. FWS is required by settlement agreement to submit the determination to the *Federal Register* by December 31.

On or around January 8, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final rule to remove the eastern puma (cougar) (historically known to exist in southeastern Ontario, southern Quebec, and

New Brunswick in Canada, and a region bounded from Maine to Michigan, Illinois, Kentucky, and South Carolina in the eastern United States) from the list of endangered and threatened species due to extinction. Although FWS does not anticipate major public resistance to the final rule, opposition to the conclusion of extinction may be expressed by advocates for puma and large predator conservation. There may be some concern due to “puma” sightings reported by the public. The best available information indicates that these are cases of mistaken identity and escaped captive animals, and, rarely, dispersers from western puma populations. This rule will also acknowledge the current state of the North American puma taxonomy. Interested parties include the states within the eastern United States, the Humane Society of the United States, the Animal Legal Defense Fund, and the Cougar Network. A national news bulletin and congressional emails are planned.

On or around January 8, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to remove the Monito gecko, a reptile in Puerto Rico, from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife due to recovery. It is protected in a natural reserve managed by the Puerto Rico Department of Environmental and Natural Resources that has no public access. As a result, species’ protections will remain in place after delisting. This action is a conservation success story and is not expected to be opposed. The primary stakeholder is the territory of Puerto Rico. Planned outreach will include a news release and web postings.

On or around January 12, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposed listing determination and proposed critical habitat designation for the Island marble butterfly, found in Washington. The proposed critical habitat designation includes approximately 812 acres. This action is not expected to be opposed and media coverage is expected to be neutral. Interested stakeholders include Xerces (the petitioner), federal partners including National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management, and state partners including Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Washington Department of Natural Resources, San Juan County Land Bank, the San Juan Preservation Trust and local landowners. A news release to all interested parties and the media is planned.

On or around January 15, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a revised proposed listing determination for the Louisiana pinesnake to include a species-specific 4(d) rule. This snake is found in Louisiana and Texas. The 4(d) rule will allow some routine forest management activities to proceed without need for permitting. Interested stakeholders include the forestry industry, state wildlife agencies, and Center for Biological Diversity. This action is not expected to be opposed and media coverage is expected to be neutral. Planned outreach includes a news release to all interested parties and the media. FWS would like to finalize the 4(d) rule with the final listing rule, which is required by settlement agreement to publish by April 4; therefore FWS plans to submit the proposed 4(d) rule to the *Federal Register* by January 15.

On or around January 17, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final downlisting of the Tobusch fishhook cactus from endangered to threatened. This plant species has shown significant recovery due in part to collaborative conservation efforts with partners. Supporters of this action include the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas Department of Transportation, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, The Nature Conservancy. FWS has gained significant positive coverage on downlisting proposals, and anticipates more interest

when this final determination is announced. Outreach planned includes a news release and social media postings.

On or around January 19, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a taxonomic change for the orangutan. The original listed entity included all orangutans in the genus *Pongo*. However, the orangutan has recently been reclassified as belonging to two distinct species: *P. pygmaeus* and *P. abelii*. Therefore, we are revising the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife to reflect the current scientifically accepted taxonomy and nomenclature of the orangutan. This change does not alter regulatory protections afforded to the orangutan and is not expected to be opposed. Since this is a technical correction, minimal outreach is planned.

On or around January 24, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice of availability of a draft post-delisting monitoring plan for the black-capped vireo. While this action is not expected to be controversial, stakeholders who oppose the delisting of the species may express use this notice to express their concerns about the delisting. Stakeholders include the petitioners, Pacific Legal Foundation, Jim Chilton, New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association, New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau, New Mexico Federal Lands Council, and Texas Farm Bureau, and the Office of Travis Co. Judge and Big Bend National Park. Planned outreach will include notifications to local stakeholders, a news release to local media and social media posts.

On or around February 1, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* an amendment to the current listing of the southern Selkirk Mountains population of woodland caribou (endangered) to include the entire Southern Mountain Caribou population as a distinct population segment (DPS). The revised DPS (17 subpopulations; 15 extant, 2 extirpated) includes the currently listed southern Selkirk Mountains population of woodland caribou, which is a transboundary population between British Columbia, Canada and northern Idaho and northeastern Washington. The critical habitat designation will remain unchanged. Non-governmental organizations including the International Fund for Wildlife, Kettle Range Conservation Group, Selkirk Conservation Alliance, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, Center for Biological Diversity, Idaho Conservation League, and the State of Idaho may be opposed to the DPS listing. The Pacific Legal Foundation (representing Bonner County) is likely to challenge the determination. FWS received a notice of intent to sue from the Pacific Legal Foundation on behalf of Bonner County in June 2017 because FWS has not met the statutory deadline for finalizing this rule (a proposed rule was published in 2014). Planned outreach includes a news release, social media, emails and phone calls to Congressional offices and stakeholders.

On or around February 2, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final listing determination for the Texas hornshell, a mussel that occurs in New Mexico, Texas and Mexico. The states of New Mexico and Texas have not overtly opposed listing the hornshell, and FWS has worked with oil and gas companies extensively on a Candidate Conservation Agreement for the Black and Delaware Rivers, the only portion of the range of Texas hornshell where oil and gas production is occurring. FWS anticipates significant participation in these agreements which will provide regulatory certainty for these companies. Stakeholders include the Center for Biological Diversity, the States of Texas and New Mexico, the Bureau of Land Management, the Independent Petroleum Association of America, and local landowners. Planned outreach will include notifications to stakeholders and relevant members of Congress and a news release to

local media. FWS is required by settlement agreement to publish the final determination in the *Federal Register* by February 10; therefore, FWS plans to submit it by February 2.

On or around February 2, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to downlist the Hawaiian goose (nene) from endangered to threatened. FWS will also propose to establish special regulations for the conservation of the species under section 4(d) of the ESA to allow for flexibility in managing lands. Landowners of resort, golf course, agricultural, residential, and recreational properties are likely to support the reclassification and associated 4(d) rule while conservation groups may be opposed. Interested stakeholders include the State of Hawaii, federal agencies, conservation and bird groups, various private landowners, and the public. Outreach includes a news release, social media, emails and phone calls to Congressional offices and stakeholders.

