

**EXAMINING THE PRESIDENT'S FY 2025  
BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT AND  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

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**OVERSIGHT HEARING**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**  
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

**To:** House Committee on Natural Resources Republican Members

**From:** Subcommittee on Federal Lands—Aniela Butler, Taylor Wiseman, and Colen Morrow (Aniela@mail.house.gov, Taylor.Wiseman@mail.house.gov, and Colen.Morrow@mail.house.gov, x6-7736); and Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources—Ashley McManus, Rob MacGregor, and Jeanne Kuehl (Ashley.McManus@mail.house.gov, Robert.MacGregor@mail.house.gov, Jeanne.Kuehl@mail.house.gov x5-9297)

**Date:** Wednesday, May 15, 2024

**Subject:** Oversight Hearing on “*Examining the President’s FY 2025 Budget Request for the Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service*”

The Subcommittee on Federal Lands will hold an oversight hearing on “*Examining the President’s FY 2025 Budget Request for the Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service*” on **Wednesday, May 15, 2024, at 10:15 a.m. in room 1324 Longworth House Office Building.**

Member offices are requested to notify Will Rodriguez (Will.Rodriguez@mail.house.gov) by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 14, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

#### **I. KEY MESSAGES**

- The Biden administration’s proposed budget for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the National Park Service (NPS) is out of touch with the issues everyday Americans are facing, like high energy costs, inflation, and lack of access to public lands. The budget harms rural communities, families, and small businesses.
- The BLM budget is a fundamental threat to the Western way of life, focusing on topics like climate change, environmental justice, and clean energy at the expense of rural Americans whose jobs depend on the multiple uses of our public lands.
- The NPS budget inexplicably cuts programs that improve access to our nation’s crown jewels and reduce the deferred maintenance backlog to fund vague and undefined administration priorities.
- In contrast, Committee Republicans have advanced commonsense, bipartisan solutions that allow access to our abundant federal lands to support American energy dominance, national security, and rural economies.

#### **II. WITNESSES**

- **The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning**, Director, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC.
- **The Honorable Charles F. “Chuck” Sams III**, Director, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC.

### III. BACKGROUND

#### *Budget Totals of Select Accounts*

Agency	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Annualized CR	FY 2025 Request	Change, FY 2024 Annualized CR to FY 2025
<b><i>Bureau of Land Management (BLM)</i></b>	<b><i>\$1.99 billion</i></b>	<b><i>\$2.03 billion</i></b>	<b><i>\$2.06 billion</i></b>	<b><i>+\$31.5 million</i></b>
Management of Lands and Resources	\$1.37 billion	\$1.37 billion	\$1.4 billion	+26.3 million
Range Improvements	\$9.4 million	\$9.4 million	\$9.4 million	-
Land Acquisition	\$70.0 million	\$73.9 million	\$78.2 million	+\$4.4 million
<b><i>National Park Service (NPS)</i></b>	<b><i>\$6.24 billion</i></b>	<b><i>\$4.72 billion</i></b>	<b><i>\$4.81 billion</i></b>	<b><i>+89.1 million</i></b>
Operation of the National Park System	\$2.92 billion	\$2.92 billion	\$3.09 billion	+\$167.0 million
Centennial Challenge	\$15 million	\$15 million	\$13 million	-\$2.0 million
National Recreation and Preservation	\$95.51 million	\$92.51 million	\$84.42 million	-\$8.09 million
Land Acquisition and State Assistance	\$578.85 million	\$547.74 million	\$532.89 million	-\$14.86 million
Construction (and Major Maintenance)	\$1.74 billion	\$239.8 million	\$237.2 million	-\$2.6 million

#### **Bureau of Land Management**

*Overview*—The BLM manages 245 million acres of public lands, heavily concentrated (99 percent) in the 11 western continental states and Alaska, and 714 million acres of federal subsurface mineral estate.<sup>1</sup> The BLM manages approximately 1 out of every 10 surface acres and 1 out of 3 subsurface acres in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> Under the agency’s enabling statute, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), BLM manages public lands based on a multiple-use and sustained yield mandate (multiple-use mandate) that supports livestock grazing, energy and mineral development, recreation, timber production, watershed protection, and wildlife and fish habitat.<sup>3</sup> In FY 2022, activities undertaken on BLM-managed lands supported almost \$263 billion in economic output and approximately 1 million jobs.<sup>4</sup> BLM lands attract over 82 million visitors annually.<sup>5</sup> The President’s FY 2025 budget includes \$1.556 billion in discretionary appropriations for the BLM, a 7.1 percent increase from the FY 2024 annualized Continuing Resolution (CR). This includes an additional 104 full-time equivalents (FTEs), or staff.

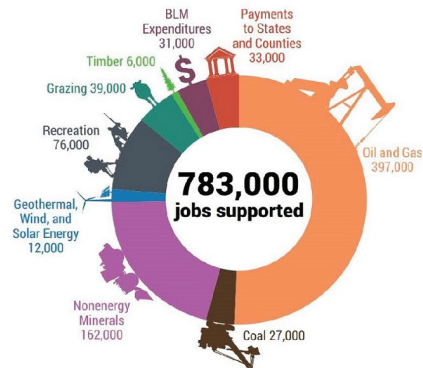
<sup>1</sup> Federal Lands and Related Resources: Overview and Selected Issues for the 118th Congress, Congressional Research Service, February 24, 2023, <https://www.crs.gov/Reports/R43429>.

<sup>2</sup> FY 2025 Bureau of Land Management Greenbook, U.S. Department of the Interior, <https://www.doi.gov/media/document/fy-2025-bureau-land-management-greenbook>.

<sup>3</sup> Federal Lands and Related Resources: Overview and Selected Issues for the 118th Congress, Congressional Research Service, February 24, 2023, <https://www.crs.gov/Reports/R43429>.

<sup>4</sup> FY 2025 Bureau of Land Management Greenbook, U.S. Department of the Interior, <https://www.doi.gov/media/document/fy-2025-bureau-land-management-greenbook>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*



Source: BLM, 2022.

*Onshore Oil and Gas Program*—In FY 2023, Federal oil production on Federal and Native American lands totaled 588 million barrels, and natural gas production on Federal and Native American lands totaled roughly 4 trillion cubic feet.<sup>6</sup> While oil and natural gas production increased on Federal lands from FY 2022, production dropped on Native American lands.<sup>7</sup> Federal and Native American leases generated approximately \$8.94 billion in bonus bids, royalties, rents, and other revenues in FY 2023.<sup>8</sup> Nearly half of the revenue from Federal leases was distributed to states in accordance with statutory revenue-sharing provisions.<sup>9</sup>

The Mineral Leasing Act explicitly states that “lease sales shall be held for each State where eligible lands are available at least quarterly and more frequently if the Secretary of the Interior determines such sales are necessary.”<sup>10</sup> In his first days in office, President Biden imposed an indefinite pause on new oil and natural gas leasing on U.S. federal lands and waters.<sup>11</sup> On June 15, 2021, a U.S. District Court judge placed an injunction on the Department of the Interior’s (DOI’s) unlawful moratorium and ordered DOI to restart the leasing process.<sup>12</sup> In response, the Biden administration appealed the decision and continued to delay scheduling lease sales.<sup>13</sup>

Despite these actions, the Biden administration has attempted to take credit for the increase in production on Federal lands, even though most, if not all, of production is occurring on leases issued by previous administrations. The Biden administration did not hold an onshore Federal lease sale until June 2022 and only held 19 lease sales over its first three years.<sup>14</sup> By contrast, the Trump administration held 82 lease sales over its first three years.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Natural Resources Revenue Data, <https://revenue.data.doi.gov/query-data>.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> 30 U.S. Code § 226.

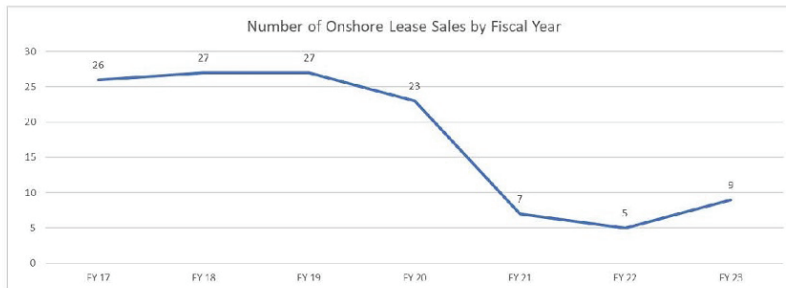
<sup>11</sup> Exec. Order 14008, 86 Fed. Reg. 19, 7619 (Jan. 27, 2021).

<sup>12</sup> Joshua Partlow & Juliet Eilperin, “Louisiana judge blocks Biden Administration’s oil and gas leasing pause,” The Washington Post, June, 15, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/06/15/louisiana-judge-blocks-biden-administrations-oil-gas-leasing-pause/>.

<sup>13</sup> Valerie Volcovici, “Biden administration appeals federal court decision to block oil, gas leasing pause,” Reuters, August 16, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/biden-administration-appeals-federal-court-decision-block-oil-gas-leasing-pause-2021-08-16/>.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, State Oil and Gas Lease Sales, <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/oil-and-gas/leasing/regional-lease-sales>.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*



**Source:** HNRC Majority Staff, using data from BLM, 2024.

*Note: All lease sales held in FY 21 were held by the Trump administration.*

The BLM's FY 2025 budget request would continue the Biden administration's war on domestic energy production and small businesses by requesting a new onshore oil and gas inspection fee, repealing the enhanced oil recovery credit and the marginal well credit, and proposing to end expensing of intangible drilling costs and the use of percentage depletion with respect to oil and gas development.<sup>16</sup> The President's budget does not explain how BLM will address the permitting backlogs for oil and gas drilling permits, which stood at 5,492 pending permits in the latest published report.<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, the BLM has recently taken new regulatory actions to further impede future oil and gas production on federal lands. Last month, for example, the BLM issued a final rule to update its oil and gas leasing regulations.<sup>18</sup> The rule would formally implement provisions from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which increased the royalty rate for production on federal lands but would also make major, non-statutory changes to the BLM's onshore leasing program. Specifically, the rule proposes ending nationwide bonding and increasing the minimum bond amounts for individual lease bonds and statewide lease bonds from \$10,000 to \$150,000 and from \$25,000 to \$500,000, respectively. These significant increases would tie up capital that would otherwise be put back into production. This result is unjustifiable, given that only 37 orphaned oil and gas wells are on BLM-managed lands.<sup>19</sup> The rule would also formalize the use of "preference criteria" to inform the BLM's selection of lands for lease sales.<sup>20</sup> The BLM's stated rationale for this change is to avoid conflict in areas with cultural, wildlife, and recreation resources.<sup>21</sup> This nebulous methodology could be especially problematic if BLM field offices avoid leasing in all areas with endangered or threatened species, critical habitat, or a nearby recreation area. Additionally, this new criterion would be legally binding and could open the BLM up to increased litigation if the agency leased in areas with these resources. Lastly, the rule proposes to create new fees and increase existing fees while limiting the use of lease suspensions and drilling permit extensions.<sup>22</sup> H.R. 6009, which was introduced by Representative Boebert to nullify the rule, passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 216–200.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Bureau of Land Management, Budget Justification and Performance Information Fiscal Year 2025, <https://www.doi.gov/media/document/fy-2025-bureau-land-management-greenbook>. Office of Management and Budget, Budget of the U.S. Government: Fiscal Year 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/budget-fy2025.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Application for Permit to Drill Status Report: 1/1/2024 to 1/31/2024, Bureau of Land Management, <https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2024-03/BLM-FY2024-Application-for-Permit-to-Drill-Status-Report-January-2024.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Bureau of Land Management, Fluid Mineral Leases and Leasing Process, 89 FR 30916, April 23, 2024, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/23/2024-08138/fluid-mineral-leases-and-leasing-process>.

<sup>19</sup> United States Department of the Interior, Questions for the Record Response for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Full Committee Hearing "To Examine the Department of the Interior's Implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act" held on December 13, 2022, June 22, 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Bureau of Land Management, Fluid Mineral Leases and Leasing Process, 89 FR 30916, April 23, 2024, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/23/2024-08138/fluid-mineral-leases-and-leasing-process>.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives. Roll Call 95. H.R. 6009. <https://clerk.house.gov/Votes/202495>.

Last month, the BLM also finalized its “Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation” rule.<sup>24</sup> This rule aims to regulate methane emissions for oil operations on BLM lands by forcing companies to pay royalties on uncaptured methane. The rule builds off of a similar regulation that was finalized during the Obama administration and later vacated by the Federal District Court for the District of Wyoming.<sup>25</sup> Judge Scott Skavdahl, an Obama appointee, stated in his decision that “although the stated purpose of the Rule is waste prevention, significant aspects of the Rule evidence its primary purpose being driven by an effort to regulate air emissions, particularly greenhouse gases.”<sup>26</sup> In addition to exceeding its statutory authority by trying to regulate air emissions, Judge Skavdahl also found that BLM failed to adequately consider the rule’s costs, benefits, and impacts on marginal wells.<sup>27</sup>

The new final rule would require operators to submit either a Waste Minimization Plan (WMP), including certification of a valid, executed contract to sell the associated gas, or a self-certification of 100 percent capture of associated gas with oil-well applications for permit to drill (APDs).<sup>28</sup> The final rule would also set time and volume limits on royalty-free (RF) flaring. It would not allow operators to request that flared oil-well gas be deemed RF based on case-by-case economic assessments.<sup>29</sup> The new requirements in the rule would significantly impact small oil and gas producers and marginal wells. Concerningly, the economic analysis that the rule relies on is incomplete. At the end of last month, the states of North Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, and Texas filed a claim against the final regulation, alleging that BLM has once again exceeded its statutory authority and that BLM’s cost-benefit analysis fails to meaningfully account for the rule’s impact on operators.<sup>30</sup>

On September 8, 2023, BLM issued a proposed rule, “Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska” (NPR-A), further limiting oil and gas leasing in the NPR-A.<sup>31</sup> The final rule, issued earlier this month, was largely unchanged and would require BLM to review and gather public input at least every ten years to determine whether BLM should create, expand, or add resources to Special Areas within the NPR-A.<sup>32</sup> In the rule, the BLM essentially reinterprets the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976 (NPRPA) by treating 13.1 million acres of Special Areas in the NPR-A as *de facto* wilderness.<sup>33</sup> However, NPRPA clearly states that DOI must “conduct an expeditious program of competitive leasing of oil and gas in the Reserve.”<sup>34</sup> The entire Alaska delegation, along with a majority of stakeholders on the North Slope, opposes the rule. They openly criticize the administration for ignoring their concerns and limiting engagement.<sup>35</sup> In response,

<sup>24</sup> Bureau of Land Management, Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation, April 10, 2024, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/10/2024-06827/waste-prevention-production-subject-to-royalties-and-resource-conservation#:~:text=On%20November%2030%2C%202022%2C%20the,gas%20from%20venting%2C%20flaring%2C%20and.>

<sup>25</sup> F.R. 83008 (November 18, 2016), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/18/2016-27637/waste-prevention-production-subject-to-royalties-and-resource-conservation>. United States District Court for the District of Wyoming, Scott W. Skavdahl, Case 2:16-cv-00285-SWS, October 8, 2020, [https://climatecasechart.com/wp-content/uploads/case-documents/2020/20201008\\_docket-216-cv-00285\\_order-1.pdf](https://climatecasechart.com/wp-content/uploads/case-documents/2020/20201008_docket-216-cv-00285_order-1.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> Bureau of Land Management, Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation, April 10, 2024, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/10/2024-06827/waste-prevention-production-subject-to-royalties-and-resource-conservation#:~:text=On%20November%2030%2C%202022%2C%20the,gas%20from%20venting%2C%20flaring%2C%20and.>

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> United States District Court for the District of North Dakota Western Division, Case 1:24-cv-00066-DMT-CRH, April 24, 2024, <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/eenews/t/eenews/?id=0000018f=16b2-da17-adbf=77b683c10000>.

<sup>31</sup> Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, 43 CFR 2360 (September 8, 2023), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2023-09-08/pdf/2023-18990.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Bureau of Land Management, Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, May 7, 2024, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2024-05-07/pdf/2024-08585.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> 42 U.S.C. 6501.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> Senator Dan Sullivan, Press Releases, “Delegation, Alaska Leaders: Biden Administration Puts American Energy Security at Risk; Harms the State and Alaska Native Communities,” September 6, 2023 <https://www.sullivan.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/delegation-alaska-leaders-biden-administration-puts-american-energy-security-at-riskharms-the-state-and-alaska-native-communities>. The VOICE of the Arctic Inupiat Resolution No. 2024-01, Opposing the

Representative Stauber introduced the “Alaska’s Right to Produce Act of 2023,” which passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 214–199.<sup>36</sup>

*Renewable Energy Program*—While the Biden administration has taken action to stifle conventional energy sources on BLM lands, it continues to push renewable energy development forward. The FY 2025 budget justifies this bias by citing the administration’s unrealistic commitments to achieve a carbon-pollution-free power sector by 2035 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.<sup>37</sup> Through the Renewable Energy Management Program, the BLM oversees the processing of rights-of-way (ROW) applications and leases for wind and solar energy, geothermal energy leasing and production, and transmission development. The budget request includes \$53.1 million for BLM’s onshore renewable energy program, which is \$12.1 million above the 2024 CR level.<sup>38</sup> The BLM’s increased request aims to help with the permitting process by hiring more staff. Still, it fails to include any meaningful legislative proposals to streamline permitting processes, like reforming the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which continues to hamstring renewable energy development. House Republicans passed provisions in H.R. 1, the “Lower Energy Costs Act,” sponsored by Rep. Scalise, that would streamline the NEPA process for all forms of energy, including renewables.<sup>39</sup>

The BLM furthered its bias for renewable energy through recent rulemakings. In May, BLM finalized its “Rights-of-Way, Leasing, and Operations for Renewable Energy” rule to update its procedures governing renewable energy and right-of-way programs. Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) requires ROW grant holders and leaseholders to pay the “fair market value” for using public lands.<sup>40</sup> The fair market value is paid to BLM in the form of rental fees and megawatt capacity fees. The BLM’s final regulation would significantly reduce acreage rents and capacity fees by 80 percent for renewable energy sources on BLM land through 2035. BLM is citing the authority provided to the agency in the “Energy Act of 2020,” which allows BLM to “reduce acreage rental rates and capacity fees” to “promote the greatest use of wind and solar energy resources.”<sup>41</sup>

In January, BLM published its Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Utility-Scale Solar Energy Development (Western Solar Plan) in the Federal Register.<sup>42</sup> The Western Solar Plan amends the 2012 Western Solar Plan to include 11 western states (there were only 6 in the 2012 Plan) and identifies 22 million acres of land open for solar applications.<sup>43</sup> The proposed alternative has caused dissent among western Republicans, who believe it will limit the multiple uses of federal lands. Environmental special interest groups, on the other hand, argue that too much land is currently being made available for leasing. Additionally, the solar industry and the State of Nevada both disagree with the revisions, claiming that they are too restrictive and do not make enough land available for solar leasing.<sup>44</sup>

*Hardrock Mining*—While no recommendations for streamlining the permitting process for new hardrock mines are included in the budget request, DOI issued a report from the Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Mining Reform in September

Proposed Rule for the Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, [https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/UploadedFiles/VOICE\\_Resolution\\_2024-01.pdf](https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/UploadedFiles/VOICE_Resolution_2024-01.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> <https://clerk.house.gov/evs/2024/roll174.xml>.

