

Opening Statement
Chairman Alan S. Lowenthal
Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee Oversight Hearing:

Examining the Policies and Priorities of BOEM, BSEE, BLM, USGS, OSMRE
March 10, 2020

The Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources will come to order.

The Subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on the policies and priorities of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, the Bureau of Land Management, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, and the United States Geological Survey.

Under Committee Rule 4(f), any oral opening statements are limited to the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member or their designees.

I ask unanimous consent that all other Members' opening statements be made part of the hearing record if they are submitted to the Subcommittee Clerk by 5:00 pm today. [*pause*] Hearing no objection, so ordered.

I also ask unanimous consent that other Members of the Natural Resources Committee who are not members of the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee be allowed to sit on the dais and participate in the hearing. [*pause*] Hearing no objection, so ordered.

Today we are hearing testimony from the directors and acting directors of BOEM (like "roam"), BSEE ("Bessie"), B-L-M, U-S-G-S and O-S-M-R-E. It's an alphabet soup of agencies and titles but I want to thank them for appearing before the committee today.

All of these agencies perform critical missions on behalf of the American people in managing our public lands and waters and overseeing much of this country's

domestic energy production. Their missions lend themselves well to fostering our nation's energy transition and addressing the climate crisis.

Throughout this Congress we have had numerous hearings exploring ways that we can transform our public lands from being a net source of carbon pollution to a net source of carbon solutions.

But is that what we're going to hear about today? Of course not, this is the Trump Administration after all, where the number one priority is letting big polluters run roughshod over our public lands and waters by rolling back critical protections for clean air, clean water, clean lands, wildlife, public participation, and more.

How could these agencies possibly prioritize renewable wind energy when the President thinks wind turbines cause cancer?

This harmful Trump Agenda is made abundantly clear in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget requests that we are examining today.

Climate science and programs to help struggling communities would see enormous cuts, while fossil fuel programs would get bumped up.

If there is any silver lining to all of these highly problematic budgets, it's that they are a fantasy that even the President has already decided to ignore. Most prominently, he has completely reversed positions on the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a welcome change that Congress is already taking under consideration.

But while the chances of this budget becoming a reality are close to zero, that doesn't mean that this subcommittee isn't taking the proposal seriously, because it shows exactly where the Trump Administration wants to take us and just how far they are willing to go on behalf of big polluters.

Two reports in recent weeks highlight what this administration is trying to do.

Two weeks ago, in the Wall Street Journal, we learned that Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement Director Scott Angelle attempted to secretly change memos from technical experts in order to hide the fact that those recommendations went the other way from where the oil and gas industry, and Director Angelle, wanted to go.

Director Angelle has previously been the subject of national attention for encouraging oil and gas executives to call him on his cell phone to avoid leaving any kind of record of their discussions.

This is a breathtaking commitment to behind-the-scenes big-money influence that puts offshore workers and our environment at increased risk.

And just last week, the Government Accountability Office reported that the move of the Bureau of Land Management headquarters to Grand Junction, Colorado, was poorly planned and barely analyzed.

As the G-A-O concluded, quote, “BLM has not substantially followed key practices for effective agency reforms relevant to relocating employees.” End quote.

This is why it was not surprising to find out late last week that despite Director Pendley’s rosy proclamations in the past, more than half of the B-L-M employees who were asked to move out West have refused to go.

Together, the news from BSEE (“Bessie”) and B-L-M are perfect examples of the Trump administration’s priorities in action: doing the oil and gas industry’s bidding, and intentionally trying to make our government worse.

In both cases, dedicated public servants – non-political experts in their field – are being deliberately ignored or gleefully purged.

It shouldn’t be this way.

Democrats on this Subcommittee are committed to ensuring that federal agencies prioritize public health, community input, and environmental safeguards over corporate profits, and we are going to fight efforts from the Trump administration to take us in the opposite direction through this misguided budget.

With that, I now recognize Ranking Member Gosar for his opening statement.