



Chairman Ken Calvert

*Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

Bureau of Land Management FY 2017 Budget Hearing Thursday, March 3, 2016 Opening Statement As Prepared

As the manager of more than 245 million acres of the nation's land and 700 million acres of its subsurface mineral estate, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is on the forefront of nearly every land management issue facing the nation today. BLM funding, programs, policies, and decisions especially affect Americans in the West, including me and my home state of California.

The President's budget proposes \$1.3 billion for BLM for fiscal year 2017. Overall, this is a \$7.1 million increase above fiscal year 2016. However, this seemingly moderate increase actually is much larger because of the fee proposals in the request.

We have many topics to discuss today regarding BLM's management of public lands and its funding request. I am certain we will cover the fee proposals, funding increases for hydraulic fracturing and other oil and gas regulations and the status of the sage-grouse conservation effort. We also will cover the proposed improvement to the wild horse and burro program and BLM's plans for the newly designated national monuments in California.

Once again, I have to express my disappointment with the proposals to collect \$16.5 million from a new fee for grazing permits and \$48 million from a new fee for oil and gas inspection. We all know that Congress has rejected these proposals in the past. I expect that we will reject them again for fiscal year 2017. The appropriations process is not the appropriate forum to debate these issues; they are best left to our colleagues on the authorizing committees.

BLM is proposing a \$15.2 million increase to implement "new rules and regulations" for its onshore oil and gas program. While not all of this is for the new rules, I do find it somewhat presumptuous to ask for an increase when the hydraulic fracturing rule is stayed and may be for some time, and the methane and waste reduction rule is in the early stages of its comment period. When these two regulations are considered along with the proposed changes to the planning process, BLM sure seems to be focused on a lot of new regulations these days.

Although we did not expect to be able to make significant investments in BLM's programs when we started the fiscal year 2016 process, I am pleased we were able to do so in a few places. Most significant was the \$45 million increase for sage-grouse conservation. The budget requests an

additional \$19 million, including a \$4 million increase to implement the National Seed Strategy, for fiscal year 2017.

The funding provided last fiscal year was primarily intended to put into place on-the-ground conservation measures to help restore sage-grouse habitat and the sagebrush ecosystem. We will need to know whether progress is being made with the existing funding as we weigh the request for additional funds.

Some States continue to have concerns with the Resource Management Plans for sage-grouse and the proposed mineral withdrawal. Thank you for your letter responding to the subcommittee's report language and for explaining how BLM worked with the States. I encourage you to continue these efforts and to develop additional guidance, which would help clarify the implementation process and provide certainty to States and other partners.

Regarding the proposal to establish a BLM Foundation. This Subcommittee is interested in this concept. It has proven to be a successful model for other Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture agencies. It also has the potential to supplement and complement BLM's work. However, Congress needs a legislative proposal in order to move forward. I hope that one is coming soon.

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