<sup>37</sup> FY 2025 Bureau of Land Management Greenbook, Page V-90, <https://www.doi.gov/media/document/fy-2025-bureau-land-management-greenbook>.

<sup>38</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, FY2025 Budget in Briefs—Departmental Overview, <https://www.doi.gov/media/document/fy2025-budget-briefs-departmental-highlights>.

<sup>39</sup> H.R. 1, 118th Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/1>.

<sup>40</sup> 43 U.S.C. 1761-1772.

<sup>41</sup> 43 U.S.C. 3003.

<sup>42</sup> Bureau of Land Management, Notice of Availability of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Utility-Scale Solar Energy Development and Notice of Public Meetings, January 19, 2024, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/01/19/2024-00730/notice-of-availability-of-the-draft-programmatic-environmental-impact-statement-for-utility-scale>.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*

<sup>44</sup> Senate Letter to Director Tracy Stone-Manning on the Western Solar Plan Revision, May 2, 2024, <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/eenews/f/eenews/?id=0000018f-39a5-d476-ab9f-b9a733e00000>. Climate, conservation, environmental justice, and tribal organizations letter to Secretary Haaland on the Western Solar Plan Revision, 4/18/24, [https://www.wilderness.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Western%20Solar%20Plan%20NGO%20letter%20to%20Sec.%20Haaland\\_April%202024\\_2.pdf](https://www.wilderness.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Western%20Solar%20Plan%20NGO%20letter%20to%20Sec.%20Haaland_April%202024_2.pdf). Solar Industry Concerns on BLM Draft Solar PEIS and Director McClintock letter to Secretary Haaland on BLM Draft Solar PEIS, April 2, 2024, [https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/solar\\_industry\\_concerns.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/solar_industry_concerns.pdf).

2023.<sup>45</sup> Although the report aimed to identify recommendations to alleviate permitting delays, some suggestions—like imposing a royalty on production and shifting the mining claims system to a leasing system—would be detrimental to the hardrock mining industry.<sup>46</sup> On February 12, 2024, BLM posted a notice seeking comments on vague mine permitting metrics which were informed by the IWG report.<sup>47</sup> This notice was posted to BLM’s website instead of the Federal Register.

Despite the Biden administration’s acknowledgment that the U.S.’s “over-reliance on foreign sources and adversarial nations for critical minerals and materials [pose] national and economic security threats,” DOI continues to shutter domestic mineral development.<sup>48</sup> In January 2022, the Biden administration canceled Twin Metals Minnesota’s two-decades-old mineral leases and simultaneously began the withdrawal process of over 225,000 acres of mineral-rich land in the same area, effectively barring new extraction of minerals such as copper, nickel, cobalt, platinum, and iron ore.<sup>49</sup> In response, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3195, the “Superior National Forest Restoration Act,” by a vote of 212–203 to reverse these counterproductive measures.<sup>50</sup>

More recently, on April 19, 2024, BLM recommended the “no action” alternative in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Ambler Mining District Industrial Access Road (Ambler Road) in Alaska.<sup>51</sup> BLM’s decision to refuse a ROW permit on the small section of the proposed 211-mile Ambler Road that crosses federal lands not only impedes access to an estimated \$7.5 billion in copper and other minerals such as zinc, cobalt, silver, and gold, it also hinders development that could bring Alaska over 65,000 jobs, \$5 billion in wages, and \$1.3 billion in state and local revenues.<sup>52</sup> During a May 1, 2024, hearing before the full Committee, Secretary Haaland testified that DOI has “. . . approved 40 mining or mining modification permits since the President has been in office, that includes five critical mineral mines.”<sup>53</sup> However, she was unable to answer questions about which minerals these mines would extract, and DOI has yet to provide the Committee with requested, specific data on these actions.

*Coal Leasing Program*—While the June 2021 preliminary injunction applies specifically to the oil and gas leasing program, the administration continued its ban on coal leasing. On August 15, 2022, a federal judge fully reinstated the coal moratorium on new leasing.<sup>54</sup> In February 2024, the Ninth Circuit vacated this

<sup>45</sup> DOI, Press Release, Biden-Harris Administration Report Outlines Reforms Needed to Promote Responsible Mining on Public Lands, <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/biden-harris-administration-report-outlines-reforms-needed-promote-responsible-mining>.

<sup>46</sup> NMA, Press Release, IWG Recommendation on mining Unworkable and Unreasonable, <https://nma.org/2023/09/12/iwg-recommendations-on-mining-unworkable-and-unreasonable/>.

<sup>47</sup> BLM, Mining Performance Metrics, <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/mining-and-minerals/mining-performance-metrics>.

<sup>48</sup> White House, Press Release, FACT SHEET: Securing a Made in America Supply Chain for Critical Minerals, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/02/22/fact-sheet-securing-a-made-in-america-supply-chain-for-critical-minerals/>.

<sup>49</sup> DOI, Press Release, Biden Administration Takes Action to Complete Study of Boundary Waters Area Watershed, <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/biden-administration-takes-action-complete-study-boundary-waters-area-watershed>.

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3195>.

<sup>51</sup> DOI, Press Release, Biden-Harris Administration Takes Critical Action to Protect Alaska Native Subsistence, Lands and Wildlife, <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/biden-harris-administration-takes-critical-action-protect-alaska-native-subsistence>.

<sup>52</sup> Lisa Friedman, “Interior Said to Reject Industrial Road Through Alaskan Wilderness”, N.Y. Times, Apr. 18, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/16/climate/ambler-road-alaska-interior.html>. DOI, Press Release, Trump Administration Supports Alaskan Infrastructure Development to Mine Critical Minerals, <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/trump-administration-supports-alaskan-infrastructure-development-mine-critical>.

<sup>53</sup> Examining the President’s FY 2025 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior: Hearing Before the Comm. On Natural Resources, 118th Cong. (2024) (testimony of Debra Haaland, Sec., Dep’t of the Interior).

<sup>54</sup> Clark Mindock, “Judge reinstates Obama-era coal-leasing ban,” Reuters, August 15, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/litigation/judge-reinstates-obama-era-coal-leasing-ban-2022-08-13/>.

decision.<sup>55</sup> Despite the favorable ruling, DOI has failed to reverse course and resume proper review of expansion plans.<sup>56</sup>

*30x30 Initiative and Locking Up Lands*—The Biden administration continues to conduct orchestrated attacks on public lands, using a variety of tools to further the 30x30 agenda. These preservationist policies limit access, hurt local economies, and remove uses of public lands that benefit Americans. The Biden budget continues to support the 30x30 Initiative, including through several references in the BLM budget.<sup>57</sup> On May 6, 2021, DOI and other federal departments released an “interim” report titled “Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful,” which outlined a 10-year campaign to preserve 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030.<sup>58</sup> The administration proposed an American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas in this report. Nearly three years later, the administration finally published this Atlas, even though DOI has already been implementing 30x30 without clear goals or definitions and in whatever manner it considers to be convenient on any given day.<sup>59</sup> These measures continually threaten working lands, private landowners, and multiple uses of land.

President Biden has recently designated several new national monuments using authorities under the Antiquities Act of 1906.<sup>60</sup> Earlier this month, the President expanded a BLM-managed monument in California that DOI claimed would “advance” the goal of conserving 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030.<sup>61</sup> DOI also claimed, without citation, that the administration has “conserved more than 41 million acres of lands and waters, putting President Biden on track to conserve more lands and waters than any President in history.”<sup>62</sup> This follows a concerning trend indicating that the only lands the administration is counting toward its 30x30 goal are lands with the most restrictive designations, including national monuments and wilderness areas.

*BLM Public Lands Rule*—The BLM announced its final so-called “Conservation and Landscape Health” rule (Public Lands Rule) on April 18, 2024.<sup>63</sup> The Public Lands Rule will fundamentally upend the agency’s longstanding, statutory multiple use and sustained yield mandate and cede control of federal lands to wealthy elites and environmental extremists. The final rule, published on May 9, 2024, will broadly allow the BLM to lease lands under new and vaguely defined restoration and mitigation leases and change standards around land use decisions. If the administration determines uses authorized under FLPMA, such as grazing, energy production, mining, or recreation, are incompatible with a lease, land health standards, or an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), those uses would not be allowed. They could be prohibited indefinitely from those lands. This would effectively lock up lands for multiple uses, including potential historic uses of the land. To prevent such abuses, Representative Curtis introduced H.R. 3397, the “Western Economic Security Today (WEST) Act” in May of 2023. The bill, which would

<sup>55</sup> Hannah Northey and Niina Farah, “9th Circuit ruling axes Obama-era freeze on coal leasing”, E&E, Feb. 21, 2024, <https://www.eenews.net/articles/9th-circuit-ruling-axes-obama-era-freeze-on-coal-leasing/#:~:text=The%20appellate%20court%20panel%20found,moratorium%20on%20new%20coal%20leasing.&text=A%20federal%20appellate%20court%20on,coal%20leases%20on%20public%20lands>.

<sup>56</sup> Hannah Northey, “Coal Company sues Interior over delayed leasing,” Mar. 7, 2024, <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2024/03/07/coal-company-sues-interior-over-delayed-leasing-00145339>.

<sup>57</sup> BLM, Budget Justification, FY 2025, <https://www.doi.gov/media/document/fy-2025-bureau-land-management-greenbook>.

<sup>58</sup> DOI, “Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful,” 2021, <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/report-conserving-and-restoring-america-the-beautiful-2021.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas, launched April 19, 2024, <https://www.conservation.gov/pages/atlas-and-data>.

<sup>60</sup> The White House, “Fact Sheet: President Biden Expands San Gabriel Mountains National Monument and Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument”, May 2, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/05/02/fact-sheet-president-biden-expands-san-gabriel-mountains-national-monument-and-berryessa-snow-mountain-national-monument/>.

<sup>61</sup> DOI, “Secretary Haaland Celebrates President Biden’s Expansion of Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument,” May 2, 2024, <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/secretary-haaland-celebrates-president-bidens-expansion-berryessa-snow-mountain>.

<sup>62</sup> *Id.*

<sup>63</sup> Public Lands Rule, Bureau of Land Management, accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2024-04/BLM-Conservation-Landscape-Health-Final-Rule.pdf>.



prevent the BLM from implementing the final rule, passed the House of Representatives with a bipartisan vote on April 30, 2024.<sup>64</sup>

*Biden Border Crisis*—President Biden’s policies continue exacerbating the southern border crisis. Some of the most dangerous areas along the U.S.-Mexico border are the estimated 693 miles of federal land, representing approximately 35 percent of the total 1,965 miles of the southern border.<sup>65</sup> Of this total, BLM managed 172.8 miles, or roughly 25 percent, of federal borderlands.<sup>66</sup> Although the federal government seeks to protect the ecological and recreational value of these lands, such areas are often targeted by criminals, drug smugglers, and human traffickers because they are remote, thinly populated, and less frequently patrolled.<sup>67</sup> The illegal dumping of trash and wildfires sparked by campfires from illegal border crossers threatens wildlife, destroy habitat, and deprive the public of access to federally owned lands.

Despite the increasing severity of the Biden Border Crisis, the word “border” appears just once in the entire 260-page DOI budget document, specifically with reference to a \$1 million investment in water infrastructure along the Texas border and a \$11 million *reduction* in requested funds for “Unites States/Mexico Border Issues—Technical Support.” In contrast, the word “climate” appears 128 times, and the word “justice” appears 33 times (usually in reference to racial and environmental justice).<sup>68</sup> Within the BLM budget, the word “border” only appears one time in the context of the southern border. The BLM’s only proposed increase for law enforcement along the southern border is \$250,000 to hire a Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Coordinator.<sup>69</sup>

*Forest and Rangeland Health*—While the BLM’s budget proposes \$11.03 million for Public Domain Forest Management, an increase of \$276,000, most of this increase comes from rising fixed costs. The budget actually proposes a \$63,000 decrease in forest management, which “will result in slightly fewer acres treated” compared to FY 2023 and a reduction of 50,000 for seedlings re-planted.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps even more concerning, the BLM budget proposes reducing timber outputs by 19 percent in Western Oregon “to focus on protection of mature and old-growth forests and improving forest health and fire resilience.”<sup>71</sup> This exemplifies the misguided and unscientific approach the Biden administration has taken to managing old-growth forests. In fact, the administration’s own report on old-growth forests found that wildfire, insects, and diseases were the leading threats to old-growth forests, and “tree cutting” generally “improved or maintained” managed stands.<sup>72</sup>

### National Park Service

*Overview*—NPS manages 429 park units covering over 85 million acres in all 50 U.S. states and territories.<sup>73</sup> Unlike the BLM, which manages lands for multiple use, NPS manages units of the National Park System “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”<sup>74</sup> NPS’s FY 2025 budget requests \$3.58

<sup>64</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, Clerk, Roll Call 165, Bill Number: H.R. 3397, <https://clerk.house.gov/Votes/2024165>.

<sup>65</sup> Note: This estimate ranges from 632 miles to 820 miles. Federal and Indian Lands on the U.S.-Mexico Border, Congressional Research Service, February 21, 2018, <https://www.crs.gov/Reports/IF10832>.

<sup>66</sup> *Id.*

<sup>67</sup> Statement of Brandon Judd on behalf of the National Border Patrol Council, Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations Republican Forum: “The Biden Border Crisis: Environmental and Humanitarian Consequences”, May 27, 2021, [https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/brandon\\_judd\\_testimony\\_biden\\_border\\_crisis\\_forum.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/brandon_judd_testimony_biden_border_crisis_forum.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> DOI, Fiscal Year 2025 The Interior Budget in Brief, March 2024, <https://www.doi.gov/media/document/fy2025-508-bib-entire-document>.

<sup>69</sup> *Id.* Page V-140.

<sup>70</sup> *Id.* Page V-45.

<sup>71</sup> *Id.* Page VII-24.

<sup>72</sup> U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, “Analysis of Threats to Mature and Old-Growth Forests on Lands Managed by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, January 2024,” [https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs\\_media/fs\\_document/MOG-Threats-Intro.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/MOG-Threats-Intro.pdf).

<sup>73</sup> NPS, “About Us,” <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/faqs.htm>.

<sup>74</sup> *Id.* Bureau Highlights, NPS-1.

billion in discretionary funding, an increase of \$101.1 million over FY 2024 CR levels.<sup>75</sup> This will support an estimated 19,953 FTEs, an increase of 134 employees.

*Deferred Maintenance Backlog*—Deferred maintenance at sites and facilities throughout the National Park System has proven to be a perennial issue plaguing NPS despite unprecedented investments from the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). Four years after GAOA’s passage, the NPS backlog has inexplicably risen from \$12.7 billion in FY 2019 to \$23.3 billion at the end of FY 2023 (the most recent year for which data is available), a staggering \$10.6 billion increase.<sup>76</sup> Between FY 2022 and FY 2023, the backlog rose by nearly \$1 billion.<sup>77</sup>

One of the most perplexing questions about NPS’s rising deferred maintenance backlog is the agency’s methodology to track and report deferred maintenance projects. Earlier this year, the DOI Inspector General testified before the subcommittee that:

*NPS was unable to effectively identify and manage its deferred maintenance, in large part due to inaccurate and unreliable data. Furthermore, the NPS applied a blanket 35 percent markup to its FY 2021 deferred maintenance, which resulted in a \$3.7 billion increase to the estimated costs of the NPS’ deferred maintenance in just one year.*<sup>78</sup>

In its FY 2025 budget justification, NPS stated that it “continued to transition assets to the new methodology,” although it is unclear when the methodology will fully be put into place.<sup>79</sup> If NPS continues to have unreliable and inconsistent data on its backlog, both the agency and Congress will be unable to appropriately address the issue or provide meaningful solutions.

For FY 2025, NPS listed 50 priority projects to receive the final round of GAOA funding.<sup>80</sup> Included in the priority project request was \$40 million in repairs for the Gateway National Recreation Area in New York, the same unit that the Biden administration is currently using to house thousands of illegal immigrants.<sup>81</sup> It is unclear whether any of these funds will be used to construct or improve housing for illegal migrants or how much the misguided decision to use NPS facilities for migrant housing exacerbated any deferred maintenance issues. The priority project list also included \$45 million in repairs for the White House. Rather than focusing funding on crown jewels, the administration is once again spending tens of millions of taxpayer dollars in liberal, urban centers like Washington, DC. Concerningly, the project list allocates more than \$97 million for the “Contingency Fund.” The Contingency Fund is designed to “address cost increases, unforeseen site conditions, and adapt project methods” in addition to supporting “successful completion of major [Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF)] projects that encounter challenges, ensuring projects are not delayed.”<sup>82</sup> The \$97 million allocated for the Contingency Fund is higher than all other 50 projects on the priority list and represents 8 percent of the total amount for FY 2025 projects. Given the 35 percent markup NPS has already applied to each deferred maintenance project, it is concerning that the agency is overestimating and overinflating the cost of individual projects.

*Facility Operation and Maintenance*—One of the most concerning aspects of NPS’s budget is a \$25 million decrease in repair and rehabilitation projects in the Facility Operation and Maintenance account. Instead, this account proposes \$3.1 million for “Increasing Representation on Our Public Lands.”<sup>83</sup> Repair and rehabilitation projects are critical to “address complex repair needs that arise on an infrequent or non-recurring basis” and “halting or correcting deterioration where preventive

<sup>75</sup> National Park Service, “Budget Justifications and Performance Information Fiscal Year 2025”, p. Overview–2, <https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-03/fy2025-508-nps-greenbook.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> *Id.* p. SpecEx-2.

<sup>77</sup> *Id.*

<sup>78</sup> House Natural Resources Committee, Testimony Greenblatt, [https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/testimony\\_greenblatt.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/testimony_greenblatt.pdf).

<sup>79</sup> *Id.* [https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-03/fy2025-508-nps-greenbook\\_2.pdf](https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-03/fy2025-508-nps-greenbook_2.pdf); SpecEx-1.

<sup>80</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, “FY2025 National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund—Appendix”, <https://www.doi.gov/media/document/fy2025-national-parks-and-public-land-legacy-restoration-fund-appendix>.

<sup>81</sup> [https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2024.04.18\\_hnr\\_letter\\_to\\_white\\_house\\_on\\_perez\\_fbf.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2024.04.18_hnr_letter_to_white_house_on_perez_fbf.pdf).

<sup>82</sup> National Park Service, “Budget Justifications and Performance Information, Fiscal Year 2025,” p. LFR-7, <https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-03/fy2025-508-nps-greenbook.pdf>.

<sup>83</sup> *Id.* ONPS-67.

maintenance is no longer sufficient to maintain the condition of the facility or infrastructure.”<sup>84</sup> By decreasing funding for these vital maintenance projects to “preserve funding for Administration priorities,” NPS is only ensuring that the deferred maintenance backlog will continue to grow.<sup>85</sup>

*Centennial Challenge*—The budget proposes a \$2 million reduction for the Centennial Challenge Fund, a popular and successful public-private partnership that matches federal funding 1:1, at a minimum, with private donations. These projects “repair and modernize NPS infrastructure, expand recreational opportunities and access to the public, and develop new and improved educational and interpretive programs for visitors.”<sup>86</sup> The budget estimates that this reduction will result in eight fewer projects being completed nationwide. Once again, the budget justifies this decrease through the vague rationale of “preserv[ing] funding for Administration priorities.”<sup>87</sup> Reducing funding for the Centennial Challenge Fund will hamper efforts to increase access to our nation’s parks and reduce the deferred maintenance backlog.