On or around February 16, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final rule to delist the Hidden Lake bluecurls, a plant in California, due to recovery. FWS does not expect opposition to the delisting. Primary stakeholders include California Department of Parks and Recreation Mount San Jacinto State Park. Planned outreach will include a news release and notifications to stakeholders and members of Congress.

On or around February 16, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a rule removing the textual descriptions of the critical habitat boundaries from certain wildlife entries (50 CFR 17.95) that have maps sufficient to stand as the official delineation of the critical habitat designation. This rule does not increase, decrease, or in any other way change the critical habitat designations from which we are removing the textual descriptions of boundaries. This action will save taxpayer resources. FWS is taking this action in accordance with the May 1, 2012, revision of the regulations related to publishing textual descriptions of critical habitat boundaries. No outreach is planned.

On or around February 20, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to delist the Colorado butterfly plant due to recovery. This species is located in Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming. This action is not expected to be opposed. Outreach plans include a news release, and an if-asked Q&A. Key stakeholders include private landowners, F.E. Warren Air Force Base, the City of Fort Collins, Colorado and the Bureau of Land Management.

On or around February 23, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a minor map correction in the final rule designating critical habitat for the two butterflies. One map incorrectly labeled Poweshiek skipperling critical habitat as Dakota skipper critical habitat in Minnesota. FWS does not expect any opposition to this. No outreach is needed for this simple correction notice.

National Wildlife Refuge Actions

In January, FWS will award nearly \$19 million in grants to coastal states to conserve and restore coastal wetlands and their fish and wildlife habitat. Each year, the Service supports coastal wetland conservation through the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program and the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund. The grant funds are derived from excise taxes on fishing tackle and motorboat and small engine fuels. The grants will support 22 projects

in 13 coastal states to protect, restore or enhance more than 30,000 acres of coastal wetlands and adjacent upland habitats, including 287 miles of shoreline. Over \$21 million in additional matching funds will be provided by partner contributions from state and local governments, private landowners and conservation groups. Conservation of this habitat will help recover coastal-dependent federal trust species, enhance flood protection and water quality, provide economic benefits to coastal communities and increase recreational opportunities for hunters and anglers. The grant recipients (states) have not yet been informed that they will be receiving funds. Planned outreach includes congressional and stakeholder notifications and a news release.

Bosque del Apache and Valle de Oro NWRs along with other federal and non-federal partners were recently awarded a \$1 million North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant for restoration and enhancement of nearly 1,100 acres in the Middle Rio Grande Valley in New Mexico. NAWCA grants increase bird populations and wetland habitat, while supporting local economies and American traditions such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, family farming, and cattle ranching. In recognition of this grant, Ducks Unlimited is arranging for a field visit to Bosque del Apache NWR and has invited Senator Udall (D-NM) and Representative Pearce (R-NM) to attend. The field visit is tentatively set for January 15, 2018.

Migratory Bird Management Actions

In January, FWS plans to publish in the *Federal Register* the proposed 2018-19 hunting regulations for certain migratory game birds. FWS annually prescribes frameworks, or outer limits, for dates and times when hunting may occur and the number of birds that may be taken and possessed in hunting seasons. These frameworks are necessary to allow state selections of seasons and limits and to allow recreational harvest at levels compatible with population and habitat conditions. Planned outreach includes congressional and stakeholder notifications and a news release.

In January, FWS plans to publish a final rule removing regulations setting forth the provisions for two depredation orders for double-crested cormorants. FWS had used these standing orders to allow for lethal control of cormorants where they impact aquaculture and public resources; however, on May 25, 2016, the District Court for the District of Columbia ordered that both the Aquaculture Depredation Order and the Public Resources Depredation Order be vacated until FWS performs a new and legally adequate environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement for national cormorant management orders in compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This final rule administratively implements the court's decision. While the depredation orders no longer exist, on November 15, 2017, FWS provided some measure of relief to aquaculture facilities. It issued a final EA under NEPA, which allows aquaculture facility managers and property owners across 37 central and eastern states and the District of Columbia to apply for individual permits for lethal take of cormorants where they are impacting resources. This latest action is not controversial. If-asked talking points will be planned for outreach.

In January, FWS will publish a final rule in the *Federal Register* on special methods of hunting migratory game birds by tribal members on ceded lands in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota for the 2017-18 season. This rule prescribes special migratory bird hunting regulations for certain

tribes on Indian reservations, off-reservation trust lands and ceded lands. This rule responds to tribal requests for FWS recognition of their authority to regulate hunting under established guidelines. This rule allows the establishment of season bag limits and, thus, harvest at levels compatible with populations and habitat conditions. This new final rule replaces the August 31, 2017, interim final rule. Outreach will include talking points, emails and phone calls to tribes, states, Congressional offices and stakeholders.

In January FWS, will publish a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* for migratory bird subsistence harvest regulations in Alaska for the 2018 season. These regulations allow for the continuation of customary and traditional subsistence uses of migratory birds in Alaska and prescribe regional information on when and where the harvesting of birds may occur. These regulations were developed under a co-management process involving FWS, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Alaska Native representatives. The rulemaking is necessary because the regulations governing the subsistence harvest of migratory birds in Alaska are subject to annual review. This rulemaking proposes region-specific regulations that go into effect on April 2, 2018. Planned outreach includes congressional and stakeholder notifications and a news release.

In January, FWS will release a draft environmental assessment in response to a request by Ocotillo Express LLC for a five-year programmatic take permit for golden eagles at its Ocotillo Wind Energy Facility in Imperial County, California. Golden eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Ocotillo is requesting a permit to cover unintentional of eagles from their ongoing activities. With their permit application, Ocotillo has submitted an eagle conservation plan that proposes proactive conservation measures to minimize impacts to golden eagles in the region to offset unavoidable harm. Outreach is planned in the form of a news release. This is not controversial.

National Park Service

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area will be the subject of an eight-page spread in the January/February 2018 issue of *Westways Magazine*, the official publication of the Southern California Automobile Association of America. The article is timed to coincide with the park's 40th anniversary.

