

Committee on Natural Resources
Oversight Hearing
1324 Longworth House Office Building
March 27, 2019
10:00 am

Hearing on “*Examining the Department of the Interior’s Spending Priorities and the President’s Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Proposal*”

Questions from Rep. Huffman for Scott Cameron, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget, U.S. Department of the Interior

1. There are 19 memos from the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) regarding oil and gas drilling on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The cover memo, “Priority Information Needs for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge 1002 Area,” notes that additional information on polar bears and 10 priority studies are needed.
 - Have any of these studies been completed? If so, when? Please provide any completed studies as referenced in the above FWS memos.
 - There is nothing in the FY20 Interior Budget that is allocated towards these studies, despite the need for roughly \$2.7 million for the polar bear study and \$1.25 million for the other studies, according to the FWS memos. How much of the Department’s FY20 budget will be used for the studies that are yet to be completed, and that are still needed to meet regulatory requirements, for the BLM-led EIS for the 1002 Area in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

2. Who in the Department outside of the Fish and Wildlife Service was aware of the existence of these memos? Were these memos sent to anyone in the Department outside the Fish and Wildlife Service? If so, who and when?

3. It is my understanding that the FWS memos were not released under Freedom of Information Act requests regarding efforts to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
 - Can you confirm that these were not released?
 - Can you confirm that these were also not listed as being withheld from the FOIA requests?
 - Was Department leadership aware that these memos were not released?

- If these were not released nor listed as being withheld, please provide documentation for the decision as to why these memos were not released under FOIA.
2. Reclamation's 2020 Budget Proposal includes \$54.8 million for the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) Restoration Fund. This fund provides water for wildlife refuges and fisheries restoration projects in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys. It is a key source of funding for the recovery of endangered fish species and the continued delivery of water and power to CVP users. Congress has annually appropriated money to this fund with clear direction that Reclamation must continue to collect the full amount of annual CVPIA restoration payments authorized by CVPIA section 3407. For the first time, in the 2020 Budget Proposal, Reclamation proposes to collect \$2 million less than the full amount of contractor payments.
- Can you explain the purpose behind the reduced CVPIA Restoration Fund budget request?
 - Can you confirm that the purpose behind the reduced CVPIA Restoration Fund budget request for 2020 is limited only to "resetting" the 3-year rolling average, to create more consistent collections and expenditures going forward?
 - Can you confirm that if Congress approves the request for this limited purpose, Reclamation does not intend to propose collections of less than the full amount of CVPIA Restoration Fund payments for any other purpose in the future?
 - Can you confirm that Reclamation is not proposing a change to the standard appropriations language for this item, which would continue to direct Reclamation to collect the full amount of mitigation fees going forward?