*Outdoor Recreation and Visitation*—Visitation throughout the National Park System continues to rise as hundreds of millions of people across the globe travel annually to experience the unparalleled scenery that so many of our nation’s crown jewels have to offer. Visitation totaled over 325 million in 2023, marking the fourth year of consecutive growth.<sup>88</sup> Recreation visits are up 11 percent compared to the beginning of the decade.<sup>89</sup> In 2022, visitors spent \$23.9 billion in local gateway communities, supporting 378,000 jobs, \$29 billion in economic value added, and \$50.3 billion in total economic output.<sup>90</sup> Unfortunately, the FY 2025 budget proposal is largely silent on how NPS will work to maximize partnerships with rural gateway communities. Even more concerning, the budget proposes a \$9.0 million decrease in the National Recreation and Preservation account. Most of these cuts are to programs that assist local communities, including gateway communities that face significant challenges.

In contrast to this approach, Committee Republicans are committed to expanding access to outdoor recreation opportunities on our nation’s public lands. Chairman Westerman’s “Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act” is bipartisan, bicameral legislation that streamlines permitting processes for small businesses, improves visitor experiences, and increases access and opportunities for recreation.<sup>91</sup> The bill would also address the pressing needs of gateway communities, including overcrowding and a lack of affordable housing. It successfully passed the House last month by voice vote.

*Biden Border Crisis*—NPS manages approximately 195.1 miles along the Southern border, or 28 percent of federal borderland.<sup>92</sup> This is the largest share of federal borderlands among all federal land management agencies. Despite this footprint, the NPS budget only proposes a paltry \$8,000 increase for the Southwest Border Resource Protection Program. The NPS budget admits border security is a prolific problem, with individual units “consistently experience[ing] serious resource damage due to illegal crossborder activities traversing the parks.”<sup>93</sup> The budget goes on to state that: “thousands of miles of unauthorized roads and trails have been created, major ecological processes and the migration patterns of wildlife have been disrupted, important historic sites have been vandalized, and archeological sites have been looted.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *Id.*

<sup>85</sup> *Id.*

<sup>86</sup> *Id.* CC-5.

<sup>87</sup> *Id.*

<sup>88</sup> National Park Service, “Visitation”, <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/visitation-numbers.htm>.

<sup>89</sup> Congressional Research Service, “National Park Service (NPS)” Appropriations: Ten-Year Trends”, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R42757.pdf>.

<sup>90</sup> National Park Service, “Budget Justifications and Performance Information, Fiscal Year 2025”, p. Overview-2, <https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-03/fy2025-508-nps-greenbook.pdf>.

<sup>91</sup> H.R. 6492, EXPLORE Act, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/6492>.

<sup>92</sup> *Id.*

<sup>93</sup> *Id.* NRP-44.

<sup>94</sup> *Id.* NRP-44.

*Housing*—As housing costs continue to rise nationwide, finding affordable housing for NPS employees has become increasingly challenging. This burdens the agency’s recruitment efforts and makes it difficult to retain park staff. In March 2023, Director Sams testified before the House Appropriations Committee, highlighting the declining workforce at NPS.<sup>95</sup> The FY 2025 budget request only allocated \$9.0 million in new funding for additional employee housing while providing \$4.2 million for Zero Emission Vehicles.<sup>96</sup> Given the important implications of this issue for the agency’s overall success, it is concerning that NPS is devoting millions of dollars to frivolous and inefficient climate goals rather than basic necessities for its employees.

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<sup>95</sup> Congressional Research Service, “FY2024 Appropriations”, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12436>.

<sup>96</sup> National Park Service, “Budget Justifications and Performance Information Fiscal Year 2025”, p. Overview-16.

**OVERSIGHT HEARING ON EXAMINING THE  
PRESIDENT'S FY 2025 BUDGET  
REQUEST FOR THE BUREAU OF LAND  
MANAGEMENT AND NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

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**Wednesday, May 15, 2024  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
Committee on Natural Resources  
Washington, DC**

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The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:16 a.m. in Room 1324, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Tom Tiffany [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Tiffany, Lamborn, McClintock, Stauber, Curtis, Bentz, Moylan, Westerman; Neguse, Porter, Kamlager-Dove, Levin, and Leger Fernández.

Also present: Representatives Hunt, Rosendale, Collins, Hageman, Newhouse, Good; and Hoyle.

Mr. TIFFANY. The Subcommittee on Federal Lands will come to order.

Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a recess of the Subcommittee at any time.

The Subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on the President's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request for the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service.

I ask unanimous consent that the following Members be allowed to participate in today's hearing from the dais. Actually, it might be better off to name the people that are not asking consent.

But anyhow, the following Members we ask consent to participate in today's hearing from the dais: Mr. Wittman, Dr. Gosar, Mr. Graves, Mr. Webster, Mr. Rosendale, Mrs. Boebert, Mr. Hunt, Mr. Collins, Mr. Duarte, Ms. Hageman, Mr. Huffman, Ms. Hoyle, Mr. Newhouse, Mr. Good, and Ms. Malliotakis.

Without objection, so ordered.

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

I therefore ask unanimous consent that all other Members' opening statements be made part of the hearing record if they are submitted in accordance with Committee Rule 3(o).

Without objection, so ordered.

I will now recognize myself for an opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. TOM TIFFANY, A REPRESENTATIVE  
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WISCONSIN**

Mr. TIFFANY. Welcome, Director Stone-Manning and Director Sams, back to the Committee to discuss the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management's budget request for Fiscal Year 2025.

It is unsurprising, although still disappointing, that President Biden's budget is once again underwhelming. It features more of the same radical priorities, broken promises, and extreme proclamations that we have seen from this Administration over the past 3 years. These priorities are out of line with the American people and the communities, families, and small businesses that live and operate closest to Federal lands.

With alarming consistency, these budget requests cater to environmental extremists at the expense of local communities who depend on access to Federal lands for their way of life. They double down on the Biden administration's commitment to American prosperity and energy independence, and pick winners and losers based on ideological concerns.

The budgets allow unelected DC bureaucrats to enact their radical agendas without any accountability from the people they serve, all from the comfort of their home offices.

The BLM has drifted so far from its mission that it has become unrecognizable. It is transforming into the Bureau of Land Mismanagement.

Before me today are eight rules and land use plans that the BLM recently published in the Federal Register. Together, they comprise 6,290 pages of rules and regulations that the BLM rushed to get out, instead of meaningfully listening to and coordinating with local stakeholders. The only people happy with that stack out in fly-over land in America are the paper mills.

Each one of these documents claims to protect ecological and sensitive resources on Federal lands. However, these are little more than thinly veiled attempts to lock up millions of acres of land from multiple uses and shirk the agency's statutory multiple use mandate. These rules and land use plans harm rural America, make us less energy independent, and threaten our national security.

Today, we will address this shift away from congressionally-mandated uses of the land to partisan priorities, which include a decrease in forest management to increase environmental justice efforts; a backlog of deferred maintenance that has been allowed to grow out of control so the agencies can buy more electric vehicles; and ranchers, energy producers, and outdoor recreationists getting pushed off their land so that they can be locked up indefinitely in the name of preservation.

We will also talk about the complete dereliction of duty the Department of the Interior has committed with respect to Federal lands along the southern border. If ecological and resource protections are so critical, then the agencies must address the enormous environmental degradation that is occurring at the southern border.

Combined, the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management account for 53 percent of the Federal land along the southern border. Trash from illegal immigrants, wildfires sparked

by migrant campsites, an abundance of illegal trails, and the lack of safety for lawful visitors is astonishing. We would never accept this level of destruction and vandalism on our Federal lands anywhere else in the country, so why is it acceptable on the southern border?

Despite the increasing severity of the Biden border crisis, the word “border” appears just once in the context of the southern border in the BLM’s entire 364-page budget request. The word “climate” appears 77 times, however, and the term “environmental justice” appears 11 times.

Today, we will also address the Administration’s reckless spending, particularly the failure of the National Park Service to rein in the out-of-control deferred maintenance backlog. Earlier this year, this Subcommittee heard testimony from Interior’s Inspector General, who described the Park Service’s accounting for deferred maintenance as akin to a house of cards built upon a house of cards. The Fiscal Year 2025 budget request does little to reassure Congress or the American people that these issues have been resolved, let alone taken seriously by the agency.

It should also go without saying that, after years of complaints from states across the nation saying they weren’t having any projects funded, the Park Service would choose to spend \$45 million updating Joe Biden’s home.

While that is the bad news, the good news is that we have recently passed a host of bills on the House Floor with bipartisan support to reverse these troubling trends. They include the Mining Regulatory Clarity Act to secure mining in this country; the Alaska’s Right to Produce Act, which reverses a harmful decision limiting oil and gas production in Alaska; the WEST Act to stop an illegal, vague rule that will upend the multiple uses of BLM land; the Superior National Forest Restoration Act, which would facilitate the permitting of a very important mine in Congressman Stauber’s district; and finally, the EXPLORE Act, which would cut red tape for small recreation businesses and improve outdoor access.

Having Democrats join Republicans on each of these bills to stop the out-of-control preservationists and hurtful policies of the Biden administration should be a wake-up call, but I fear it won’t be. Leadership in DC must listen to local stakeholders, engage meaningfully with communities, and, above all, follow your mandatory coordination requirements.

House Natural Resources Committee Republicans will continue holding the Administration accountable, demanding answers, and, when needed, passing legislation to stop harmful decisions.

With that, I yield back and recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Neguse, for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. JOE NEGUSE, A REPRESENTATIVE  
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF COLORADO**

Mr. NEGUSE. I thank the Chairman. I want to thank both of the witnesses for being here today for this important hearing.

I would be remiss if I just did not take one moment to note my strong disagreement with a number of statements made by the Chairman. Only in Washington can colleagues of mine on the other

side of the aisle rationally argue that the budget proposed to fund these incredibly important land management agencies are, I think the word that was used was underwhelming, after having voted against the appropriation bills that funded the very agencies that we are discussing today. Only in Washington.

House Democrats have been working for years to appropriate sufficient resources so that the hard-working people at the BLM and the National Park Service can do the important work that they are statutorily authorized and compelled to do; so that the hard-working folks who are at the BLM in Colorado, just by way of example, the western headquarters in Grand Junction in my district, and across our great country can continue doing their important work.

It is shameful, in my view, that House Republicans, not all, certainly most members of this particular Subcommittee, including the Chairman, and most members of the Full Committee, have chosen a different course. I understand that they have disagreements with respect to particular priorities that the Biden administration is pursuing. That is their prerogative. But the caustic way in which these two agencies have been described by my colleagues, I think, is deeply unfortunate.

I, for one, am grateful to have both Director Sams from the National Park Service and Director Stone-Manning from the Bureau of Land Management here with us today to talk about the important missions of your respective agencies and the work that you are doing to be stewards for our national parks and our public lands.

I want to say that, again, while I think we can argue, disagree, and discuss interpretations of the two management frameworks with respect to both of your agencies, and, of course, members of this Subcommittee and the Full Committee have been doing so for decades, I am grateful for the work that you two are doing and the Biden administration is doing more broadly to manage our public lands with future generations in mind. I think that is important. It matters a great deal for our children, for my 5-year-old daughter, for future generations to come.

It is the same approach that we took in the 117th Congress, when I chaired this Subcommittee. We worked to ensure that we would invest billions of dollars into the future of our public lands. And it is unfortunate, as I said, in my view, that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have chosen a different course, have not scheduled a single hearing in this Subcommittee, for example, to even discuss the climate crisis. I think that is unfortunate. Instead, they have done the opposite. They pursued any number of policies that ultimately would put polluters over the people that we are here to serve.

At BLM, Director Stone-Manning, your agency has advanced rules that ensure public lands are managed for the greater good, putting conservation on par with other uses, and advancing a framework to promote renewable energy. Now, I don't know if, in the stack of regulations here, this prop that the Chairman has decided he will use for this hearing, which I think is beneath this Subcommittee, but nonetheless I don't know if included in this package are the regulations pertaining to the Thompson Divide. I



hope so, because I will tell you that my constituents in Colorado are deeply grateful, deeply grateful for the actions that the BLM took to protect the Thompson Divide.

And as I said, while I recognize that we can have reasonable disagreements about the extent or propriety or depth of some of these particular policies and programs that the BLM and the NPS are implementing, I hope we can do so with a degree of respect for the witnesses who are here and for the agencies that they represent.

I want to say thank you to both of you and your respective workforces, and I look forward to the conversation.

I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you for the opening statement, Ranking Member Neguse. I now recognize the Chairman of the Full Committee, Mr. Westerman.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. BRUCE WESTERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS**

Mr. WESTERMAN. Thank you, Chairman Tiffany.

Thank you, Director Sams and Director Stone-Manning, for appearing before the Committee today.

As Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, I have focused on advancing policies that achieve four primary objectives, and those are access, conservation, innovation, and transparency. When it comes to the Biden administration's policies and the proposed budget, it seems like there is almost an antithesis of these values. And instead of promoting access to our public lands, the Administration is locking up millions of acres of land and resources, making it harder to produce energy, graze cattle, and feed our families.

And we have to maintain and restore access. And I realize that there are forces above the levels that you all work in the Federal Government, and you are being good soldiers and doing your job in the positions that you are in. But for the sake of our Federal lands, we need to actively manage them for multiple uses that they offer, whether that be energy development, outdoor recreation, timber harvesting, or wildlife habitat.

And I will state it again: Conservation is an ethic. It is not a use, as this Administration is trying to create a new lexicon. Conservation should be at the core of what we do, not a misinformed headline that has no substance but sounds good to the casual listener.

Conservation has taken a hit in this Administration, but the policies that we advance in this Committee can help right the ship. This includes the WEST Act, which nullifies the BLM's Public Lands Rule, as well as the EXPLORE Act, which expands outdoor recreation access.

Both of these pieces of legislation passed with bipartisan support earlier this year.

While the budget is just a wish list that is never actually going to become law, we can't lose sight of the fact that policies concocted here in DC have a real effect on the local communities closest to those lands. I have seen that firsthand with the proposed renovations at the Buckstaff Bathhouse in my district. Originally, the Park Service proposed renovating the bathhouse in a manner that

would lay off 37 employees. And I appreciate Secretary Haaland and Director Sam's recent commitments to work with Buckstaff to ensure that we avoid that kind of an outcome.

I look forward to hearing the testimony today, and look forward to hearing the questions.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We will now move on to witness testimony.

I would like to remind the witnesses that under Committee Rules, you must limit your oral statement to 5 minutes, but your entire statement will appear in the hearing record.

To begin your testimony, press the "on" button on the microphone.

We use timing lights. When you begin, the light will turn green. At the end of 5 minutes, the light will turn red, and I will ask you to please complete your statement.

First, I would like to introduce Ms. Tracy Stone-Manning, Director of the Bureau of Land Management.

Director Stone-Manning, you have 5 minutes for your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. TRACY STONE-MANNING, DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Thank you, Chairman Westerman, Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee. I am Tracy Stone-Manning, the Director of the Bureau of Land Management. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Fiscal Year 2025 budget priorities and the mission of the BLM.

We are the nation's largest land manager, responsible for 1 in 10 acres in this country. The multiple-use, sustained-yield mission established by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, or FLPMA, directs us to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of 245 million acres of public lands and 700 million acres of mineral estate for multiple uses. These lands provide food, fiber, minerals, energy, clean water, habitat, and lifetime memories for countless families.

We owe a great deal of gratitude to the nearly 10,000 BLM civil servants that do the hard work of balancing our mission day in and day out.

In Fiscal Year 2022, public lands managed by the BLM supported \$262 billion in economic output and 1 million jobs. In addition, last year public lands generated more than \$9.6 billion in revenue. The country's economic return on its investment in the BLM is remarkable. For each dollar Congress provided us in Fiscal Year 2023, we generated \$6 in revenue, 6 to 1. And, of course, this return does not consider how we pay forward to the future in our work to conserve, protect, and restore public lands and waters for the benefit of current and future generations.

The President's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request of \$1.6 billion ensures that we can meet our multiple use and sustained yield responsibilities under FLPMA. While the budget request advances many important Administration priorities, I will focus on two:

prioritizing landscape health and resilience, and the transition to a clean energy economy.

The budget request proposes continued investments to prioritize the health and resilience of public lands and waters that are increasingly facing impacts of climate change, including prolonged drought, increased spread of invasive weeds, and more frequent and intense wildland fires. The budget requests \$317.4 million to improve the health of public lands through restoration efforts, including eradicating and controlling invasive species and re-establishing native plant communities.

Each of the landscape health activities supported by the budget request is key in supporting the multiple use and sustained yield of our public lands into the future, helping to improve the health and resilience of public lands and conserve important wildlife habitat as we facilitate responsible development. That approach of managing so that present and future generations can enjoy the benefits of our public lands is a through line in all of our work and in the rulemakings we have recently finalized.

How we approach the future of energy is also central in that work. President Biden has asked us to ensure an electricity sector free of carbon pollution by 2035 and economy-wide by 2050, and our public lands play an important role in that effort. The budget proposes \$53 million to support siting, leasing, and oversight of renewable energy projects and transmission lines on public lands which provide excellent solar, wind, and geothermal energy potential.

During this Administration, the BLM has approved over 7.3 gigawatts of renewable energy projects, helping to surpass the Administration's goal of permitting 25 gigawatts of clean energy projects on public lands by 2025. We also leased lands in solar energy zones that will yield another 2 gigawatts. To help foster the work, the BLM published the final Renewable Energy Rule earlier this month, which will lower consumer energy costs, improve project application processes, and incentivize developers to continue responsibly developing solar and wind projects on our public lands.

While the BLM has made great progress transitioning to the clean energy future, oil and gas production continues to be a substantial part of the BLM's energy portfolio. Our work has ensured that conventional energy development is as environmentally responsible as possible, and that it provides a fair return to the American taxpayer. To that end, BLM recently published the first comprehensive update to the onshore oil and gas leasing regulations in many decades. This update implements congressional direction in the Inflation Reduction Act and will help protect critical wildlife habitat, cultural resources, and recreation.

We also finalized a rule to ensure that we reduce the wasteful practice of venting or flaring natural gas.

Both of these efforts are key in helping to modernize the oil and gas program, and ensuring it is fair to the American taxpayer for whom the BLM stewards our public lands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I welcome any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Stone-Manning follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TRACY STONE-MANNING, DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF LAND  
MANAGEMENT, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Budget priorities and mission of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM's 2025 Budget proposal supports the critical role the Bureau plays in achieving the environmental, conservation, and economic goals of the Biden-Harris Administration, while working in partnership with thousands of communities nationwide, mostly across the American West and in Alaska.

### Introduction

Managing the BLM's portfolio of approximately 245 million acres of surface land and 700 million acres of subsurface mineral estate on behalf of the American people is a tremendous honor. As directed by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the BLM sustains the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's public lands for multiple uses, such as conventional and renewable energy development; livestock grazing; conservation; mining; watershed protection; and hunting, fishing, and other forms of recreation. This multiple-use, sustained yield mission demands a thoughtful, science-based approach to management of our public lands and waters, as it enables the BLM to sustain the economy, create jobs, and produce domestic energy, while generating revenues for Federal and state treasuries. The BLM is also charged with conserving, protecting, and restoring public land resources and nationally significant landscapes for the benefit of current and future generations. To advance this broad mission as pressures increase on our public lands, the BLM recently announced new rules to help protect critical wildlife habitat, cultural resources, and recreational values, and ensure a fair return for American taxpayers. Combined, these rules will guide balanced management of America's public for decades to come.