On February 1, 2018, Joshua Tree National Park will be expanding its current online campground reservation system to include Jumbo Rocks and Cottonwood campgrounds. Currently the park offers approximately 200 sites for reservation, and the inclusion of Jumbo Rocks and Cottonwood campgrounds will double the number of reservable sites. Park management is moving towards expanding the number of reservable sites following an extensive public comment period and a series of public meetings on how better to serve the camping community at the park. Sites can be reserved at Recreation.gov; first come, first serve campers will still have access to four other campgrounds.

On February 1, 2018, Joshua Tree National Park will implement a pilot transportation program with a fleet of shuttle buses operating throughout the northern portion of the park during the peak season. The shuttle will be a free option for visitors, and will travel the 30 miles between

Twentynine Palms, California and the village of Joshua Tree, providing access to all of the major campgrounds and hiking trails. After a two-year test period, the park will reevaluate the system to determine if it should be further expanded or made permanent.

On February 1 and 2, 2018, Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL-5) and possibly additional members of the House Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition (SEEC) are planning to visit coastal areas of Everglades National Park and sites in Northeastern and Central Florida Bay. Topics during the visit will include Hurricane Irma effects, and Everglades Restoration and Ecosystem Sustainability programs.

On February 7, 2018, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore will host a Quarter Launch & Coin Exchange at Mather Elementary School in Munising, Michigan, commemorating the release of the parks' quarter, the 41st coin to be released in the United States Mint America the Beautiful Quarter Program. As a prelude to the event, the United States Mint will host a coin forum the evening before, February 6, at Munising Township Office in Wetmore, Michigan. The WASO Office of Communications is in contact with the United States Mint who will draft a press release for coordination by the WASO Solicitor's Office.

On February 19, 2018, President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter will speak at the Plains High School in Plains, Georgia, a part of Jimmy Carter National Historic Site, during the annual Presidents Day celebration. The Congressional delegation, state and local officials will be invited to attend. The deadline to submit proposals for the 250th non-profit has been extended until February 28, 2018. The team sent out a press release regarding this extension on December 21.

In February 2018, Death Valley National Park and the Ridgecrest Bureau of Land Management (BLM) office anticipate opening a public comment period on the Keystone Mine Plan of Operations Amendment and accompanying Environmental Assessment. The mine is on BLM land near the park's western border, but the mining plan includes the use of water rights within the park.

In February 2018, Olympic National Park anticipates initiating a two-week public scoping period for the Olympic Hot Springs Road Environmental Assessment. A news release will be issued. No public meetings are planned.

In March 2018, the nonprofit Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue will begin rounding up and removing feral burros from Death Valley National Park and Mojave National Preserve. The organization anticipates removing up to 2,500 burros over the next 5 years to test burros for disease and domesticate the animals for adoption. Burros that cannot be tamed will be kept in sanctuaries by the organization. Compliance for burro removal was conducted as part of both parks' 2002 General Management Plans. This is anticipated to generate public interest and has already triggered a FOIA request.

Through March 2018, the NPS will conduct annual deer management actions at Catoctin Mountain Park, Antietam National Battlefield, Monocacy National Battlefield, and Rock Creek Park. This will be Catoctin's ninth season of deer management operations, Rock Creek Park's fifth season, and the second season for Antietam and Monocacy National Battlefields. Park staff

members are conducted deer population density surveys in October and November 2017 to determine the number of animals to remove, as determined through their deer management plans. Sharpshooters from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service will remove deer from closed park areas during the daytime in some parks and from park roads after dusk in all parks. Venison will be donated to local food banks

In early 2018, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is expected to begin conducting an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Morehead City Port channel project, located next to Cape Lookout National Seashore in Carteret County, North Carolina. Recently, the county and Rep. Walter Jones Jr. (R-NC-3) formally requested that the Corps prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a mitigated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) before moving ahead with the project. They expressed concerns that the Corps' alternatives will have negative impacts to nearby eastern Bogue Banks that were not evaluated, and that the draft EA would not comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. The county believes that the Corps should include the installation of a terminal groin (rock jetty) on the western tip of Shackleford Banks, an island within park boundaries that is designated as proposed wilderness.

In the spring of 2018, Mojave National Preserve expects to begin the public comment period on a Management Plan for Developed Water Sources and Environmental Assessment (PDWS/EA). The plan will provide a comprehensive strategy and water management techniques to ensure the preservation of wildlife, historic, wilderness, and recreation values in the management of developed and undeveloped water resources in the park (wildlife guzzlers and developed springs). The process is being closely watched by local hunting and conservation groups concerned about how the park will manage wildlife guzzlers, which are viewed by some as necessary for maintaining a healthy bighorn sheep population.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) estimates the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Alaska Stand Alone Pipeline to be released in summer 2018, with a prior review by cooperating agencies expected to begin in February 2018. The proposed action remains outside of Denali National Park and Preserve (DENA), and a right-of-way application has not been submitted to the NPS. The applicant considers the route through DENA to be infeasible because of the procedural requirements of Title XI in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. However, proposed legislative changes to preclude the procedural requirements of Title XI are pending in Congress. The applicant could change their proposed route because of changes in legislation or with the Final Supplemental EIS. The Corps could direct the applicant to the route through DENA as the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA) because of fewer impacts to wetlands. If the route would encumber DENA lands, the applicant would submit a right-of-way application to the NPS.