America's public lands are strong economic drivers, and the BLM's work contributes significantly to the national economy as well as the financial health of the States where BLM lands and resources are located. According to the BLM's estimates, activities associated with BLM-managed public lands and minerals contributed an estimated \$262 billion to the nation's economic output, supporting approximately one million jobs in FY 2022.<sup>1</sup> In terms of receipts, in FY 2023, productive uses of BLM-managed public lands generated more than \$9.6 billion, including a significant share for the States where the revenues were generated. The country's economic return on its annual discretionary appropriations investment in public lands is remarkable: more than six dollars are generated for each dollar provided to the BLM.

### Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Overview

The Bureau's FY 2025 Budget requests \$1.6 billion, including \$1.4 billion for the Management of Lands and Resources (MLR) appropriation and \$120.8 million for the Oregon and California Grant Lands (O&C) appropriation—the BLM's two main operating accounts.

The BLM's FY 2025 Budget request advances the Administration's priorities in the following areas:

- Strengthening climate resilience by investing in landscape health;
- Facilitating the transition to a clean energy economy;
- Enhancing and expanding outdoor recreation;
- Improving the management of wild horses and burros;
- Conserving and protecting nationally significant landscapes;
- Strengthening Tribal sovereignty and self-determination; and
- Supporting underserved and disproportionately affected communities.

### Strengthening Climate Resilience by Investing in Landscape Health

The FY 2025 Budget request demonstrates the BLM's enduring commitment to addressing the impacts of climate change by continuing to prioritize investments that promote the health and resilience of public lands and waters that are increasingly facing those impacts, including prolonged drought, increased spread of

<sup>1</sup>The BLM: Valuing America's Public Lands 2023, <https://www.blm.gov/about/data/socio-economic-impact-report-2023>.

invasive species, and more frequent and intense wildland fires. For example, the Budget requests \$317.4 million under the BLM's Land Resources activity to improve the health of public lands through restoration efforts, including eradicating and controlling invasive species and re-establishing native plant communities. Efforts to improve landscape health supported by this request will complement the Bureau's ongoing ecosystem restoration and resilience work, including activities funded through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act—more commonly referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)—and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

In addition to \$11 million for the Public Domain Forest Management program, the Budget requests \$105.8 million in the BLM's Western Oregon Resources Management program. Combined, these funds will support timber sales, help restore forest structure and composition to improve wildfire and climate resilience, identify and manage carbon sinks, and implement projects for reforestation and to protect mature and old-growth forests.

The FY 2025 Budget requests \$153.4 million in the BLM's Wildlife Habitat Management program to identify, protect, conserve, and restore wildlife habitat; maintain and improve wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity; enhance ecosystem diversity; and improve drought preparedness and response. Together, these efforts will help respond to the effects of climate change on priority wildlife and plant species and habitats. This program supports the development of the native seed supply chain, the foundational underpinning of all of the BLM's land restoration efforts, and provides significant support to conserve greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat. This work is bolstered by one-time funding provided by the BIL and IRA and coordination with many Federal, State, Tribal and other partners. The Budget request also includes \$59.9 million for BLM's Aquatic Resources program to enable the Bureau to continue to work to conserve remaining high-quality lands and waters, restore degraded land and water resources, and ensure the connectivity of these systems.

Each of the landscape health activities supported by the FY 2025 Budget request will be complemented by the *Conservation and Landscape Health Rule*, which the BLM finalized on May 9, 2024. Informed by more than 200,000 comments from individual Americans, State and local governments, Tribes, industry groups, and advocacy organizations, the final rule will support multiple use and sustained yield of the public lands into the future, helping to improve the health and resilience of public lands in the face of a changing climate, conserve important wildlife habitat and intact landscapes, facilitate responsible development, and better recognize unique cultural and natural resources on public lands. The FY 2025 Budget also supports the Administration's *America the Beautiful* initiative, a ten-year, locally led effort to protect, conserve, connect, and restore the lands, waters, and wildlife upon which we all depend.

### **Facilitating the Transition to a Clean Energy Economy**

As conventional energy sources continue to play an important role in our economy, the BLM is advancing the development of renewable energy by providing sites on public lands for environmentally sound renewable energy production and transmission projects. BLM-managed public lands provide excellent solar, wind, and geothermal energy potential and are an important component of the Administration's broader strategy to rapidly reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 percent by 2030 and achieve a carbon pollution-free electricity sector by 2035.

Consistent with the Energy Act of 2020, the BLM continues to accelerate responsible permitting of renewable energy projects on public lands. Since January 21, 2021, the BLM has permitted projects that are expected to produce over 7.3 gigawatts of clean energy—enough to power over 2.8 million homes. In addition to specific project approvals, the BLM has also leased eight new areas in Solar Energy Zones with the capacity to generate nearly 2.5 gigawatts of additional clean energy. These efforts contributed to the Administration recently surpassing its goal of permitting 25 gigawatts of clean energy projects on BLM-administered public lands by 2025. As of April 2024, the BLM is currently processing 65 utility-scale onshore clean energy projects—including solar, wind, geothermal, and transmission interconnect projects—with a combined potential to add approximately 32,500 megawatts of renewable energy. The BLM is also undertaking the preliminary review of almost 200 applications for solar and wind development, as well as almost 100 applications for solar and wind energy testing.

In addition, on May 1, 2024, the BLM finalized its *Rights-of-Way, Leasing and Operations for Renewable Energy Rule*, which will lower the cost of developing solar and wind projects, improve renewable energy project application processes, and incentivize developers to continue to responsibly develop solar and wind projects on public lands. Consistent with the Administration's commitment to create high-

quality jobs in the clean energy economy and support American manufacturing, the final rule includes incentives for projects to use project labor agreements and American-made materials.

The complexities involved with authorizing bulk energy generation and the associated transmission lines necessitate extensive stakeholder engagement and coordination and thorough environmental reviews of project proposals. To that end, the FY 2025 Budget proposes \$53.1 million in the Renewable Energy Management program to support siting, leasing, processing rights-of-way applications, and oversight of renewable energy projects and transmission lines on BLM-managed public lands. The BLM expects renewable energy demand and workload to continue to increase significantly as more utility companies and States seek to diversify their energy sources or require increased amounts of renewable energy in their electric power portfolios. Helping to drive the expected demand is the nearly \$400 billion in Department of Energy loans for clean energy and transmission infrastructure enacted in the IRA. This investment is anticipated to further increase permitting workloads on Federal lands through at least 2030.

While the BLM has made great progress facilitating renewable energy development, a substantial part of the BLM's energy portfolio consists of oil and gas production from public lands. Since January 21, 2021, the BLM has approved more than 11,000 new drilling permits—including over 3,800 in 2023 alone—and onshore oil production from Federal lands is at an all-time high. At the same time, the BLM has focused on efforts to ensure that conventional energy development is environmentally responsible and provides a fair return to the American taxpayer.

On April 23, 2024, the BLM finalized its *Fluid Mineral Leases and Leasing Process Rule*, which codifies fiscal provisions that were enacted in the IRA. These changes revise outdated fiscal terms for the onshore Federal oil and gas leasing program, including royalty rates and minimum bids, and will increase returns to the public and disincentivize speculation. The rule also strengthens bonding standards to help ensure that taxpayers are not saddled with paying industry cleanup costs. The rule is the BLM's first comprehensive update to the federal onshore oil and gas leasing framework since 1988, the first update to minimum bonding levels since 1960, and the first increase in royalty rates in more than a century. The rule also implements recommendations from the Department of the Interior's *Report on the Federal Oil and Gas Leasing Program* and will guide BLM efforts to focus oil and gas leasing in areas that are the most likely to be developed—areas with existing infrastructure and high oil and gas potential—providing transparency and clarity for industry, while better managing public lands for other important uses.

Additionally, on April 10, 2024, the BLM finalized its *Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation Rule* to curb the waste of natural gas during the production of oil and gas on Federal and Tribal lands. The final rule modernizes regulations that are more than 40 years old. The updates will help hold oil and gas companies accountable by requiring operators to avoid wasteful practices and find and fix leaks, while ensuring that American taxpayers and Tribal mineral owners are fairly compensated through royalty payments. By building on technological advances and best management practices to help reduce waste, the rule is expected to generate more than \$50 million in additional natural gas royalty payments each year to taxpayers and Tribal mineral owners, while conserving billions of cubic feet of gas that might otherwise have been vented, flared, or leaked from oil and gas operations.

Finally, given the importance of critical minerals to the clean energy transition, the BLM is working across the Federal government to update mining policies, strengthen permitting efficiency, and promote a robust, environmentally and socially responsible domestic mining industry. Some of these efforts, including much needed reforms to the General Mining Law of 1872, will require the assistance of Congress. The BLM looks forward to continuing to work with the Subcommittee on this issue.

### **Enhancing & Expanding Recreation**

The BLM is a key part of connecting Americans to the outdoors, as more than 120 urban centers and thousands of rural towns are located within 25 miles of BLM-managed public lands and waters. Public lands and waters are widely recognized as a “backyard to backcountry” treasure, affording a variety of accessible recreation opportunities—from neighborhood trails to world-class destinations and a diverse mix of camping, boating, off-highway vehicle riding, recreational shooting, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and many others.

As a result of the unique opportunities, resources, and experiences our public lands offer, recreational use has skyrocketed. In FY 2023, the BLM recorded more than 82 million visits, representing a 41 percent increase in use since 2012, with almost a third of that increase occurring since 2020. In response to this significant

growth in recreation, the BLM last year released its *Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation* (Blueprint), which is intended to guide investments, partnerships, outreach, and program development, so the Bureau can more effectively respond to current demand and chart a course to meet future needs. The FY 2025 Budget request for the Recreation Resources Management program is \$61.5 million to implement the Blueprint; enhance and increase access to recreational opportunities, including access by disadvantaged or underserved communities; and maintain, repair, and construct recreational trails, facilities (including campgrounds, day-use areas, and trailheads), kiosks, and directional signs. The request will also support recreation site and trail design improvements to mitigate recreation conflicts with sensitive natural resources, such as by altering traffic and concentrated use patterns.

### **Improving the Management of Wild Horses & Burros**

The overpopulation of wild horses and burros across the West continues to present unique challenges to the BLM's ability to improve and maintain landscape health. As of March 2024, there were approximately 73,500 wild horses and burros across the 177 herd management areas that the BLM administers—exceeding the nationwide appropriate management level (AML) of 27,000 animals by over 46,500. Of the 177 herd management areas, almost 80 percent are above AML. The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 requires that the BLM manage wild horses and burros in a manner “designed to achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance on public lands,” and the AML is the population range the BLM sets to best maintain that thriving natural ecological balance. The BLM has worked diligently in the last few years to address this problem, reducing the on-range population from a peak of 95,000 wild horses and burros in 2020 to approximately 73,500 today, but we have more work to do. Climate change-induced lack of forage and water, as well as competition among wild horses and burros, big game species, and livestock over these limited resources, have made it even more difficult for the BLM to maintain this necessary ecological balance, resulting in further degradation of the range and undermining other BLM land health investments.

The BLM is focused on addressing the management challenges with this program, particularly through use of fertility control treatments and permanent sterilization efforts and through private placements of animals. However, the substantial growth in the cost of off-range holding has impacted the BLM's ability to deliver fertility treatments or remove wild horses and burros from the range while balancing the obligations to ensure the wellbeing of the approximately 63,000 horses off-range in our care (as of May 2024). The FY 2025 Budget requests \$170.9 million in the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Management program, which will help to offset rising program costs and conduct on-range and off-range management activities. This includes a \$15 million increase to support permanent sterilizations. Given the substantial challenges associated with the management of wild horses and burros in the face of a changing climate, and the fact that about two-thirds of the program's budget is now allocated to the care and feeding of horses off range, the BLM would welcome the opportunity to work with the Subcommittee to address the many challenges with this issue.

### **Conserving & Protecting Nationally Significant Landscapes**

As specified in the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, the BLM's National Conservation Lands “conserve, protect, and restore nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations.” The National Conservation Lands currently encompass 905 units covering over 37 million acres, including national monuments, wilderness, wilderness study areas, wild and scenic rivers, national conservation areas, and national scenic and historic trails. Designated by Congress or the President, the National Conservation Lands represent some of the nation's most spectacular landscapes and are also the current and ancestral homelands of Tribal Nations and Indigenous peoples, many of whom have deep cultural, historic, and spiritual connections to these places.

An estimated 12.5 million people visit units of the National Conservation Lands each year, providing significant economic benefits to surrounding communities and sustaining long-term jobs within them. To support the conservation and management of these special places, the FY 2025 Budget requests \$65.8 million in the BLM's National Conservation Lands program, \$19.6 million in the Wilderness Management program, and \$7.1 million in cross-cutting funds for wild and scenic rivers.

### **Strengthening Tribal Sovereignty & Self-Determination**

The BLM's management of heritage resources informs the public about climate change and human interactions with the natural environment; offers educational, interpretative, and recreational opportunities to the public; and affirms public, Native American, and other descendent community connections to the landscape. Under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, the BLM has a responsibility to identify Native American human remains, funerary items, and objects of cultural significance in its museum collections and consult with Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations to repatriate these remains and objects. The FY 2025 Budget includes an increase of \$250,000 in the Cultural Resources Management program to support and expedite this critically important work.

### **Supporting Underserved & Disproportionately Affected Communities**

The impacts of climate change and environmental degradation in the United States are not evenly distributed across our society. Communities of color, low-income families, and rural and Indigenous communities have long suffered disproportionate and cumulative harm from air pollution, water pollution, and toxic sites. The BLM, as part of its work, dedicates time and resources to engage a wide range of stakeholders and communities in all its land management decisions, as well as to conduct formal consultation with Tribes in recognition of the Federal government's trust responsibilities.

The FY 2025 BLM Budget will advance the Administration's efforts to create good-paying jobs through its program to remediate and reclaim orphaned wells and abandoned mines. These jobs will support communities that may have been disproportionately affected by energy and mining activities and ease the transition for oil and gas field workers, coal miners, and conventional energy and mining communities as the market transitions toward cleaner energy sources. The FY 2025 request in the BLM's Oil and Gas Management program includes over \$23 million to enable the agency to continue remediating wells on Alaska's North Slope. The BLM expects to address orphaned oil and gas wells in the Lower 48 states with funds provided by the BIL (through the Department's Energy Community Revitalization Program), in addition to annual appropriations. Plugging these wells will mitigate risks to groundwater and air pollution. The request also includes \$58.4 million in the Abandoned Mine Lands and Hazardous Materials Management program for the remediation of both physical and environmental impacts of legacy abandoned mine lands and the prevention, mitigation, and remediation of the effects of hazardous substance releases.

### **Conclusion**

The BLM's FY 2025 proposed Budget reflects the Administration's continued commitment to managing America's public lands in a balanced, science-based manner. It is incumbent on us as stewards of our public lands to ensure their use is sustainable and beneficial to current and future generations of Americans, regardless of who they are or where they live, and we take that responsibility seriously. I look forward to working with the Subcommittee to ensure that the BLM has the tools and resources necessary to achieve these important objectives. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO THE HONORABLE TRACY-STONE  
MANNING, DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

**The Honorable Tracy-Stone Manning did not submit responses to the Committee by the appropriate deadline for inclusion in the printed record.**

### **Questions Submitted by Representative Westerman**

*Question 1. How much funding has the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) spent to initiate, administer, and grow the 30x30 initiative?*

*Question 2. How many acres of federal lands under the BLM's jurisdiction are already under some level of protected or restrictive-use status?*

*Question 3. How will Congress know if the administration has reached its 30x30 goal? Will you commit to promptly informing Congress once the 30x30 goal is reached?*



Question 4. What happens after the administration reaches its 30x30 goal?

Question 5. On [conservation.gov](https://www.conservation.gov), there is a diagram that summarizes the Biden administration's "preliminary framework for assessing progress toward the nation's goal of conserving at least 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030." Notably, BLM lands "that are conserved and restored" are listed as only "potential additions" to the "National Conservation Goals."

5a) How many acres of BLM lands are currently listed as "potential additions"?

5b) What data is required before this acreage can be added to the "National Conservation Goals"?

5c) What steps has the BLM taken to get this acreage added to the "National Conservation Goals"?

5d) What are the current uses of the specified BLM lands? Please give a percentage breakdown of primary uses (e.g., x percent is primarily used for wildlife habitat, y percent is primarily used for timber harvesting, z percent is primarily used for grazing, etc.).

Question 6. The final Public Lands Rule states:

"Some commenters raised concerns about the ability of foreign entities to use conservation leases to block development of critical mineral or energy projects on public lands or to obtain conservation leases near military bases or other sensitive government installations."

"In response to these and other comments on the potential use of conservation leases in ways that would excessively interfere with other uses or to intentionally block development, the BLM clarified that restoration and mitigation leases may only be issued for two discrete purposes: restoration of degraded landscapes or mitigation to offset the impacts of development."

6a) To confirm, does this mean that the BLM will not issue a restoration or mitigation lease to block development of critical mineral or energy projects on public lands?

6b) Will the BLM commit to not issuing restoration or mitigation leases near military bases or other sensitive government installations to any entity?

Question 7. The final Public Lands Rule states that the BLM will not issue any restoration or mitigation leases to foreign entities. The rule also states that the BLM will use standard lease adjudication processes to determine whether an applicant is a foreign entity. The processes cited in the rule, however, say nothing about determining whether an entity is foreign-controlled or not.

7a) What specific processes will you put in place to ensure that a foreign entity—especially a bad actor, like China or Russia—will not obtain a restoration or mitigation lease under the guise of a non-profit or American entity? For example, U.S.A. Conservation Leasing Group LLC may sound fine, but what if it's an entity funded by China?

7b) Does the BLM have employees who are trained to identify foreign-owned or—controlled entities? If not, whom will the BLM use to make such identifications?

7c) Will restoration and mitigation leases be subject to a Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) review?

7d) Has the BLM ever conducted a similar process before or will a new system have to be put in place to verify these leases are not held by foreign entities?

Question 8. Will the BLM commit to not issuing any restoration or mitigation leases that would block development of critical mineral or energy projects on public lands that are necessary to counter China's influence?

Question 9. Can any citizen, group, organization, non-governmental organization, or similar entity—assuming that it meets the minimum requirements—apply for and potentially secure a restoration or mitigation lease?

Question 10. Can the same leaseholder infinitely renew their existing restoration or mitigation lease?

Question 11. What safeguards are there to prevent one of the many anti-multiple-use groups from leasing federal lands to prevent wind and solar development, transmission infrastructure, grazing, mining, or oil and gas development?

Question 12. What safeguards are in place to keep the DOI from identifying and leasing public lands for conservation that have significant benefits for other multiple-

use activities in an effort to administratively bar those other activities from taking place?

Question 13. Please explain how restoration and mitigation leases and required avoidance and mitigation portions of BLM's Public Lands Rule will not preclude all other multiple-use activities on public land?

Question 14. What does Section 103(l) of FLPMA say? How does the BLM interpret this?

Question 15 The Public Lands Rule clarifies that conservation is a use on par with other uses of public lands under FLPMA's multiple-use and sustained yield framework.

15a) Can we expect additional and competing "uses" of public lands out of this Administration?

15b) Will the BLM elevate another "use?"

Question 16. Will each restoration and mitigation lease be subject to a NEPA analysis?

Question 17. If a restoration lease is proposed on an area at high risk for wildfire, will the BLM require the restoration lease to treat the area to reduce its risk of wildfire?

Question 18. Will lease applications for restoration or mitigation leases, or both, be public? Once approved, will leases for restoration or mitigation be public?

Question 19. What guidance have you given state directors and field managers on restoration and mitigation leases? What do they do if someone walks in the door with a proposal for a restoration or mitigation lease?

Question 20. Will this guidance be finalized and made available to the Committee before June 10, 2024?

Question 21. Have you provided any direction to current users of the land for what to expect concerning restoration and mitigation leases?

Question 22. Have you provided any direction to any outside groups, like environmental and non-profit organizations, concerning restoration and mitigation leases?

Question 23. Will you commit to sharing information about the process of the new leasing system with all current users of BLM land when developed, not just to certain groups?

Question 24. The final Public Lands Rule states:

**"§6102.5.1 Mitigation**

(a) The BLM will apply the mitigation hierarchy to avoid, minimize, and compensate, as appropriate, for adverse impacts to resources when authorizing uses of public lands. As appropriate, the authorized officer may identify specific mitigation approaches or requirements to address resource impacts through land use plans or in other decision documents."

24a) Are grazing permits included in the land uses that require mitigation?

Question 25. Are there circumstances under which you believe that a grazing permittee in good compliance with their permit and terms and conditions would be required to mitigate their grazing management?

Question 26. Does the BLM consider grazing to be a form of conservation?

Question 27. Does the BLM consider forest management to be a form of conservation?

Question 28. The final rule references uses that it claims are compatible with conservation, like "sustainable recreation."

28a) What is sustainable recreation?

28b) Which types of recreation does the BLM believe to be not sustainable?

28c) Is rock climbing, including the use of fixed anchors, in a wilderness area considered sustainable recreation under this definition?

28d) Please provide a definition and example of unsustainable recreation.

*Question 29. Private investment in restoration and mitigation leases will require an expectation of durability for the investor. Did the BLM meet with potential investors in restoration and mitigation leases before finalizing the Public Lands Rule?*

*Question 30. The rule provides for the agency to do landscape health analyses for uses other than grazing but says that, until new processes are developed for ecosystems other than rangeland, no assessments shall occur. When does the agency expect assessments for other ecosystems will be developed?*

*Question 31. Which BLM lands are available for a restoration or mitigation lease? Will all 245 million acres of BLM land be available for restoration or mitigation leases? If not, how is this distinction between leasable and non-leasable BLM lands to be made?*

*Question 32. Pursuant to the final Public Lands Rule, would it be possible to have a wilderness area in an ACEC in a national monument and then issue a restoration lease on the land?*

*Question 33. The National Park Service (NPS) FY 2025 budget justification states that illegal immigration along the Southern border is a serious problem affecting our parks. Specifically, the NPS document states that some of its units along the U.S.-Mexico border “consistently experience serious resource damage due to illegal cross-border activities traversing the parks.” The budget goes on to say that “[t]housands of miles of unauthorized roads and trails have been created, major ecological processes and the migration patterns of wildlife have been disrupted, important historic sites have been vandalized, and archeological sites have been looted.”*

*33a) Do you agree with the NPS’s assessment that illegal immigration is causing significant amounts of damage to our federal border lands?*

*33b) Why is BLM’s budget justification virtually silent on the border?*

*Question 34. The U.S.-Mexico border has become the site of a large-scale humanitarian disaster. How many migrants and suspected migrants have perished on BLM lands along the U.S.-Mexico border since 2021? Please provide annual data.*

*Question 35. In a response to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee’s Ranking Member Barrasso during your confirmation, you promised: “If I am confirmed as BLM Director, I will work with the Department of Homeland Security and other relevant Departments and agencies, as appropriate, to address border related issues on the public lands.”*

*35a) Will you commit to meeting with Secretary Mayorkas this year and discussing the environmental and resource degradation at federal lands along the southern border?*

*35b) Have you met with CBP agents about how to improve operational control of federal borderlands and protect the life and safety of officers?*

*Question 36. From 2003 to 2016, BLM conducted the Southern Arizona Project, in which the agency published detailed annual reports covering the millions of pounds of trash that migrants and drug smugglers had left along Arizona’s border with Mexico. Why was this project discontinued?*

*Question 37. In 2018, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) estimated that each border crosser leaves behind approximately six to eight pounds of trash. Since the number of migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border has reached record highs under the Biden administration, does the BLM believe that the amount of trash along the border has increased since 2016?*

*Question 38. How many pounds of trash did the BLM collect along the U.S.-Mexico border in FY 2021, 2022, and 2023, respectively?*

*Question 39. How many trash pick-up events did the BLM conduct along the U.S.-Mexico border in each of those fiscal years?*

*Question 40. How much annual funding has been devoted to trash collection along the U.S.-Mexico border in FY 2021, 2022, and 2023, respectively?*

*Question 41. How much funding has the BLM requested for FY 2025 for removing trash from BLM-administered lands along the U.S.-Mexico border?*

*41a) How did the BLM decide to request this amount?*

*41b) Please describe, in detail, how the budget request corresponds to increased migration and trash totals along the U.S.-Mexico border.*

Question 42. The proposed BLM budget anticipates a decrease of \$4 million in 2024 and into next year for recreation fees. There is also a decrease of 3 full-time equivalents (FTE).

42a) Will you explain why the anticipated decrease in recreation fees?

42b) Is this due to improving access and limiting feed or a reduction in users of the land?

42c) Are the 3 FTE positions being eliminated or moved to another area in BLM?

Question 43. The BLM Budget proposes \$1 million for the BLM Foundation established in P.L. 115-31.

43a) How was it determined that \$1 million was the appropriate amount?

43b) How will this money be spent?

Question 44. When the President designates a new national monument, does the BLM receive funding to complete the resource management plan (RMP)? If so, please list how much and from what source. If not, please list where the BLM is reducing funding to compensate for the increased need for national monuments.

Question 45. The BLM Budget states: "In FY 2025, the BLM anticipates completing approximately 15 RMPs and RMP amendments." Will you provide a list of the 15 RMPs and RMP amendments the agency expects to complete this year?

Question 46. On March 20, 2024, before the Subcommittee on Federal Lands, Deputy Director Nada Wolf Culver admitted that she did not read the testimony of Sweetwater County Land Use Director, Eric Bingham. On May 1, 2024, when Representative Hageman asked Secretary Haaland if she has heard of the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan (RMP), the Secretary replied, "No." The next day, Secretary Haaland read a prepared response claiming she referred to it as the Sweetwater County RMP. The official name in the Federal Register is "Notice of Availability of the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the **Rock Springs RMP** Revision, Wyoming" [emphasis added]. The name "Rock Springs" appears 10 times more frequently in the RMP than does the name "Sweetwater." On May 15, Representative Hageman asked if you had read the full draft Rock Springs RMP. You replied, "that's what my staff does." Sweetwater County and the State of Wyoming continue to insist BLM has shut them out of the process and has intentionally misled them. These three examples from Secretary Haaland, Deputy Director Culver, and you only confirm their accusations.

46a) Will you commit to reading the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan in its entirety? If not, why not?

46b) Will you take any steps to address the concerns of the Wyoming and Sweetwater County governments, which strongly oppose the BLM's preferred alternative for the Rock Springs RMP Revision?

Question 47. How many Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) does the BLM manage? How many have completed RMPs?

Question 48. How many ACECs and National Conservation Areas (NCAs) currently allow livestock grazing?

Question 49. How many ACECs and NCAs designations resulted in removal of grazing activities, including cancellation of permits, in the past 10 years?

Question 50. Energy projects of all kinds on federal lands are routinely held up by lawsuits filed years after the BLM's NEPA process concludes. These lawsuits, in many cases frivolous, foster uncertainty among project developers and limit the potential of the public's energy resources. Do you agree that a statutory limitation on when such lawsuits may be filed would be a useful tool to promote the responsible production of more American energy resources?

Question 51. What is the Bureau doing to expedite rights-of-way approval for oil and gas infrastructure, like gathering lines, on Federal lands?

Question 52. How many times has the Bureau used the gathering lines categorical exclusion (CE) created by Congress?

Question 53. Must operators ask BLM to use the gathering lines CE when submitting a right-of-way application?

Question 54. The BLM's new Waste Prevention rule requires operators to either submit a Waste Minimization Plan including certification of a valid, executed

contract to sell the associated gas, or a self-certification of 100 percent capture of associated gas with oil-well APDs. How common is it for an operator to have an executed contract to sell the associated gas on the date they submit their APD?

Question 55. The Final Waste Prevention regulation explains how the BLM relies on venting and flaring data on oil wells from 1990 to 2000 to establish flaring thresholds. As you know, oil wells from the 1990's are much different from modern, unconventional oil wells. Why would you use data from the 1990's to establish standards when you have more recent data?

Question 56. What evidence does BLM have that the Waste Prevention rule will result in better capturing of methane than state rules?

Question 57. Why does BLM insist on refusing variances for state rules that are effective in increasing the capture of methane, whether that be for environmental purposes or financial purposes?

Question 58. According to the BLM's website there are currently 20 proposed renewable energy projects in the NEPA process. Do you look at the lifecycle emissions for these projects as a part of the NEPA analysis?

Question 59. In the BLM's Final Renewable Energy regulation it says that the BLM will review and process applications, including on a non-competitive basis, for proposed solar and energy generation rights-of-way inside designated leasing areas.

59a) What is the process for awarding someone a lease on a non-competitive basis?

59b) Is the public notified for awareness or for comment?

Question 60. Much like with the oil and gas industry, minerals projects take significant lead-times to go from exploration to operational mine, often taking decades for the federal permitting process and litigation to play out. Benchmark Mineral Intelligence has forecasted that, based on average mine size, 384 new mines are needed by 2035 to meet the demand for electric vehicles and energy storage batteries. Secretary Haaland recently told the House Natural Resources Committee that, since 2021, the Biden administration has approved five new mines requiring an Environmental Impact Statement, or the type of mines that Benchmark is referring to in their forecasting. You corrected the record in your testimony by indicating that one of the mine approvals was actually done under the prior administration.

60a) Are the IWG Report recommendations—which propose fee increases, new fees and royalties, restricted land access, and other provisions on the domestic mining industry—sufficient to attract the investment needed to support President Biden's mineral-heavy energy transition goals?

60b) With only four mines approved since 2021, what is the Biden administration doing to sufficiently build the pipeline of projects needed to supply skyrocketing mineral demand in the future?

Question 61. In testimony before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee last September, Dr. Daniel Yergin, the Vice Chairman of S&P Global stated that based analysis, "if you start a new mine today, you wouldn't see production till 2040."

Is the Biden administration appropriately positioned, with a pipeline of domestic mining projects, to meet U.S. manufacturing, infrastructure, energy and national security priorities now and in the future?

Question 62. As Director, you oversee the permitting of the Burning Man event on BLM land.

62a) Have you ever attended the Burning Man event either as Director or before your current role as Director?

62b) Do you have plans to attend the Burning Man event in 2024?

Question 63. How much land does the BLM manage without a partner?

Question 64. How much land does the BLM manage with no lease holder?

Question 65. When asked for an extension on the NPR-A regulation, a BLM employee responded quote "Yeah, I wish we could . . . In other contexts we might have that kind of time, but I'm happy to regale you with the ins and outs of the Congressional Review Act, but unfortunately we're on a schedule with this one that we don't have any control over, so we just don't have that kind of time for this rule."

65a) Did you issue any kind of internal directive either formally or informally to expedite comment periods in order to meet the timelines of the Congressional Review Act at all costs?

65b) During the hearing, you mentioned the employee who said this was no longer with the BLM. Was she fired due to making this statement?

Question 66. Is BLM able to fully comply with FLPMA section 512?

Question 67. Are there any regulations, land use plans, internal manuals, memos, or policy documents that must be updated for BLM to comply with section 512 of FLPMA?

Question 68. Are there any laws or congressionally directed actions limiting compliance with section 512 of FLPMA?

Question 69. Will the BLM need to create a regulatory framework to comply with section 512 of FLPMA? If so, when will this be complete?

Question 70. In a QFR response from last year's budget hearings, the Department outlined its telework policy which states that "an employee approved to telework must physically report to their official duty station at least two full workdays per bi-weekly pay period."

70a) What percentage of employees met this benchmark every month for the past year?

70b) Does the Field count as a duty station, or is the duty station the office?

70c) If so, telework employees only have to either go into the office or into the field two times every two weeks?

70d) How can the Bureau ensure appropriate customer service using this model?

Question 71. BLM's Greater Sage-Grouse land use plan amendment affects ten states, 121 million acres of BLM-administered public lands, and 77 RMPs. The document covers highly complex protection measures such as triggers, buffers, and density and disturbance caps, and introduces extensive new scientific studies, including novel concepts such as neighborhood and climate clusters and a Targeted Annual Warning System that have not been sufficiently peer reviewed nor vetted with cooperating agencies and the public.

How can BLM expect the public to read, comprehend, and substantially comment on a 2,428-page document and the many associated scientific studies within 90 days?

Question 72. In 2017, Congress struck down the BLM Planning 2.0 rule, partly because BLM attempted to eliminate both the local administrative and local geographic focus of land use planning by centralizing all planning authority in BLM's Washington DC headquarters and allowing centralized land use planning efforts to have potentially unlimited geographic scope. Despite that clear message from Congress and the CRA's prohibition of an agency to issue "a new rule that is substantially the same", BLM is attempting to do the same type of centralized planning covering 121 million acres and ten states with the Greater Sage-Grouse land use plan amendments.

72a) Do you believe that the manner in which these plans are being developed violates BLM regulations under FLPMA and are contrary to state and local government participation required by NEPA?

72b) Are you concerned that the plan may be legally vulnerable under NEPA, FLPMA, APA, and CRA?

72c) Wouldn't it be better to develop appropriate state-based plans for each of the ten states?

Question 73. Section 50625 (b)(1) of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) states the following:

"(1) the Secretary may not issue a right-of-way for wind or solar energy development on Federal land unless—(A) an onshore lease sale has been held during the 120-day period ending on the date of the issuance of the right-of-way for wind or solar energy development; and (B) the sum total of acres offered for lease in onshore lease sales during the 1-year period ending on the date of the issuance of the right-of-way for wind or solar energy development is not less than the lesser of—(i) 2,000,000 acres; and (ii) 50 percent of the acreage for which expressions of interest have been submitted for lease sales during that period;"

73a) Please provide the Committee with a list of all wind and solar and wind projects (including acreages) that were issued rights-of-way since the passage of the IRA, pursuant to this section, along with the dates they were issued.

73b) BLM's website lists the status of active renewable energy projects and their most recent regulatory actions (DR Executed, ROD Executed, Lease issued, etc.). Pursuant to Section 50265 of the Inflation Reduction Act, at what stage of the regulatory process does BLM consider a solar-right-of way to be issued?

73c) The Committee is concerned that the BLM's approval of the Ancient Trails Solar Project may have failed to meet the requirements from Section 50625. Please provide sufficient evidence as to why you believe the issuance of that right-of-way met the criteria from Section 50625.

Question 74. How does BLM have authority to manage or regulate lands in the NPR-A under FLPMA? Can BLM identify where in the law the agency is authorized to manage NPR-A under FLPMA?

Question 75. Regarding the NPR-A:

75a) Do you think the new NPR-A rule will have any negative effect on future leasing in the NPR-A?

75b) The new NPR-A rule adds new processes and decisions that BLM must undertake and make when permitting activity in the NPR-A. Did BLM perform any analysis of the added time and cost for permitting activities in the NPR-A as a consequence of the new rule? If so, please provide.

75c) If an existing leaseholder proposes a new development in a Special Area, does the new rule's presumption against new infrastructure in Special Areas apply?

Question 76. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 designated permit processing Pilot Offices in seven BLM Field Offices. These "pilot offices" were redesignated as "Project Offices" by Section 3021 of the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act. How many staff are in each of these "Project Offices"?

Question 77. Section 365 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 permanently directs that 50 percent of rents from onshore mineral leases for oil and gas, coal, and oil shale on Federal lands are to be deposited into the Permit Processing Improvement Fund (PPIF). Additionally, section 3021 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 permanently extended the BLM's access to the rent receipts in the PPIF and section 3021 added fees for APDs as a source of receipts to the PPIF. Specifically, Section 3021 authorizes the Secretary in fiscal years 2016 through 2026 to charge and collect a \$9,500 APD processing fee, indexed for inflation. According to the FY 2025 Bureau of Land Management Greenbook, in 2023, the BLM deposited \$51.8 million into the Permit Processing Improvement Fund (PPIF), including both rental receipts and APD fees. How much money has the BLM allocated for permit processing for oil and gas outside of fee collection by year over the last 20 years?

Question 78. The BLM's budget proposes a \$63,000 decrease in Public Domain Forest Management.

78a) Why is the BLM cutting funding for forest management?

78b) Is this funding decrease consistent with DOI's 5-year strategy to reduce wildfire risk?

Question 79. The budget states: "The decrease in funding will result in slightly fewer acres treated to restore forest structure and composition for fire and climate resilience compared to 2023 levels." Please provide the exact acreage the agency treated in 2023 and the expected acreage decrease for 2024.

Question 80. What percentage of the agency's reforestation targets are accomplished annually?

Question 81. How large is the BLM's reforestation backlog?

Question 82. Is the BLM meeting the targets set forth in the 5-year strategy to reduce wildfire?

Question 83. The budget states: "The BLM is shifting program emphasis in response to E.O. 14072, Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies. In keeping with the E.O., BLM will reduce timber outputs to a total volume offered of 215 million board feet to focus on protection of mature and old-growth forests and improving forest health and fire resilience."

- 83a) Does the BLM view active forest management as a threat to “old-growth” or “mature” forests?
- 83b) How is the BLM defining “mature and old-growth” forests?
- 83c) What is the biggest threat to forests in Western Oregon?
- 83d) How many acres of land have been lost to catastrophic wildfire in Western Oregon in the past 10 years?
- 83e) How many acres in Western Oregon are already under a restrictive land designation, such as a wilderness or national monument?
- 83f) Of the acreage identified in 83(e), how much has burned in the past 10 years? How does this compare with acreage not under some type of restrictive land designation?