Heads-up/reminders:

In 1976, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) assistance was provided for the acquisition of approximately 1.26 acres of lake front property and site development at Marion Beggs Memorial Park (Beggs Park) located along the shore of Lake Champlain in the Town of Essex, New York. On May 30, 2017, New York State contacted the NPS with a proposal by the Town of Essex to upgrade and expand the water pumping station; and add a public restroom, water fountain, and a rooftop viewing platform to Beggs Park. The NPS determined that the proposal

would trigger a conversation because an upgraded facility would expand into the surrounding LWCF protected parkland, which is a non-public outdoor recreation area. On October 25, Rep. Elise Stefanik's (R-NY-21) district office in Plattsburgh, NY, contacted the Northeast Regional Office (NER) on behalf of the Town of Essex by letter outlining the project and requesting an appeal of NPS' findings on the matter. On November 8, representatives from the Town of Essex, New York State, and NPS staff participated in a follow-up discussion about the proposal. After discussing the project and the LWCF compliance finding, the Town of Essex indicated that they would like to bring their issue to the attention of the NER regional director in hopes of an appeal. The regional director responded to the letter indicating she did not have the authority to alter the finding, and provided clarification on the decision and process. The matter was also raised to the NPS Associate Director for Partnerships and Civic Engagement, who manages the LWCF program, and has offered to have a call with the interested parties if requested.

CBS News will be airing a segment (date to be determined) about uranium mining at Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA). The report will include information about the ongoing cleanup at the Orphan Mine Site on the South Rim of GRCA. Access to the mine is restricted by two protective fences and a locked gate to protect park visitors from any potential exposure to radiation and other mining-related contaminants. The NPS is the lead agency undertaking response actions at the Orphan Mine Site, and the Contaminated Sites Program, which protects human health and the environment by managing the cleanup of contaminated soil and groundwater, has been closely involved with the project since 2000.

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

On January 8, Indian Affairs plans to announce by press release the approval of several Tribes' leasing regulations under the Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Homeownership (HEARTH) Act.

On January 11-12, the Advisory Board for Exceptional Children will be meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Advisory Board was established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) to advise AS-IA on the needs of Indian children with disabilities.

On January 12, Dr. Sherry Allison, SIPI President, will serve as a keynote speaker at the Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, California.

January 13 is the deadline for comments on BIE's Strategic Plan.

On January 16, PDAS-IA will lead the first Tribal consultation session on potential revisions to fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR 151 in Sacramento, California.

January 16-19, BIE will be hosting a Strategic Plan planning session in Washington, DC.

On January 18, PDAS-IA will lead the second Tribal consultation session on potential revisions to fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR 151 in Prior Lake, Minnesota.

January 23-24, the Self-Governance Advisory Committee (SGAC) January quarterly meeting will take place in Washington, DC. Representatives of the Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs are invited to attend on January 24.

On January 23, PDAS-IA will lead the third Tribal consultation session on potential revisions to fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR 151 in Mashantucket, Connecticut.

On January 25, PDAS-IA will lead the fourth Tribal consultation session on potential revisions to fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR 151 in Portland, Oregon, following the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest conference.

February 12 – 15, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) will hold its Executive Council Winter Session at the Capital Hilton in Washington, DC. It is expected that representatives of the Department will be asked to participate.

On February 20, PDAS-IA will lead the fifth Tribal consultation session on potential revisions to fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR 151 in Phoenix, Arizona.

On February 22, PDAS-IA will lead the sixth (and last scheduled) Tribal consultation session on potential revisions to fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR 151 in Miami, Florida.

February 26 - March 1, the IA Safety Manager/Division Chief will travel to Washington, DC, to attend the quarterly DOI, Occupational Safety and Health Council Meeting at the USGS Headquarters Office in Reston, Virginia.

March 21 to 22, the Tribal-Interior Budget Council (TIBC) will meet at the Washington Plaza Hotel in Washington DC.

Items of Note/Expected Legislative, Legal, Policy Issues

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is in the process of reviewing the final Streamlining Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) draft, which will be sent to Interior after HUD's final review. A 60-day public comment period has concluded on the HUD National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process Improvement Implementation Plan with 12 recommendations determined.

A Federal Register notice requesting input on BIA's Categorical Exclusions (CatXs) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is currently in surname. BECRM is working with the Department's Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC) on this effort.

The the Indian Employment, Training and Related services Consolidation Act of 2017, which recently became Public Law 115-93, identifies another seven departments of the government, now totaling 11, as being able to be included in a Tribe's Public Law 102-477 plan. The Act also allows Block Grants to be included in a Tribe's plan and allows Tribes to waive statutory law and regulations. This provision follows the administration policy to reduce regulations and allow

the Tribes to design programs that meet their needs in instances when Tribal needs may be in conflict with Federal regulatory requirements.

The Trust Asset and Accounting Management System (TAAMS) Map Viewer Version 2.0 update is fully developed, has been tested internally, and is nearly ready to deploy. Currently the product is being reviewed by Configuration Management experts at the OIMT Division of Information Security (DIS). After that review, the product will be submitted to the Architecture Review Committee (ARC) and then to the Change Advisory Board (CAB) for final approval.

Regulations Ready for OS Review

None pending.

Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs

Hearing in Spring 2018 on Pacific Veterans Healthcare – We are anticipating official communication from American Samoa Congresswoman Amata Radewagen regarding a hearing in the spring to be held on healthcare for veterans from the U.S. Insular Areas. House Veterans Committee Chairman Roe has apparently made the commitment to the Congresswoman who is supported by Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo of Guam and Congresswoman Gregorio “Kilili” Sablan of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Travel to the USVI and Puerto Rico (PR) – In late January 2018, ASIN Domenech will travel to the VI and PR for Hurricane Recovery Support meetings. He will also attend Conservation Trust meetings in PR.

Travel to the RMI – In January or February 2018, ASIN Domenech and OIA Director Nikolao Pula will travel to the Republic of the Marshall Islands for discussions with President Hilda Heine, U.S. Ambassador to the RMI Karen Stewart and travel to Kwajalein to visit the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site.

Interagency Group on Insular Areas (IGIA) – Expected to be held on Monday, February 26, 2018, the IGIA is co-chaired by the Secretary and the White House Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Justin Clark. This is the largest annual convening of high-level federal officials discussing issues of concern to the U.S. territories. It is also attended by the Governors and the Delegates.

Coral Reef Task Force Meetings - The winter meetings of the Coral Reef Task Force are likely be held February 20 – 22, 2018 here in Washington, D.C.

Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management

In early January 2018, the BLM’s Washington Office will issue an Instruction Memorandum (IM) titled "Interim Direction on Mitigation. This IM will implement E.O. 13783 and S.O. 3349 as they relate to mitigation. The IM will provide updated guidance on mitigation and will rescind the BLM's Mitigation Manual Section and Handbook issued on December 22, 2016.