#### **Questions Submitted by Representative Lamborn**

- Question 1. The BLM’s Landscape and Conservation Health Rule allows for mitigation and restoration leases which have no acreage limits. How will the BLM determine an adequate price per acre for these leases?
- Question 2. What mechanism is in place to ensure that radical environmentalist 501c3s do not use massive donation-based funding to lock up tens or hundreds of thousands of acres of land?
- Question 3. Will the BLM require these leases to pay royalties like oil and gas do?
- Question 4. Will these leases require any right of way or bonding requirements?
- Question 5. The BLM’s Fluid Mineral and Leasing rule establishes a preference criterion for leases.
- Question 6. Where do mitigation and restoration leases rank in this criterion?
- Question 7. BLM has stated that restoration and mitigation leases are only necessary until the land has been restored to a usable condition.
- Question 8. What is the measurement criteria that defines when the land has been returned to a usable condition?
- Question 9. Years worth of the worst wildfires our country has ever seen have proven that hands-off preservation is not a viable land management method.
- Question 10. Do you believe that restoration and mitigation lease holders should be required to put up a bond for wildfires that occur on their lease as a result of mismanagement or no management?
- Question 11. As you know, oil and gas lease sale revenue is split roughly 50/50 between states and the federal government. The money provided to states is used for education, public safety, and other essential services. In the first 3 years of the Trump administration the Department held 11 oil and gas lease sales, leasing 221,000 acres, bringing in \$8.8 million in revenue to the state and federal government. In the first 3 years under your control, the Department has held 1 lease sale in Colorado, leasing one 290 acre parcel, bringing in \$1.2 million in revenue to the State and federal government.
- Question 12. How are western states and communities supposed to provide essential services to their constituents when you are locking up their lands and failing to hold regular lease sales?
- Question 13. It looks like the BLM has one upcoming lease sale in Colorado for a paltry 120 acres. This lease sale along with the only other lease sale held by this administration neglects the Western Slope.
- Question 14. Will you commit to holding a lease sale on the Western Slope this year?

#### **Questions Submitted by Representative Fulcher**

- Question 1. Just recently, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) forecasted a very high risk for wildfires in the West this year. This is due to low precipitation combined with high fuel mix creating significant challenges for rural communities and the electric



utilities that serve them. In response to this threat, electric cooperatives in my district are doing everything within their power to mitigate wildfire risks. However, the unpredictable nature of extreme weather conditions complicates long-term planning efforts. It's important to note that these utilities operate on a non-profit basis, meaning any additional expenses incurred ultimately burdens their customers. Unfortunately, I've learned that the Bureau of Land Management is considering imposing substantial charges on these utilities for using power line corridors across BLM lands, nearly totaling \$3 million per fire incident in strict liability damages. This approach presents a severe financial strain for smaller, rural electric cooperatives and the communities they serve. Already these utilities are finding it difficult to obtain wildfire insurance and such levels of damage could bankrupt them. Given the gravity of this situation, I question BLM's authority to unilaterally raise strict liability damages for powerline coordinators, especially considering the significant risk it imposes on utilities.

1a) Is it BLM's intention to pursue this course of action, and if so, would the agency be willing to engage with my office or the committee to collaborate with utilities on addressing this issue?

1b) Under what authority can BLM charge strict liability damages and how does the agency justify this one-size-fits-all level of damages?

Question 2. Director Stone-Manning, there is a project in Southeastern Idaho under review now by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that is of great importance to American agriculture. The project is known as the "Caldwell Canyon Mine" and the proponent is P4 Production, L.L.C.

When complete, Caldwell Canyon Mine will provide the only source of elemental phosphorus in the United States (and indeed only source in the western hemisphere), which is critically important to our Nation's and the world's food supply, along with other important applications. It is important to note that P4's current mine, Blackfoot Bridge, is nearing the end of its economic life so there is a need to ensure that the permitting review of the Caldwell Canyon project is completed in a timely fashion.

In addition to its importance to American agriculture, the Caldwell Canyon project is critically important to the Idaho economy. Mining operations at the Blackfoot Bridge mine and the processing plant in Soda Springs, Idaho support over 1,200 direct jobs, and approximately 2,000 indirect jobs in the southeastern Idaho region. Once operational, the Caldwell Canyon Mine will provide an estimated \$115 million in direct economic benefits annually in Idaho and about \$230 million annually in indirect economic benefits. Anticipating over 40 years of production at Caldwell, P4 would also pay an estimated \$80 to \$120 million to the state and federal governments in royalties for the project.

The BLM has been diligently working on this project for many years. I appreciate its focus and dedication in the face of surprising and disappointing court decisions by the federal district court in Idaho last year—over three and a half years after the BLM's initial approvals to proceed—vacating all of the BLM's work and remanding the project back to the agency. Of note, the vacatur came after significant investment and project development activity.

As I understand it, part of the problem was that the applicable ARMPA standards changed in the midst of the NEPA review and before the Record of Decision was issued, causing confusion and delay and as noted by the federal court. I am concerned that with the timing of your new Greater Sage Grouse plan amendments and the ongoing Caldwell Canyon Mine Environmental Impact Statement, that the same thing could happen again with changing standards at the last minute after years of review disrupting and delaying the permitting process.

I am also concerned with the impact of the newly released Conservation and Landscape Health Rule, which I strongly oppose, and want to ensure it does not significantly disrupt and delay the Caldwell Canyon permitting process.

2a) Will you ensure that a decision for the Caldwell Canyon Mine stays on track with a timely ROD in 2025?

2b) Will you ensure that any decision to approve the Caldwell Canyon Mine is not disrupted again by the Greater Sage Grouse plan amendment process? This could be done by including election language for Caldwell Canyon in the EIS for the 2024 ARMPA which allows the BLM the option to apply either the best combination of old and new ARMPA standards that keep the project on schedule and ensure its durability.

2c) Will you ensure that any decision to approve the Caldwell Canyon Mine is not disrupted by the BLM's Conservation and Landscape Health rulemaking?

### Questions Submitted by Representative Grijalva

*Question 1. At the start of this year, the Department's final rule for the Implementation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act went into effect. Within this budget request, there is \$250,000 for NAGPRA in the Cultural Resources Management Program, could you share how this funding will be utilized to ensure compliance and implementation of the new rule?*

*Question 2. There are two provisions under the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act that expressly require the Department of the Interior to consult with Indian Tribes demonstrating ancestral, cultural, or other ties to the resources within the Management Area, to develop a cultural resources survey for the Vinagre Wash Special Management Area and a cultural resources management plan for the Xam Kwatchan Trail network, both of which are within lands managed by BLM.<sup>1</sup> DOI delegated these responsibilities to BLM through Secretarial Order 3374. These requirements were statutorily required to be completed by March 2021. Could you provide an update on the status of these provisions and how BLM will use congressional appropriations to fulfill these statutory obligations?*

*Question 3. BLM's budget requests significant investments to support President Biden's agenda, including thoughtful stewardship of public lands and water and implementation of the recommendations of the Interagency Working Group on Mining Laws, Regulations, and Permitting. The Interagency Working Group report recognizes the challenges Tribes face to protect lands beyond their reservation and trust land boundaries from harmful mining activities and emphasizes the importance of regular, meaningful, and robust tribal consultation to appropriately assess the impacts of mining on tribal communities. While I support the administration's efforts to implement the recommendations, I often hear from Tribes that BLM has not engaged in meaningful tribal consultation for lands containing important tangible and intangible cultural resources, consequently leading to lands significant to tribal communities having been mismanaged and severely damaged by mining and other commercial activities.*

*3a) Could you briefly explain how BLM will ensure regular, meaningful, and robust tribal consultation in implementing the recommendations of the Interagency Working Group and prior to project approvals that could adversely impact culturally significant areas and resources?*

*3b) How is BLM utilizing funding and resources to train staff and improve implementation and enforcement of its tribal consultation policies and procedures?*

*3c) What efforts is BLM engaging in to resolve dispute between Tribes and the agency, has there been consideration of engaging independent, third-party mediators to assist with resolving disputes?*

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Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you for your testimony, Director Stone-Manning. I would now like to recognize Representative Bentz to introduce our next witness.

Mr. BENTZ. Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is my privilege to introduce my friend, Director Chuck Sams, today.

Director Sams is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation of Northeast Oregon, and is a constituent of mine in Congressional District 2. He served as Executive Director for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. He is a U.S. Navy veteran, where he served as an intelligence specialist. He holds a bachelor of science in business administration from Concordia University, and a master of legal studies in Indigenous peoples law from the University of Oklahoma School of Law.

Prior to his appointment to Director of the National Park Service, he served as Oregon Governor Kate Brown's appointee to the Pacific Northwest Power and Conservation Council. I was

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<sup>1</sup> 16 U.S.C. §§ 410e(e)(f)(8); 410aaa-75(d).

proud to support his confirmation as Director of the National Park Service.

Welcome, Director Sams.

I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. Mr. Sams, you have 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. CHUCK SAMS, III, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, WASHINGTON, DC, ACCOMPANIED BY JESSICA BOWRON, COMPTROLLER, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. SAMS. [Speaking Native language.] Thank you, Chair Westerman, for meeting with me earlier.

Thank you, Chair Tiffany and Ranking Member Neguse, for having me here today.

Thank you, Congressman Bentz. It is always nice to see somebody from home, especially eastern Oregon.

I also want to thank the members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to appear before you on the Fiscal Year 2025 budget request for the National Park Service. I would like to summarize my testimony and submit my entire statement for the record.

The discretionary budget request for the National Park Service is \$3.6 billion, an increase of \$251.3 million compared to Fiscal Year 2024 enacted funding. I want to highlight for you a few critical components.

The Fiscal Year 2025 budget proposes \$15.1 million in increased investments to advance racial justice and equity for underserved communities, including the strengthening of Nation-to-Nation relationships with tribes. This includes an additional \$3 million for expanded tribal co-stewardship of park resources, \$1.5 million to increase tourism that benefits tribes, \$2.5 million in dedicated funding for tribal heritage grants, and \$1 million for management of subsistence uses of National Park Service lands and waters in Alaska.

The initiative also invests in new parks that expand access and tell important stories, like the Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument, the Somerton site expansion of Brown versus Board of Education National Historic Park, and the Amache National Historic Site. Through these efforts we intend to create greater opportunities for underserved communities to enjoy and engage in their national parks.

The Fiscal Year 2025 request also invests \$180 million in support of operational needs. The National Park Service has lost almost 15 percent of its operational capacity since Fiscal Year 2010. Over the same period, over 35 units have been added to the National Park System, and annual visitation has increased by tens of millions. This new funding includes \$46 million in support of the proposed 2025 employee pay raise, as well as the \$105.8 million in baseline capacity due to the absorption of the 2024 pay increases that eroded parks' purchasing power. And to help meet this growth in operational demand, the budget seeks \$11.2 million to address new and critical responsibilities across parks and offices, such as addressing significant physical security issues at Mount Rushmore

National Memorial, and providing increased resource and visitor protection at Stonewall National Monument.

The Fiscal Year 2025 budget also proposes \$6.8 million in wage-grade and locality adjustments to support required increases in personnel expenses, and \$10 million to restore staff capacity lost in Fiscal Year 2024.

Also, to help prevent the growth of deferred maintenance, the request proposes \$193.2 million for cyclic maintenance, a \$5 million increase over Fiscal Year 2024. This funding supports projects that address routine maintenance and recapitalization needs, and contributes to the National Park Service's approach towards life cycle investments that sustain assets in the long term.

Lastly, the budget proposes to invest more than \$100 million across fund sources for housing needs. The National Park Service has more than 5,600 housing units across 213 parks that house more than 15,000 people. While many of these units are in good condition, many have deferred maintenance and modernization needs, and the market for housing in gateway communities around parks is rapidly changing. There has been an increase in both the cost of housing, as well as the use for vacation rentals, leading to a lack of affordable and available housing for park employees in these communities. In areas that have seen significant increases in housing costs, housing is a common factor cited in job offer declinations. And some staff have been lost due to the housing challenge.

We take the responsibility of providing sufficient housing to our employees seriously. Therefore, the budget also includes an increase of \$9 million to construct, improve, and modernize housing for National Park Service employees. This funding increase will support compliance, design, and construction of housing units that will replace obsolete and deteriorating housing or add housing capacity at multiple parks, including at Rocky Mountain National Park, Sequoia and Kings Canyon Park, and Mammoth Cave National Park.

Finally, I am pleased to update you on our progress to implement the Great American Outdoors Act. Funding from the Legacy Restoration Fund has provided us almost \$3.9 billion for deferred maintenance. We have obligated more than \$2.1 billion, with over 131 projects underway, and more starting this year. From the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the National Park Service has received more than \$395 million for land acquisition activities and over \$1 billion for state grant programs matched by non-Federal funds, for a total impact of at least \$2 billion.

Chairman, this concludes my summary. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and for your continued support of the National Park Service. I would be happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sams follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHARLES F. SAMS III, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Chair Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today at this oversight hearing on the Fiscal Year 2025 President's Budget Request for the National Park Service (NPS).

I am pleased to share with you the President's Budget Request for the NPS, which directly supports the vision and objectives laid out by President Biden and

Secretary Haaland for the Department of the Interior (DOI), as well as my own priorities for the NPS. If enacted, this budget will help enable us to support and protect our resources, our visitors, and our employees well into the future.

### **FY 2025 Budget Summary**

The FY 2025 discretionary budget request for the NPS is \$3.6 billion, an increase of \$251.3 million compared to FY 2024 enacted funding levels, supporting an estimated 14,571 full-time equivalents (FTE). Recreation fee revenue, funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other mandatory funding sources provide additional funding of \$1.24 billion. The total FY 2025 request from all fund sources for NPS is \$4.81 billion and 19,912 FTE.

The request prioritizes conserving our natural and cultural resources, advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities. The request balances investments in key priorities with necessary funding for day-to-day operation of the 429 park units, 25 trails, and 66 wild and scenic rivers, ensuring the American public continues to have enriching experiences on park lands.

The request also invests in our most valuable resource—NPS employees. My top priority as Director continues to be to connect and empower a thriving and diverse workforce, and I believe that funding initiatives such as providing quality employee housing and increasing parks' capacity to address growing responsibilities directly support this goal. To that end, the budget supports an increase of \$151.9 million across all accounts for FY 2025 fixed costs like the 2.0 percent employee pay increase, and maintaining baseline capacity to reflect increased FY 2024 fixed cost requirements. Without full funding for these costs, the NPS will continue to absorb these must-pay costs by cutting funding for program work or staffing.

**Operation of the National Park System**—The FY 2025 budget request for the NPS operations account is \$3.1 billion, an increase of \$201.9 million above the FY 2024 enacted level, including an increase of \$44.0 million for FY 2025 fixed costs. This includes \$431.0 million for Resource Stewardship, \$299.5 million for Visitor Services, \$456.6 million for Park Protection, \$974.0 million for Facility Operations and Maintenance, \$709.7 million for Park Support, and \$219.5 million for External Administrative Costs.

Additionally, in support of our NPS employees and staffing capacity, the operations budget provides an additional \$28.0 million for increasing general staffing capacity, supporting new and critical responsibilities at park sites, and increases to wage grade and locality pay areas. This funding will increase operating capacity at parks and offices with new and critical needs, allow NPS to collaborate with the public and Tribal governments, broaden programming and maintenance activities, expand our law enforcement presence, and improve park safety and security.

Also, to help prevent the growth of deferred maintenance, the account proposes \$193.2 million for cyclic maintenance, a \$5.0 million increase over FY 2024. This funding supports projects that address routine maintenance and recapitalization needs, and contributes to the NPS' approach toward lifecycle investments that sustain assets in the long-term.

**Centennial Challenge**—This appropriation, requested at \$13.0 million, leverages partner donations for signature projects and programs at national parks. The Centennial Challenge program is instrumental in garnering and fostering strong partnerships. All Federal funds must be matched on at least a 1 to 1 basis, creating a program total of at least \$26.0 million. These projects focus on repairing and modernizing NPS infrastructure, expanding recreational opportunities and access to the public, and developing new and improved educational and interpretive programs for visitors.

**National Recreation and Preservation**—The FY 2025 budget request for the National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) appropriation is \$84.4 million. This appropriation is dedicated to supporting local community efforts to preserve natural and cultural resources from the local level to the international. Natural resource programs funded in this account support collaborative and community-driven efforts and outcome-focused investments to preserve and enhance rural landscapes, urban parks and rivers, important ecosystems, and wildlife habitat. NPS cultural programs funded in this account support public participation in preserving the Nation's cultural heritage through National Register Programs, research and training in historic preservation and conservation, and a number of grant programs. The FY 2025 request includes an increase of \$3.0 million to fund the recently established African American Burial Grounds Preservation Grant Program and invests additional funding in staffing for grants administration to ensure proper management of a growing

workload of grants funded through this appropriation and the Historic Preservation Fund.

The request also maintains funding for NR&P programs such as Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance, National Register programs, Chesapeake Gateways and Trails, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation, Japanese American Confinement Sites, American Battlefield Protection Program Assistance, American Indian and Native Hawaiian Art and Culture, and the 9/11 Memorial Act. NR&P also supports the management of the Heritage Partnership Program, which distributes Federal funding to 60 National Heritage Areas in 36 States and one territory as well as international cooperation on park and heritage resource management. While NPS recognized the important role of National Heritage Areas as important local conservation leaders, the FY 2025 request finds savings of \$11.2 million to the Heritage Partnership Program along with other budget savings to preserve funding for core operations and Administration priorities.

**Historic Preservation Fund**—The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) supports Historic Preservation Offices in States, territories, and Tribal lands to preserve historically and culturally significant sites and provides competitive grants to other entities. The FY 2025 budget request for this appropriation is \$151.4 million. As part of the budget's advancement of racial justice and equity for underserved communities, the request includes \$2.5 million in new, dedicated funding for Tribal Heritage Grants to support Federally recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Villages and Corporations, and Native Hawaiian Organizations to preserve and protect their cultural heritage.

The President's budget includes \$62.2 million for grants to State Historic Preservation Offices and \$23.0 million to Tribal Historic Preservation Offices to help meet preservation responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act to protect and preserve historic resources, based on local needs and priorities. This appropriation also includes \$11.0 million for grants-in-aid to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to support preservation of historic structures on HBCU campuses, \$12.5 million for Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants to support subgrant programs for historic preservation projects that stimulate economic growth in rural areas, \$30.3 million for competitive grants to preserve historic sites that tell the stories of the struggles for civil rights and equal rights in America, and \$10.0 million for Save America's Treasures grants to support preservation of nationally significant sites and collections.

**Construction**—The FY 2025 budget request includes \$237.2 million to fund construction projects, equipment replacement, management, planning, operations, and special projects. This includes \$124.7 million for line-item construction, which includes an increase of \$46.1 million for major construction projects, in order to modernize and renew some NPS priority assets. This account also includes a \$9.0 million increase to improve and expand NPS housing, a \$3.9 million increase for Climate Vulnerability Studies, a \$3.2 million increase for construction project planning, and a \$1.0 million increase to help establish charging infrastructure that supports the Federal Zero Emission Vehicle fleet.

### FY 2025 Budget Priorities

**Advancing Racial Justice and Equity for Underserved Communities**—The Biden-Harris Administration directs Federal agencies to operate in an environment that advances equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. Consistent with that effort, the NPS emphasizes a focus on advancing equity, inclusion, and access as we carry out the NPS mission.

The FY 2025 NPS budget includes an increase of \$15.1 million in targeted investments to support advancement of racial justice and equity for underserved communities. This increase is spread across multiple appropriations. The request proposes \$3.1 million and 22 FTE in the Biden-Harris Administration's Increasing Representation on Our Public Lands initiative, which supports operations at new or expanded park sites like Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Historic Site, Brown v. Board of Education National Historical Park's Summerton South Carolina unit, New Philadelphia National Historic Site, Blackwell School National Historic Site, and Amache National Historic Site. This effort also includes \$3.0 million to implement the recently established African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program, \$250,000 for the newly established Japanese American World War II History Network, and \$500,000 to address the growing workload of grants management.

The NPS's commitment to respect and strengthen connections with Indigenous communities, enhance our nation-to-nation relationships, and fully uphold our trust

and treaty responsibilities—another top priority for the Service—is reflected in our request for an additional \$3.0 million to support expanded Tribal co-stewardship of park resources, \$1.5 million to implement the Native American Tourism Improving Visitor Experience Act (NATIVE Act) to support tourism that benefits Tribes, \$1.0 million to support the management of subsistence uses of NPS lands in Alaska, \$250,000 for a new Native American Graves Protection Act (NAGPRA) national program coordinator, and \$2.5 million to provide dedicated funding for competitive grants to Tribes, Alaska Native Villages and Corporations, and Native Hawaiian Organizations for the preservation and protection of their cultural heritage.

**Ensuring Operational Capacity in the National Park System**—The NPS has lost almost 15 percent of its operations staff capacity since FY 2010. Over the same period, over 35 new units and additional authorized sites have been added to the system, existing units have seen responsibilities grow, and visitation has increased by tens of millions. To meet this demonstrated and anticipated additional demand, the FY 2025 budget proposes \$180.0 million and 944 FTE spread across multiple appropriations in support of several priorities. These increases provide vital support to parks and programs to advance priorities and fulfil important responsibilities.

The budget requests \$151.9 million to support basic operational capacity needs associated with increases in fixed costs. \$46.1 million of this request will support the proposed 2025 fixed costs increase including the employee pay raise, while \$105.8 million will support baseline capacity due to absorption of FY 2024 fixed cost requirements. An additional \$11.2 million and 69 FTE will support new and critical responsibilities at park units and central offices, such as addressing significant physical security issues at Mount Rushmore National Memorial and providing increased resource and visitor protection at Stonewall National Monument. The FY 2025 budget proposes \$6.8 million in Wage Grade and Locality Adjustments to support required increases in personnel expenses and \$10.0 million for staff capacity restoration.

**Employee Housing**—To address this very critical need, the FY 2025 budget proposal invests more than \$100 million in housing for NPS employees across multiple fund sources, including a \$9.0 million proposed increase in the Construction account that would directly support new construction or rehabilitation of existing housing facilities. Housing for employees in and near national parks is increasingly scarce and expensive, reflecting a trend impacting communities across the country; this has led to long commutes and has made it difficult for NPS to recruit and retain employees. This funding increase will support compliance, design, and construction of housing units that will replace obsolete and deteriorated housing or add housing capacity at multiple parks, including at Rocky Mountain National Park, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, and Mammoth Cave National Park.

**Additional Priorities**—The 2025 President's Budget contains additional increases that support key NPS priorities. To mitigate the impacts of climate change, this includes an increase of \$2.5 million to invest in conservation and climate-based projects that will include management and control of non-native invasive species, restoration of damaged ecosystems, or mitigation of threats to at-risk resources. And, to further strengthen the Department's ability to meet its conservation mission in the face of a changing climate, the NPS budget includes \$250,000 as part of a total \$1.0 million increase Department-wide to establish experts in NPS and other DOI bureaus to implement a nature-based solutions policy. To assess the impacts of a changing climate on parks, the budget requests an additional \$3.9 million to conduct climate vulnerability studies. The budget also includes \$4.0 million for Zero Emission Vehicle equipment and infrastructure deployment, which is used to increase electrical supply and access for electric vehicle supply equipment, and coordinates installation to ensure the Department can maximize the use of these charging stations.

The NPS request also includes a \$15.4 million investment in Central Information Technology (IT) needs. This funding will invest in IT modernization, the IT workforce, and critical IT infrastructure needs in order to meet growing cybersecurity requirements. Additional funding will preclude these costs from being billed to park and program budgets, which would further erode their operational capacity.

Additionally, the request includes \$1.0 million in new funding to implement recommendations of the DOI Law Enforcement Task Force to proactively support the mental health, wellness, and resiliency of all DOI law enforcement officers from recruitment to retirement. This funding would also provide additional psychological testing, required for all newly hired law enforcement officers. The request also contains a one-time investment of \$4.2 million for activities associated with the 2025 Presidential Inauguration.

### Conclusion

The President's FY 2025 budget proposal supports President Biden's commitment to respecting and strengthening our connections with underserved communities, mitigating the impacts of climate change, and restoring parks' abilities to protect our shared cultural and natural heritage.

Chairman Tiffany, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and for the Subcommittee's continued support of the NPS. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO THE HONORABLE CHUCK SAMS,  
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**The Honorable Chuck Sams did not submit responses to the Committee by the appropriate deadline for inclusion in the printed record.**

### Questions Submitted by Representative Westerman

*Question 1. It is our understanding that the National Park Service (NPS), to date, has spent less than 3 percent of the funds it received from the so-called Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which was specifically earmarked for hiring new employees. I've been told that NPS has spent less than \$13 million so far. Yet, I continue to hear time and again from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, and from NPS itself, that NPS needs more money for hiring.*

*1a) How do you reconcile these conflicting facts?*

*1b) Please provide a full accounting of the money spent from the IRA on hiring new employees.*

*1c) Of the funds that were spent, what positions were filled across the agency?*

*Question 2. Does the NPS have the authority to change the regulations for concessioners to update thresholds on audits and fees to reflect inflation? Right now, concessioners must pay for audits if their income is above \$500,000. This hasn't been adjusted in decades, meaning more and more small concessioners are subject to this regulation due to inflation, not actual growth. Have you considered how inflation is impacting the concessioners' fees and auditing requirements? Please explain.*

*Question 3. Your submitted testimony states: "An additional \$11.2 million and 69 [full-time equivalents (FTE)] will support new and critical responsibilities at park units and central offices, such as addressing significant physical security issues at Mount Rushmore National Memorial . . ."*

*3a) Will you describe what "significant physical security issues" there are at Mount Rushmore?*

*3b) Please describe why the current level of security, law enforcement agents, and infrastructure (including fences, cameras, etc.) are not adequate to address the "significant physical security issues."*

*3c) How much of the \$11.2 million and 69 FTE are requested specifically for Mount Rushmore National Memorial?*

*Question 4. The lease for the migrant encampment at Floyd Bennett Field ends on September 14, 2024.*

*4a) Will you commit to promptly informing the Committee once a decision is made on the renewal of the lease?*

*4b) Will you commit to ensuring that no other units of the National Park System are used as locations for migrant encampments?*

*Question 5. What were the staffing levels at Gateway National Recreation Area in New York City on September 1, 2023?*

*Question 6. What were the staffing levels at Gateway National Recreation Area in New York City on May 15, 2024?*

*Question 7. Included in the priority project request under Great American Outdoor Act for the NPS was \$40 million in repairs for the Gateway National Recreation Area, which includes Floyd Bennett Field.*



7a) Will housing 2,000 migrants at Floyd Bennett Field impact the timeline of completing this work?

7b) Will any of the \$40 million be used to repair damages to the recreation area caused by housing migrants?

7c) Will any of these funds be used to construct or improve housing for illegal migrants?

Question 8. Have you been to Floyd Bennet Field and seen the migrant camps established under the lease from the NPS and the city of New York?

Question 9. In response to questioning about reported criminal activity at Floyd Bennett Field, including arrests for assault and domestic violence, you stated that the information you have received from U.S. Park Police “is mostly around unregistered cars that we’re seeing and some minor, petty stuff.” Is the NPS unaware of the numerous violent crimes that have been reported at Floyd Bennett Field since it was turned into a migrant housing facility?

Question 10. Please provide reports of all instances in which U.S. Park Police responded to reported crimes at Floyd Bennett Field since November 2023.

Question 11. The NPS stated in its FY 2025 budget justification that units along the U.S.-Mexico border “consistently experience serious resource damage due to illegal cross-border activities traversing the parks.”

11a) Have you spoken with Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas on ways to secure federal border lands?

11b) If not, will you commit to doing so, and by when?

11c) Have you met with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents about how to improve operational control of federal borderlands and protect the life and safety of officers?

Question 12. Chairman Tiffany asked you “how much is the National Park Service proposing for the Southwest Border Resource Protection Program?” In response, you asked for the assistance of an aide and then responded, “approximately \$1 million.” In fact, the total request is \$693,000, so your answer inflated the true value by more than 44 percent. Does NPS believe that it should be spending at least \$370,000 more on this program?

Question 13. CBS News reported that the remains of two suspected border crossers who likely died from heat exposure were found in the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in July 2023. How many migrants and suspected migrants have died on NPS lands along the U.S.-Mexico border since 2021? Please provide annual totals.

Question 14. Please provide all data that the NPS collected for FY 2021, 2022, and 2023 on trash that is illegally discarded on NPS-administered lands along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Question 15. Does the NPS conduct any trash-collection activities on NPS-administered lands along the U.S.-Mexico border? Please describe such activities in detail, including the number conducted each year from FY 2021 to FY 2023.

Question 16. How much funding has the NPS spent to initiate, administer, and grow the 30x30 initiative?

Question 17. By the end of FY 2023, the NPS had a \$23.3 billion deferred maintenance backlog on its existing lands. Yet conservation.gov asserts that the U.S. will need to bring about “rapid accelerations” in conservation efforts to meet the goals of the Biden administration’s 30x30 initiative.

17a) Is it wise for the NPS to engage in expanded preservation efforts, when it currently has a large deferred maintenance backlog?

17b) Should the NPS refrain from acquiring more conservation acreage until the backlog is eliminated or substantially reduced? If not, please explain why not.

Question 18. In numerous places throughout the budget, NPS justifies cutting various programs to “preserve funding for Administration priorities.” In each place this appears, please provide a justification for why this program is being cut and what “Administration priority it is funding instead:

18a) National Capital Performing Arts Program

18b) Quagga and Zebra Mussels Management Projects

18c) Repair and Rehabilitation Projects

18d) GPS Modernization

18e) Centennial Challenge

18f) Heritage Partnership Programs Commissions and Grants

18g) Semiquincentennial Preservation Grants

18h) Save America's Treasures Grants

18i) Abandoned Mineral Lands

Question 19. Do repair and rehabilitation projects prevent infrastructure from eventually being added to the deferred maintenance backlog?

Question 20. How will reducing \$25 million in funding for repair and rehabilitation projects eventually affect the deferred maintenance backlog?

Question 21. The budget states that a \$2 million cut to the Centennial Challenge Fund will result in eight fewer projects. Please list which projects would not receive funding.

Question 22. The budget states that there will be an \$11 million reduction in the Heritage Partnership Programs Commission and Grants account and yet each organization that previously received funding will continue to do so. Please provide a breakdown of the funding reduction anticipated for each individual Heritage Area.

Question 23. How much money is NPS planning to allocate in FY 2025 to Giant Sequoia restoration and resiliency projects?

#### **Questions Submitted by Representative Stauber**

Question 1. On November 6, 2023, leadership from the Voyageurs National Park ("Voyageurs") sent a note to all Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) holders outlining policy changes the National Park Service (NPS) were making relating to the CUA application process beginning for the 2024 season, with additional changes planned for the 2025 season. These CUA application changes included increasing fees, removing the ability of vendors to bundle applications and associated fees for multiple activities, as well as moving from a rolling application process to a defined three-month application window. As a result of these changes and increased fees, many CUA applicants will be required to pay anywhere from several hundred to several thousands of dollars in additional application fees. Additionally, should a CUA applicant fail to submit their application during the defined application window or have their application denied, they will be unable to provide recreational activities to the public until the following season.

1a) How are these changes consistent with the NPS's stated mission to preserve the national and cultural resources and values of the National Park System, to "cooperate with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world?"<sup>1</sup>

1b) Has the NPS evaluated the impact that these policy changes will have on the public's visitation and accessibility by the public to Voyageurs and other properties within the National Park System?

1c) If the number of approved CUA holders, or the number of activities offered by approved CUA holders, decreases as a result of these policy changes, what actions will the NPS take to ensure the public continues to have the same level of access and recreational opportunities at Voyageurs and other properties within the National Park System?

Question 2. As part of the November 6, 2023 communication from the Voyageurs leadership, CUA applicants were notified that they would be required to complete the "2023 Annual Report" form along with their completed 2024 CUA application. The "2023 Annual Report" requires the disclosure of several pieces of sensitive financial information, including relating to receipts and income from CUA holders business operations.

2a) What is the NPS justification for the collection of this sensitive financial information?

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm>

2b) *How is this information utilized by the NPS, including but not limited to the evaluation of a CUA holder's application?*

2c) *Is this information shared beyond the NPS? Is this information kept confidential?*

2d) *What safeguards are in place to ensure this information is kept secure by the NPS?*

#### **Questions Submitted by Representative Malliotakis**

*Question 1. What is the National Park Service's plan for addressing the significant erosion problem at Great Kills Park, Staten Island, which is part of the Gateway National Recreation Area and overseen by the National Park Service?*

*Question 2. What specific plans are currently in development to mitigate this erosion?*

*Question 3. What is the timeline for completing these plans?*

*Question 4. How does the National Park Service plan to engage the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in this project?*

*Question 5. Could you provide a detailed history of the erosion issue at Great Kills Park?*

*Question 6. How long has this erosion been a known problem?*

*Question 7. What is the timeline for addressing the erosion issue at the beach?*

*Question 8. Why has there been a lack of communication between the National Park Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding this issue?*

#### **Questions Submitted by Representative Grijalva**

*Question 1. At the start of this year, the Department's final rule for the Implementation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act went into effect. Within this budget request, there is \$250,000 for NAGPRA in the Cultural Resource Stewardship Program, could you share how this funding will be utilized to ensure compliance and implementation of the new rule?*

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Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you very much, Director Sams. We will now move on to questioning at this point, and I am going to begin the questioning here of our witnesses.

Director Sams, your agency manages 195 miles of land along the southern border. Have you visited the southern border in your capacity as Director?

Mr. SAMS. Yes, sir. Most recently, last year, I went and visited Saguaro National Park, and was able to talk about border issues both with the Tohono O'odham Tribe and with my staff.

Mr. TIFFANY. And have you seen the impact of the garbage that is being dropped at the southern border by illegal immigrants?

Mr. SAMS. I am very concerned about that same thing, sir, and I thank you for the question.

Yes, we are very aware of the amount of impact we are seeing on the southern border with the amount of trash. We work continuously to ensure the safe environment for our visitors down there and for staff alike in working to resolve those issues.

Mr. TIFFANY. Director Stone-Manning, your agency manages 173 miles of land on the southern border. Have you visited the southern border as a director?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I have.

Mr. TIFFANY. You have visited? And have you seen the environmental devastation that is going on on the southern border like I have?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I didn't see a lot of trash. I did see some clean-up work necessary from the previous administration's construction projects.

Mr. TIFFANY. Oh, I see, it was the previous administration's fault that there are 193 tons of garbage that had been dropped on the Federal lands. Is that what you are saying?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. No, Congressman, I am saying I didn't witness that trash.

Mr. TIFFANY. You didn't witness that trash?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I didn't.

Mr. TIFFANY. I have seen it a couple times when I have been down to Arizona, including recently, about a month and a half ago.

In your opening statement, you say that one of the things that you seek to do is to conserve and protect the environment of the Bureau of Land Management lands that you manage. Is that preserving and protecting them, by allowing this dumping of waste on the BLM lands and then not picking it up?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Yes, Congressman, there is no doubt that illegal trash dumping is a problem all across our public lands. I just met yesterday with some folks from New Mexico, the Tetsuki Pueblo, who are very concerned about the amount of trash on the Caha. Idaho has a Don't Dump on Idaho PSA campaign running. It is, unfortunately, a real problem all across our public lands, with people disrespecting them, and we are doing as much as we can to ensure that we stop that behavior.

Mr. TIFFANY. You are doing as much as you can? How many dollars did you allocate for this in the Bureau of Land Management budget?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I don't have that number before me.

Mr. TIFFANY. I do. Zero. You put zero down. So, it is a priority, but you don't put any money towards it. Is that what you are saying?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, we pick up hundreds and thousands of pounds of garbage every year on our public lands.

Mr. TIFFANY. Have you met with Secretary Mayorkas about this problem?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I have not met the Secretary.

Mr. TIFFANY. When you appeared for confirmation before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, you made the following statement: "If I am confirmed as BLM Director, I will work with the Department of Homeland Security and other relevant departments and agencies as appropriate to address border-related issues on the public lands."

It has now been 951 days since you were confirmed. Were you lying to Senator Barrasso and the Senate when you said that you were going to work with Homeland Security to deal with this problem?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I know the many BLM staff who dedicate their work day in and day out along our southern border work daily with the Department of Homeland Security.

Mr. TIFFANY. But you haven't.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I have not had direct interaction with the Secretary, who is a very busy man.

Mr. TIFFANY. So, the Director of the Bureau of Land Management, 173 miles of southern border lands, and this is not a priority, with nearly 200 tons of trash being dropped as a result of illegal immigration. And you are supposed to be preserving and protecting our best lands in the United States of America?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, it is a really important issue all across our public lands, and our staff works on it each and every day.

Mr. TIFFANY. Director Sams, how much is an electric vehicle? How much does it cost to buy an electric vehicle?

Mr. SAMS. It depends on the type. If we are talking light utility vehicle or just a car, it can cost anywhere between \$25,000 to as much as \$80,000.

Mr. TIFFANY. Kelley Blue Book says, on average, it is about \$54,000. Does that sound about right?

Mr. SAMS. Yes, sir.

Mr. TIFFANY. How much is the National Park Service proposing for the Southwest Border Resource Protection Program?

Mr. SAMS. Approximately \$1 million.

Mr. TIFFANY. \$1 million?

Mr. SAMS. Yes, sir.

Mr. TIFFANY. How much of that is an increase?

Mr. SAMS. About \$8,000, sir.

Mr. TIFFANY. So, about \$8,000 more, but the budget includes \$4.2 million for electric vehicles?

Mr. SAMS. Yes, sir.

Mr. TIFFANY. OK, so the electric vehicles are more important than our southern border?

Mr. SAMS. Oh, we are not saying that at all, sir.

Mr. TIFFANY. I will yield back. I have exceeded my time. Next, I will turn to the Ranking Member, Mr. Levin, for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I am going to shift gears entirely.

I am first going to say it is nice to see Director Stone-Manning and Director Sams. Thank you for all your good work. I really appreciate everything you are doing for so many critical initiatives to help protect our public lands, promote domestic clean energy production, and provide outdoor recreation opportunities. I want to take a moment to commend you and the Administration for advancing historic action on climate change and conservation, commensurate with what this moment demands.

Director Stone-Manning, I would like to begin with you and speak about legislation I have introduced with Representative Casten, Ranking Member Grijalva, and many of my colleagues on the Democratic side of the aisle, the Clean Electricity and Transmission Acceleration Act. This legislation includes an entire title to improve renewable energy development on Federal public lands, which mirrors my standalone bill, the Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act.

And since we are talking about appropriations for the agency today, at least I think that is why we are supposed to be here, I want to dive into a specific piece of the legislation, which is revenue sharing. Director Stone-Manning, is it true that a portion of the receipts from oil and gas rents and fees for drilling permits are automatically reinvested in a special permit processing program?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. It is.