In January, pending publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register, BLM-AK will seek public comments for the Greater Mooses Tooth 2 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. The BLM plans to hold public meetings and subsistence hearings during the comment period in the following communities: Utqiagvik, Nuiqsut, Anaktuvuk Pass, Atkasuk, Fairbanks, and Anchorage.

In January, the BLM-UT Moab Field Office intends to issue a final decision approving upgrades to two primary access roads in the Canyon Rims Recreation Area (approximately 37.7 miles of designated routes for which BLM holds the rights-of-ways). The project is opposed by the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance as a portion was within the 2016 boundary of Bears Ears National Monument. The project is outside of the modified boundary of the Indian Creek Unit of the Bears Ears National Monument.

In January, as required under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, BOEM plans to publish a final rule to adjust the offshore facility limit of liability for damages to reflect the increase in the Consumer Price Index since 2013. The rule will increase the limit of liability under OPA from \$133.65 million to \$137.56 million.

In January, pending final approval, BOEM plans to host a webinar to solicit input from the public on draft guidance for the submission of Construction and Operations Plans that contain a design envelop, which would allow lessees the flexibility to defer final design decisions in order to take advantage of rapid technological advances.

In January, BLM-UT plans to publish a *Notice of Intended Disposition* in four newspapers in the Four Corners region for two weeks in accordance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. The notices will communicate the BLM's intention to repatriate to the Hopi Tribe human remains and 4,121 associated funerary objects that were illegally excavated and/or disturbed in 2008 from Site 42SA9266 on BLM-administered lands in San Juan County, Utah. The site is located outside of any existing or previously-designated National Monument boundaries.

On January 8, BLM-CO will attend the Western States Land Commissioners Association (WSLCA) Winter Meeting in Denver. The WSLCA is an organization representing 23 state land management agencies that together manage more than 440 million acres of surface and subsurface state lands throughout the central and western U.S. The BLM has an MOU with the WSLCA to advance the long-term goals of both the BLM and member states by resolving state-Federal land exchanges and other appropriate realty actions.

On January 9, Walter Cruickshank, Acting BOEM Director will participate in the Offshore Wind Finance Forum: Advancing Investment in U.S. Offshore Wind in New York, NY. The purpose of the Forum is to explore ways to improve the investment case of project financing U.S. offshore wind. Acting Director Cruickshank will speak at a breakfast briefing on the U.S. offshore wind market and regulations.

On January 9, BLM-CA Central Coast Field Office will meet with the California Resources Corporation, an independent company and producer of oil and natural gas in CA. The group will

discuss the company's foreseeable oil and gas development plans in the Kettleman Hills area of Fresno County.

On January 9, the BLM-NV Southern Nevada District will host its first public meeting for the development of the Revised Draft of the Southern Nevada District Resource Management Plan/EIS in Overton, NV. Additional meetings will be held in Mesquite (Jan. 10), Las Vegas (Jan. 11), Pahrump (Jan. 16), Henderson (Jan. 17), and Searchlight (Jan. 18).

On January 11, BSEE Director Angelle will meet with officials from the U.S. Coast Guard to receive a briefing on USCG programs of interest to BSEE at USCG Headquarters in DC.

In Mid-January, BLM-AK Eastern Interior Field Office will meet with the tribal councils in Fort Yukon and Chalkyitsik to conduct government-to-government consultation regarding the BLM's implementation of the Draanjik RMP and associated transportation management plan, opportunities for tribal participation in implementation (possible job creation, data collection, etc.), and fish and wildlife issues. Meetings will include council members, support staff, and first and second chiefs and are open to all enrolled tribal members and others the tribe invites to attend. Meetings dates and locations are forthcoming.

In mid-January, the BLM-UT Monticello Field Office will initiate public scoping on a proposal from San Juan County to approve a designated motorized route accessing archaeological ruins southwest of Blanding. Specifically, the site lies between the easternmost boundary of the Shash Jaa Unit of the Bears Ears National Monument. An environmental assessment will be prepared, including appropriate consultation regarding the cultural resources.

On January 15, BOEM plans to publish the Oil and Gas and Sulphur Operations in the Outer Continental Shelf Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment as a final rule to adjust the level of civil monetary penalties for inflation, as required under the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act.

On January 17, the U.S. Air Force will begin a series of public hearings for the Withdrawal Extension and Proposed Withdrawal Expansion of the Nevada Test and Training Range. Additional meetings will be held on January 18, 23, 24 and 25. The BLM is not the lead agency for this project but will be attending the meetings as a cooperator.

On January 18, BSEE Director Angelle will attend a meeting of the Committee on Marine Transportation Systems (CMTS) at the Department of Transportation in Washington, D.C.

On January 18, BLM-CA Bakersfield staff will meet with the Los Padres National Forest and Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge to discuss the Plains All American Pipeline replacement and ROW renewal, including which agency will be the lead for conducting the NEPA analysis. The pipeline replacement is necessitated by a 2015 oil spill which deposited 142,800 gallons, or 3,400 barrels, of crude oil onto Refugio State Beach in Santa Barbara. The pipeline, which has since been out of service, crosses multiple jurisdictions (Federal, state and county) and will be removed and replaced within the same footprint. Santa Barbara County will be the California Environmental Quality Act lead for this project. The BLM anticipates high public interest and media attention on this issue.

On January 21, BOEM plans to publish a Proposed Sale Notice proposing a multi-factor auction for two unleased areas within the Massachusetts Wind Energy Area.

On January 22, the BLM MT/DKs expects to transfer 2,126.11 acres of land in Chouteau, Hill, and Custer counties to the State of Montana to satisfy \$1.8 million of Montana's \$4.1 million entitlement under in lieu selection provisions of the Enabling Act of 1889. Management of these lands by the State will generate revenue for the school trust. Additional lands selected by the State in the Miles City Field Office area will be reviewed in 2018 so that the remaining \$2.3 million entitlement can be satisfied in full.

January 22 - 23, ASLM Deputy Assistant Secretary Kate MacGregor, Acting BOEM Director Walter Cruickshank, and other representatives of BOEM are scheduled to attend a meeting in Sacramento with DoD and offshore wind developers to discuss wind exclusion areas proposed by DoD off the State's Central Coast.

On January 23, BSEE Director Angelle is scheduled to speak at a meeting of the Texas Oil and Gas Association in New Orleans, LA.

On January 24, the BLM-NV Southern Nevada District Office proposes to sell 40 parcels totaling 754.88 acres of public land in Clark County. The competitive sale would be by sealed and oral bidding in accordance with the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA).

From January 28 through February 2, the Society for Range Management will hold its 71st annual meeting in Sparks, NV. On January 30, BLM-NV State Director John Ruhs will provide a presentation on wild horses and burros symposium, "Moving Beyond Ecological Effects of Wild Horses." On January 31, there will be a tour of the Northern Nevada Correctional Center's wild horse inmate training program.

On January 31, BLM-CA staff will participate in an oil and gas operator seminar that focuses on surface and environmental requirements associated with new oil and gas projects, including APDs and Sundry Notices. The BLM will provide seminar participants a refresher on the items the BLM needs regarding biological, cultural, and paleontological reviews to ensure a quick turn around when new permits are submitted.

On January 30, BOEM tentatively plans to publish a Notice of Unsolicited Request for a Submarine Transmission Cable ROW and a Request for Competitive Interest and Public Comment. This follows a request for a ROW grant from Clean Power Northeast Development, Inc. for its Atlantic Link Submarine Transmission Cable Project, which would consist of two high-voltage direct current cables and one fiber optic cable that stretches approximately 230 miles in length, from Colson Cove, New Brunswick, Canada to Plymouth Massachusetts.

On January 31, Mike Celata, BOEM-GoM Regional Director will speak at the Outer Continental Shelf Advisory Board's 2018 Workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to promote continuing education of land, legal, and other exploration and production professionals with regard to laws, policies, regulations and practices on the OCS.

In February, the BLM-CA Bakersfield Field Office staff will participate in a USFS-led public meeting in Fillmore about four APDs in the Sespe Oil field, which is adjacent to a USFWS refuge and a California condor sanctuary. USFS is the lead agency on the NEPA analysis. The BLM anticipates a negative reaction to the proposed wells from local residents and organizations who in the past have opposed oil and gas development. The meeting will also be of interest to Rep. Julia Brownley (CA-26-D).

In February, BLM-CA's Bakersfield Field Office will participate in a USFS public meeting in Fillmore, CA regarding four APDs in the Sespe Oilfield, which is adjacent to a USFWS refuge and a California condor sanctuary. The USFS is the lead Federal agency for the preparation of the NEPA analysis. The BLM anticipates a negative reaction to the proposed wells from local residents who in the past opposed oil and gas development and because of the presence of several active anti-oil and gas organizations in the surrounding counties.

In February, the USFWS anticipates publishing in the Federal Register a Notice of Availability for an EA that analyzes issuance of an eagle take permit to Ocotillo Express LLC for its wind energy facility located on BLM lands in Imperial County, California. The EA is being prepared in response to Ocotillo Express LLC's application for a 5-year programmatic take permit for golden eagles under the Eagle Act. The EA will also analyze the proponent's request to amend its BLM ROW grant to allow discontinuation of a radar avian detection system and a 10-year bio-monitoring program.

On February 2-10, the 2018 King of the Hammers Ultra Race will be held at the Johnson Valley OHV Area, including portions of public lands shared with the Twentynine Palms marine base, in San Bernardino County. This event is the largest BLM-CA special recreation permitted event and is expected to draw tens of thousands participants and spectators. The event takes place in Congressman Paul Cook's (CA-08-R) district and the Congressman and his staff have participated in previous years.

On February 6, BSEE Director Angelle will attend the BSEE/USCG Quarterly Meeting at USCT Headquarters.

On February 16, BOEM plans to publish the Final Notice of Sale and the Record of Decision for Lease Sale 250 in the Gulf of Mexico. The lease sale is scheduled to occur in March 2018 and it will be the second lease sale in the 2017 – 2022 National OCS Oil & Gas Program.

On February 16, Mike Celata, BOEM GoM Regional Director plans to speak at the Institute for Energy Law Oil & Gas Conference in Houston, TX. Specifically, Regional Director Celata will discuss BOEM's current financial assurance proposal.

On February 20-21, Mike Celata, BOEM GoM Regional Director plans to speak at the 10th Annual Decommissioning & Abandonment Summit in New Orleans, LA. The purpose of the conference is to bring together stakeholders and members of industry to share decommissioning and abandonment data, case study insight, and lessons learned.

Assistant Secretary Policy, Management and Budget

PMB is working with the Office of Congressional Liaison, Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, Office of Scheduling and Advance, and Office of Communications on an integrated rollout strategy and timeline for the FY 2018 reprogramming on the common regional boundaries and the January 10-11 Leadership Summit with DOI executives from around the country.

In early/mid-January 2018, a progress report will be sent to the Western Governors Association (WGA) from DOI for the invasive mussels' initiative in the Columbia River Basin and across western waters. The Office of Policy Analysis (PPA) is working with the bureaus on the report which addresses action items which were announced by the Secretary in June to address invasive mussels in the Columbia River Basin, and across western waters.

The Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act of 1990, as amended by the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvements Act of 2015, requires Federal agencies to adjust their civil monetary penalty rates for inflation every year. In response to the Office of Management and Budget's guidance for the inflation adjustment to the Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR) civil monetary penalty rates, ONRR is publishing this direct final rule to increase ONRR's maximum civil monetary penalty rates for inflation occurring between October 2016 and October 2017. This rule is currently routing through the Department for surname, and ONRR intends to publish this rule by January 15, 2018.

On January 19, 2018, the extension of the Continuing Resolution for the FY 2018 Appropriations expires.

For the FY 2019 Appropriations, the Office of Management and Budget is working to deliver the President's Budget to Congress on February 5. To meet this deadline, OMB will lock the master data system to funding changes on January 9. No funding changes are allowed after that point.

On February 6-7, 2018, the Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR) will host the Indian Energy Minerals Steering Committee Meeting (IEMSC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Representatives from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Solicitor's office, and the Office of Special Trustee (OST) will also attend and participate in the meeting. The primary purpose of the IEMSC meeting is to address energy issues, concerns, challenges, and opportunities in Indian Country and the inter-agency cooperation necessary to address these items at all levels.

On February 19-23, 2018, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) biannual meeting is scheduled in Washington, DC, with a public business meeting to be held on Thursday, February 22. The DOI Office of Policy Analysis (PPA) and the Department of Commerce (through NOAA) are co-chairs of the USCRTF, and are coordinating the event. The focus of discussion is tentatively set for the following: hurricane impacts in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria; natural disaster recovery and resilience; and long-term sustainable financing for the Watershed Partnership Initiative. The meeting will also include a progress report on implementation of the FY16-20 Framework for Action.

On February 18, 2018 the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Management Directive 715 Report is due to the EEOC.

On February 21-23, 2018, the Circle of Flight/Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Tribal Engagement Meeting will take place at the Oneida Nation Conference Center in Green Bay, WI. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) will meet with Great Lakes tribal staff interested in discussing ideas for tribal input into GLRI Action Plan III.

The 2018 Great Lakes Commission Semiannual Meeting will meet to coordinate interagency efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Commission and state and federal agencies that participate in Great Lakes Water Quality Act/Great Lakes Restoration Initiative activities will be in attendance.

On February 26-March 2, 2018, various activities are being planned by the Reduce Risk from Invasive Species Coalition (RISC) and collaborators (including several U.S. Government agencies) to take place on Capitol Hill. The activities are likely to include seminars, podcasts, education/outreach displays, and a reception hosted by the chairs of the Invasive Species Caucus.

On February 27-March 1, 2018, the Invasive Species Advisory Committee annual meeting is scheduled and will include the first National Invasive Species Council (NISC) Stakeholders Form and a Federal-State Leadership Roundtable.

On March 31, 2018, the No FEAR Act Report is due to Congress.

Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

Westlands Settlement legislation (H.R. 1769) is pending before the House of Representatives that would settle more than 20 years of litigation against the United States and reduce the threat of continued adverse legal action. Reclamation has a statutory obligation to provide drainage service within the San Luis Unit, and is subject to injunction orders entered by the U.S. district court in 2000 in the Firebaugh case to provide drainage without delay. Reclamation adopted a plan for drainage service in a 2007 Record of Decision. The estimated cost of implementing that plan is \$3.8 billion. Currently, approximately \$3.1 billion of this drainage service work remains to be implemented. H.R. 1769 (Valadao) would affirm an agreement between the United States and Westlands Water District (Westlands) in central California (Settlement). The Settlement, authorized by H.R. 1769, would relieve the United States of all drainage obligations within Westlands. Westlands would assume this obligation including indemnifying the United States of any past, present, or future claims, while agreeing to permanently retire a minimum of 100,000 acres of lands within Westlands. The Settlement would also relieve Westlands of certain financial obligations, authorize the conversion of Westlands' current 9(e) water service contract to a 9(d) repayment contract, and transfer title to certain CVP facilities that lie within Westlands boundaries to Westlands. The present value of the debt forgiven as part of the Settlement is estimated to be \$331.1 million in 2015 dollars. The legislation would eliminate a statutory obligation for construction estimated to cost more than three billion dollars. The district court has stated it will not grant further stays of the current injunction past January 15, 2018. If legislation is not enacted prior to that deadline, Reclamation will be required to expend significant funds to

implement the Control Schedule of drainage measures for Westlands approved by the court and will likely face additional litigation. Interior is in the process of finalizing for clearance an administration position letter to Congress that supports H.R. 1769 and encourages its passage by the House.

North Coast Rivers Alliance et al. vs Reclamation (Case No. 16-cv-307-LJO-MJS) regarding San Luis Unit Interim Renewal Contract(s) (IRC) litigation, whereby the environmental documentation surrounding Westlands Water District (Westlands) IRCs is at the center of attention. Litigation on each of Westlands IRCs has been ongoing in one form or another for many years. In July 2016, the 9th Circuit affirmed in part, reversed in part, and remanded the District Court's rulings on the adequacy of Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA) for the San Luis Unit IRCs that covered 2012-2014 time period. In response to the 9th Circuit ruling, its timing, subsequent motions, and the fact that the 2014-2016 IRCs had expired, Reclamation prepared a Revised EA for the current IRCs covering the period 2016-2018. On August 9, 2017, Plaintiffs filed a response to Reclamation's status report notifying the Court of the revised EA once again questioning its adequacy. The report is a preview of what Plaintiffs will argue in the case going forward.

On January 8, oral arguments in the *Texas v. New Mexico* case over Rio Grande water have been scheduled before the U.S. Supreme Court. Although the litigation was filed by Texas against New Mexico, the United States was allowed to intervene as it involves Reclamation's Rio Grande Project and the associated water.

On Jan. 12, Reclamation is scheduled to make the Pojoaque Basin Water Supply Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) available to the public via publication of a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. The package is set to be e-filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on that same day. The FEIS has been surnamed by the Commissioner's staff and is now being reviewed by the Department's Indian Water Rights Office, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Solicitor's Office.

In mid-January, the USGS will release "Critical Metals in Navy SEAL Gear." Like last year's popular "A World of Minerals in Your Mobile Device," this infographic identifies minerals used in U.S. Navy SEAL gear such as night vision goggles, strobes, lithium ion battery packs, and weapons; and identifies the minerals' countries of origin. This is part of a new series originated by the USGS; the text was approved by the Department of Defense.

On January 25, the city of Atlanta will host a Celebration of Success luncheon event focusing on the Urban Waters Federal Partnership in the Proctor Creek Watershed showcasing the multiple projects accomplished over the last few years. Invitees include representatives from the NGO, local community, corporate, and local, state, and federal governments. EPA has asked for representation from headquarters and regional director levels.

On January 25, the Department has been invited to participate in a meeting of the National Executing Committee for Space-based Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT EXCOM) to be held at the Pentagon. The Deputy Secretary serves as the DOI principal for the PNT EXCOM. The PNT EXCOM advises and coordinates among the federal departments and

agencies on policies, architectures, requirements, and resource allocation for maintaining and improving U.S. space-based PNT infrastructures, including the Global Positioning System (GPS), its augmentations, and relationships with foreign space-based PNT service providers.

On January 31, the USGS will release the 41st annual Mineral Commodity Summaries 2018. The 2018 report identifies events, trends, and issues in the domestic and international minerals industries from 2017. The report is the earliest comprehensive source of mineral production data for the world. It includes statistics on 88 mineral commodities that are important to the U.S. economy and national security. The report identifies events, trends, and issues in the domestic and international minerals industries. A news release is planned.

In January, Reclamation will announce the selected ideas for the Arsenic Sensor Challenge. The challenge seeks ideas for a rapid, low-cost monitoring of arsenic that will benefit water treatment plant operations, wastewater monitoring, contaminated site remediation, private well owners, scientific research and other interested parties.

In January, Reclamation is planning to release the FY 2018 Desalination and Water Purification funding opportunity (DWPR). The DWPR Program is helping Reclamation and its partners confront widening imbalances between supply and demand in basins throughout the Western United States through testing and development of new advanced water treatment technologies.

In January, the Bureau of Reclamation is planning to launch the Detecting Leaks and Flaws in Water Pipelines – Stage 1 Prize Competition. Reclamation and its collaborators are seeking methods and technologies that can reliably and easily detect leaks and flaws in operating pressurized water pipeline infrastructure regardless of size, depth of burial, pipe material or interior lining.

In January, the Bureau of Reclamation is planning to launch the Pathogen Monitoring for Potable Reuse – State 1 Prize Competition. Reclamation and Xylem, Inc., in collaboration with the Water Environment & Reuse Foundation, the State of California and the Environmental Protection Agency are seeking the development of improved monitoring techniques to protect public health and optimize operations at water treatment facilities. Success could facilitate public and regulatory acceptance of direct potable reuse systems.

In January, Reclamation intends to publish a Notice of Availability for a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement for the Yolo Bypass Salmonid Habitat Restoration and Fish Passage Project. The document addresses methods to improve fish passage and increase floodplain fisheries rearing habitat in the Yolo Bypass to benefit Sacramento winter-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley steelhead and the Southern Distinct Population Segment North American green sturgeon. The NOA will be published in the Federal Register once the decision memo is signed by the Deputy Secretary. The Federal Register Notice is pending Bureau approvals. Two public meetings have been rescheduled for public comment on Jan. 17 in Woodland and Jan. 18 in West Sacramento.

In January, Reclamation is planning to launch three grant funding opportunities for Water and Energy Efficiency Grants, Water Marketing Grants, and Small-scale Water Efficiency Projects.

Through WaterSMART Grants, Reclamation contributes to the Department of the Interior's priorities to modernize infrastructure, create a legacy of conservation stewardship, and utilize natural resources to ensure American energy is available to meet our security and economic needs by providing financial assistance to water managers for projects that seek to modernize water and energy infrastructure.

In the coming months, a USGS paper will be published that evaluates earthquake shaking hazard, risk and building and infrastructure design criteria for South America. The project was funded in part by the USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and uses the latest data, models, and methods applied in developing the U.S. building code maps. During the past century, South America has experienced many catastrophic earthquakes. New results indicate that over 150 million people live in areas with significantly elevated seismic hazard, primarily within the northern and western portions of the continent where tectonic earthquakes associated with subduction and crustal faulting are most common. Future earthquakes will most likely cause billions of dollars of economic losses and thousands of casualties across the most seismically active regions. The new ground shaking models presented in the report can be used for analyzing building design standards and improving risk assessments which can save lives and dollars by providing new information on where and how to strengthen buildings in vulnerable areas. The report will be published in the *Bulletin of the Seismological Society of America* and a USGS Top Story is being developed.

Major Press Inquiries

- USGS Alaska Science Center biologists Bob Gill, Lee Tibbitts and Brandt Meixell were all contacted by National Geographic Magazine for an upcoming story (March 2018) on migratory birds with an insert poster that will feature migratory pathways of numerous bird species, including some that have been studied by the USGS. Tibbitts and Meixell provided tracking data for the new map for bar-tailed godwits and greater white-fronted geese.
- Paul Steblein, USGS Wildland Fire Science Coordinator, was contacted by the Discovery Channel Canada Science and Technology show called 'Daily Planet' which showcases "the latest and greatest advancements in the sci-tech world" to learn about the work the USGS is doing in regards to the LA wildfires. The program also interviewed USGS fire ecologist Jon Keeley.
- **Media: Background Interview with BBC Assistant Producer for Upcoming Sea Otter Nature Series:** An assistant producer with the BBC is interested in speaking with sea otter ecologists from the USGS Western Ecological Research Center for a new wildlife series called, "First Year on Earth." If the center and producer are able to schedule a meeting, the interview will provide the producer with background information on environmental or anthropogenic variables affecting the range expansion of California's southern sea otters (*Enhydra lutris nereis*), and the physical and behavioral development of young otters. The BBC will partner with the Monterey Bay Aquarium to conduct three filming shoots on sea otters in Monterey Bay beginning in early-mid January and continuing through early May 2018.
- **Media: "The Verge" Interviews USGS Ecologist for Facebook Video on California's Tree Mortality:** On Tuesday, December 12, a reporter with The Verge (<https://www.theverge.com/>) interviewed Adrian Das of the USGS Western Ecological

Research Center (WERC) for an upcoming Facebook video about tree mortality in the Sierra Nevada of California. The interview's primary purpose was to provide the reporter with background information for the video. Das works for lead scientist Nathan Stephenson, out of WERC's Sequoia & Kings Canyon Field Station. Stephenson's research program identifies the way in which disease, insect attacks, drought, and other threats interact to affect tree mortality in the Sierra Nevada.