Mr. LEVIN. And per the BLM's budget justification, this program is just for oil and gas permitting improvement, not renewable energy permitting improvement. Is that right?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. That is correct.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you. It is my understanding that this program, known as the Permit Processing Improvement Fund, has in some cases helped BLM to better staff certain field offices where applications to drill for oil and gas are most concentrated, so the agency can process permits in a timely manner.

But when it comes to renewable energy, there is no such permit processing improvement fund, is there?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. That is correct.

Mr. LEVIN. And legislation would be necessary to create one, correct?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Correct.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you. Right now, 100 percent of the revenues from acreage rents, megawatt capacity fees, bonus bids, and other fees from renewable energy development on public lands just go straight back to Treasury. But I think that this current structure misses out on a very important opportunity. My bills, both CETA and PLREDA, include a provision to split these revenues four ways between states, counties, permit processing, and conservation efforts, paired with recreational access.

Director Stone-Manning, according to your testimony, as of April 2024 there are 65 utility-scale renewable energy projects under review by BLM, representing more than 32 gigawatts of potential capacity to power millions of homes and create thousands of jobs. Can you speak to how mandatory funding for wind and solar permit processing could help your agency tackle all of these applications?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, thanks for the question. Not only would it help the BLM staffers who are hard at work every day with big stacks of projects on their desks, but I think it would also be very important to the local communities in which these projects are placed. It would mirror the oil and gas program so that local counties and states could receive revenue from the great power that we are generating from hot water, the sun, and wind.

Mr. LEVIN. So, am I correct in understanding that Federal revenue from oil and gas leasing is partially dispersed to the states where production is located?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. That is correct.

Mr. LEVIN. And the same is not true for renewable energy production on public lands.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. That is correct.

Mr. LEVIN. So, I think, at the very least, we ought to ensure that the Federal Government treats wind and solar on par with oil and

gas. Oil and gas revenue is shared with communities, reinvested in permit processing, all while the fossil fuel companies are making record profits and they are enjoying structural benefits. They continue to enjoy structural benefits in our system that have been built in over the last century.

I would like to enter into the record a white paper from Harvard discussing these issues more in depth.

And just in closing, Director Stone-Manning, I really appreciate all you and your team are doing to try to level the playing field with the two roles that your agency has finalized, but there is clearly more to be done legislatively. I am committed to ensuring that happens so that responsible wind and solar development can happen at scale, and I hope to work with my colleagues to bring parity to our energy resources and balance the use of our public lands so that generations to come can continue to enjoy them.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. Does the gentleman ask for unanimous consent to enter that into the record?

Mr. LEVIN. I would love unanimous consent to enter this into the record, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. TIFFANY. It is so ordered.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you, sir.

[The information follows:]

## Federal Land Leasing, Energy, and Local Public Finances

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### Executive Summary

Current legislation allocating revenue from fossil fuel energy projects on federal land to states and local communities contrasts with renewable energy projects, where revenue is predominantly retained by the federal government. This discrepancy represents a missed opportunity to support local economies through renewable energy revenue. The exclusion of wind and solar energy revenue from state and community benefits constitutes a political oversight. Our objective is to highlight this missed opportunity to let states and local communities further benefit from energy production activities in their region.

Revenue from energy production on federal lands, governed primarily by the Bureau of Land Management, is derived from rents, royalties, bid bonuses, and other fees. While offshore wind and geothermal projects have revenue-sharing mechanisms benefitting local jurisdictions, onshore wind and solar projects do not (*Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act 2023*; Comay, 2019). This contrasts with fossil fuel revenues, where states typically receive half of all bid bonuses, rents, and royalties, fostering local support and financial reliance on such development. In 2023 the US Treasury received over \$7 billion and states and counties received over \$4 billion from the Federal government due to payments for fossil fuel extraction on Federal land (ONRR, 2023). The lack of a revenue dispersal mechanism for wind and solar

<sup>1</sup> This paper was supported by the Harvard Salata Institute [Strengthening Communities](#) cluster. Thanks to John Sutton, Richard Lazarus, Amanda Shafer, Kara Choquette, and Joseph Aldy for feedback on earlier drafts.

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The full document is available for viewing at:

[https://scholar.harvard.edu/sites/scholar.harvard.edu/files/dtingley/files/federal\\_land\\_and\\_revenue\\_return.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/sites/scholar.harvard.edu/files/dtingley/files/federal_land_and_revenue_return.pdf)



Mr. TIFFANY. We now turn to Representative Lamborn for his 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Sams, I totally appreciate our national parks. I have been to 300 units of the National Park System.

Recently, Secretary Haaland testified in front of this Committee. And in Colorado alone, where I have my congressional district, there is a deferred maintenance backlog in repairs that total \$558 million. I asked her specifically if NPS is considering looking to the concessionaire industry to support any of these important capital investment needs. Has she spoken to you about this?

And can you answer where NPS is in leveraging the concessionaire industry? Concessionaires are willing to make long-term investments if NPS has the vision to utilize this resource.

Mr. SAMS. Thank you, Congressman. The Secretary and I have spoken about this before, and we see our concessionaires exactly as that, helping with capitalization. They have done a wonderful job across the Service in helping us really protect some of our more iconic buildings, everything from the hotels at Yosemite and Yellowstone and everywhere in between.

I have had some really great discussions with several of our concessionaires about that and what that looks like, and we look forward to continuing to partner with them in that, opportunities to do that capitalization.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you, and I was pleased to see that the rule-making process earlier this year finalized a rule that updates the contracting process for concessionaires. I am concerned about transparency. And will you commit to making sure there is even more transparency in this process going forward?

Mr. SAMS. I welcome the opportunity to work with you on that transparency issue. I am trying to make sure, as we are modernizing our business practices, which is one of seven of my initiatives that I have laid out before the staff, that is one of them, ensuring that it is very transparent. But if you see any issues in that, I am happy to work with you and your staff on that.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you so much, I appreciate that.

Director Stone-Manning, I would like to ask you some questions about the so-called Landscape and Conservation Health Rule which refers to mitigation and restoration leases. These have no acreage limits. And I am concerned. How will BLM determine an adequate price per acre for these mitigation and restoration leases?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, thank you for the question.

What these mitigation and restoration leases are going to enable us to do is ensure that investment can come onto public lands to restore them so that they are healthy for future generations. We are currently working on guidance on what kind of rents we would charge for those, and what they would cost.

Mr. LAMBORN. Will they be paying royalties like oil and gas leases currently do?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, no, they will be charged rent and there will be bonding.

Mr. LAMBORN. OK. Now, what mechanism is in place to ensure that environmentalists, including some of the extreme groups out

there, will use their 501(c)(3)'s to generate massive, donation-based funding to lock up tens or hundreds of thousands of acres of land?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, again, I need to be clear. These leases are not going to lock up land. Other uses will be available and allowed on the leases that are compatible, and we will use the same adjudication process for all of our right-of-ways that we will use for leases. And that stems from 43 CFR 2920.

Mr. LAMBORN. OK. The BLM's fluid, mineral, and leasing rule establishes a preference criterion for leases. Where do mitigation and restoration leases rank in this criterion, in this order of priority?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, valid existing rights on leases will go forward. So, if there is a valid existing right out there, we have 10 million acres that are currently leased but not being used, that right would hold over the restoration or the mitigation. We would look elsewhere to put a restoration and mitigation lease.

Mr. LAMBORN. BLM has stated that these leases are only going to be necessary until the land has been restored to a usable condition. What will be the measurement criteria that defines when the land has been returned to a usable condition?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Thank you for that question. We do assessment and inventorying and monitoring as part of our daily work to have a real understanding of the ecosystems in which we work. It will be science and data that drive the answer to that question.

Mr. LAMBORN. OK. Lastly, on a slightly different subject, under the Biden administration we have not had lease sales except for one in Colorado in the last 3 years. Will you commit to holding a lease sale on the Western Slope this year in Colorado?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, it is my understanding that due to litigation, we have not been leasing on the Western Slope because so much of it is tied up in litigation.

Mr. LAMBORN. I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields, and I will now recognize Ms. Porter for 5 minutes.

Ms. PORTER. People love our national parks. Republicans, kids, adults. Some of our greatest national treasures are parks, not only for the natural beauty they provide, but also for the history that they preserve.

Director Sams, do you know of anyone who hates the national parks? Have you encountered people like that in your service?

Mr. SAMS. I have not, Madam Congresswoman, not at all.

Ms. PORTER. I have not, either. But sadly for all of us, our national parks have been increasingly harmed by wildfire. California has seen devastating wildfires in the last decade in our national parks. Forests have been destroyed. Wildlife has been vanquished, relocated, and historic structures have burned.

[Slide.]

Ms. PORTER. And I want to show people what this looks like. These are tragic images. We should all be able to agree that these are tragic images.

And we all know now, I want to be clear about this, we all understand that fires are, to a certain extent, an essential part of forest management. They are a natural part of forest management.

But we want our parks to be resilient. Mr. Sams, can you tell me, just yes or no, does the National Park Service have a fire resilience plan to address situations like this?

Mr. SAMS. Yes, we do.

Ms. PORTER. You do? Of course you do. Of course you do, because everyone loves the national parks, and nobody wants to see these kinds of harms.

Mr. Sams, what is the one big thing that Congress can do to help aid wildfire resilience? When we see these images, when our constituents see these images, what do they need their Representatives to do?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you for the question, Congresswoman. Additional resources, the national——

Ms. PORTER. Money. Let me just stop you right there, because I am going to ask you what you are going to do with the money in just a minute.

But I want to be really clear: money. They don't need us suiting up and showing up, trying to fight the fire. Social media posts don't put out wildfires or replant forests. They need money. Congress can provide the resources.

Now, fortunately, last Congress, thanks to Democrats and President Biden, we passed two laws: the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and there were Republicans who supported that, and the Inflation Reduction Act. Each law invests \$5 billion into Federal wildland fire management. This is because, just like I said, people love parks, and we want them to be open.

Mr. Sams, how is the money that you said you need and that Congress has allocated, how are you using that to restore national parks that have been harmed by wildfires?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you, Congresswoman. We have been allocated \$105 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for fuels reduction and post-fire restoration and rehabilitation activities that will mitigate the damaging effects of the wildfires and set landscapes on a path towards natural recovery and climate resilience. This includes planting of native and non-native species to restore or establish healthy, stable ecosystems, and re-establishing burned habitat, and re-establishing native trees lost in the fire.

Ms. PORTER. So, you are putting these dollars to great use. You have led a major effort to restore, for example, historic sequoia trees in the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park in California that burned in 2020 and 2021. I have been there myself unable repeatedly to visit Kings Canyon, because it is still being affected by fire and storms.

How exactly does investing in these efforts promote wildfire resilience? You have talked about kind of repairing and restoring, but how about making things more resilient?

Mr. SAMS. The funding helps us really look at how we are moving forward in the face of climate change. What are the species of plants that were out there?

In my own experience in working with tribes, and understanding Indigenous knowledge, and how we have used that, we, as American Indians, have seen climate change over the last 30,000 years happen at least three, if not four times, and we have enough

knowledge and understanding of what we can do to help build a more resilient future.

Ms. PORTER. Can you continue to do this work without the \$105.3 million?

Can you do this just by waving a wand? Is there a way to do this without spending money?

Mr. SAMS. Absolutely not. We need the funding in order to be able to combat this issue.

Ms. PORTER. And Mr. Sams, can you tell me which political party proposed a budget that would cut funding for wildfire resilience?

Mr. SAMS. Ma'am, it was the Republican side.

Ms. PORTER. It was not the Biden administration. Their budget has these funds in it. So, when we look at these pictures, like most Americans, what I feel is I feel love for our national parks and recreation lands, and I feel a desire to protect them. But apparently not House Republicans. They look at these pictures and they don't seemingly feel anything at all. They just see an opportunity to attack our national parks.

When we cut funding, we are hurting parents who have saved all year to take their kids or grandkids camping. We are devastating our recreation economies and we are putting lives at risk. Fully funding the National Park Service and BLM, protecting those investments from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, it is critical to the survival of our parks.

I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentlelady yields. I now recognize the Chairman of the Full Committee, Mr. Westerman, for his questions.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Thank you, Chairman Tiffany, and I want to echo my colleague from California's concern on wildfire and for the sequoias, and remind you we have a bipartisan bill called the Save Our Sequoias Act. We would love to have you on that.

And also, if we would do a little bit more management, we wouldn't have to spend so much money on wildfires and the damage that they do. It is really a great example of how an ounce of prevention is worth many, many pounds of cure when it comes to our forests.

But Director Sams, it is good to see you again. I enjoyed our meeting last week with some of my folks from Arkansas with the Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, with Secretary Lewis, Heritage Division Director Ryall, and First Gentleman Bryan Sanders to discuss outdoor recreation opportunities in Arkansas, and to talk about the ways the state can partner with the National Park Service on promoting tourism, and how the states and the Federal land agencies could work together and benefit both.

As we discussed and I mentioned in my opening remarks, I know we had a chance to talk about the Buckstaff bathhouse, and that may sound like a pet project because it is one in the national park in my hometown, but it is also concerning to know that there were plans to shut down a facility that would cause 37 people to lose their jobs. And this bathhouse has been open since 1912, the Buckstaff has. I know you were going to look into that. I just wanted to get an update to see if you can tell me if those folks are

going to be able to keep their job and maybe do a little different planning on how to install the HVAC, which is obviously needed and appreciated.

Mr. SAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for convening the meeting last week. It was a pleasure to meet several of your folks from your home state and have discussions with them. And I have met several of them before. And even through social media we continue to visit with each other to talk about what a wonderful asset we have there for folks to enjoy.

We are continuing to work on that issue, to figure out how best to ensure that we are not going to lose that staff, including discussion even now on how much longer we can extend that particular concessionaire's contract.

We have not gone out for a total bid yet to talk about who we are going to end up working with, especially on the HVAC system, to determine how we can do a work-around so that folks can continue to do their work.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Yes. As an engineer in my former life, I can tell you there are multiple ways to do that, and I am pretty sure people put HVAC systems in before without having to lose their whole workforce.

Now, turning to a different direction, we have talked a lot about Floyd Bennett Field. I made a trip up there, met with your colleagues on that Park Service facility. And maybe I am not too good at reading people, but I think I could see in the faces of those folks up there that they weren't real happy about making their national park a migrant shelter. And I really believe that was way above the level of the Park Service. I believe that decision was made way above the level of the Interior Department. The more we research this, the more that it appears it was Department of Homeland Security working directly with the White House that forced this migrant shelter to be built on Park Service land. And amazingly, we saw our so-called bedrock environmental laws waived within a week or two so that this construction could happen.

I know that that lease ends on September 14 of this year. Can you commit to not renewing that lease, or is that above your level of commitment?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Within the lease it does allow for a 1-year extension of that lease, but I can assure you I am currently in no discussions or negotiations with the city of New York about that extension at this time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. So, can you commit that no other national parks are turned into migrant encampments?

Mr. SAMS. Mr. Chairman, I know that you have asked for a lot of information on this, and we have provided that. I don't have the most current information in front of me, but I am happy to get back to you on that particular question.

Mr. WESTERMAN. As the weather is getting nicer, and local New Yorkers are looking to get outside and use recreational sites and facilities including the beach at Floyd Bennett Field, can you commit to at least increasing the police presence there at this site to ensure the safety of local residents?

Mr. SAMS. Under the lease agreement we have been able to add additional patrols from the U.S. Park Police, who are helping on

those issues and providing security and safe enjoyment of the park. It is, specifically under the lease, the New York City Police Department's responsibility for the migrant camp itself. But we will continue to ensure that all of our visitors are safe within our parks.

Mr. WESTERMAN. There have been multiple arrests at the Floyd Bennett Field facility, for instance, ranging from assault to domestic violence. Since those reports have come out, what has the Park Service done to protect the safety of Park Service employees and local residents?

Mr. SAMS. For the latest data, I can't speak, Mr. Chairman, I can't speak to it directly. And I am happy to talk to you in more detail and provide you written information about where we are at in that.

But I recognize that, just from the information I have received from the park police is that it is mostly around unregistered cars that we are seeing, and some minor, petty stuff. But I am happy to get you a more detailed report.

Mr. WESTERMAN. All right, I would like to see that.

Also included in the priority project request under the Great American Outdoors Act for the National Park Service there was \$40 million in repairs for the Gateway National Recreation Area, which includes Floyd Bennett Field. Will putting 2,000 migrants at Floyd Bennett Field impact the timeline of completing this work?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you. I don't believe it will at this time. Those projects are part of our deferred maintenance package that have been on for a long time and made the business case, and we will continue to work forward to ensure that those investments are placed in the park for everyone's enjoyment.

Mr. WESTERMAN. And Mr. Chairman, I thought the clock was going the other way. I yield back the microphone because I am way out of time. Thank you for your indulgence.

Mr. TIFFANY. The Chairman yields, and now I recognize Mr. McClintock for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I need to offer a word in response to the opening statement by the Ranking Member. He obsesses over a 1 degree increase in global temperatures over the next century, but he couldn't care less that the Democrats' policies are making it harder and harder for families to afford to heat their homes, purchase groceries, or drive their cars to work, or even have work to drive to. These policies are madness, and they are now having a terrible effect on the prices that Americans have to pay for everything from gasoline and electricity to automobiles and light bulbs. Europeans are already waking up to this lunacy, and I think Americans will soon follow.

I also need to respond to Ms. Porter. I would remind her that half the forests in California are privately owned. The private forests are healthy, resilient, and fire resistant because their owners manage their forests and match the timber density to the ability of the land to support it. And they make money doing that. We need to do the same thing. We used to.

A fourth of the funds from Federal timber auctions used to go to local communities that were affected by the forests, and the other 75 percent went to the Forest Service to manage our forests. The environmental laws of the 1970s now require an average of 4½

years of studies before we can undertake a forest thinning project. They cost millions of dollars more than the value of the timber to be harvested.

So, private landowners keep their lands in excellent condition and they make money. Federal land managers have kept our forests in decrepit condition under these laws and they lose money. That is not the fault of taxpayers for not paying enough taxes. That is the fault of the very policies that my friend from California has spent her career advocating.

In fact, according to a recent UCLA study, the 2020 wildfires in California released twice as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as all of the CO<sub>2</sub> reductions that they imposed in that state between 2003 and 2019 combined, and at a staggering cost to taxpayers, consumers, and employees.

Mr. Sams, I have Yosemite National Park in my district, and I want to address management issues there that are a continuing nightmare for park visitors. And they have become an economic disaster for the gateway communities that depend on park visitation.

Crowding exists in the Valley, but the Valley isn't the sole destination for visitors, yet the reservation system doesn't make this distinction, nor does it distinguish between peak visitation periods and slack periods. And, far worse, it makes it impossible for spontaneous trips to the park by those in the general region.

In a memo to your management there at Yosemite, the gateway businesses noted the experience with the reservations problem. And here are some of the things they noted: uncertainty regarding access for those who want to visit Yosemite from out of state or internationally; and the existence of a ticketing system inhibiting visitation generally; ticket hoarding by locals; complexity, confusion, and frustration for visitors; unfairly advantaging lodge properties inside the park; greater congestion at entry gates; and rigidity and inability to respond to real-time events based on actual demand pressure. These are what the locals have actually observed there.

I have written to you to ask that the Park Service not finalize the reservation system until other alternatives are explored. And as I wrote to you a month ago, rather than seeing what pressure points remain the pilot system is overly onerous and restrictive to the public in several areas, which will mask opportunities to create a more appropriate, minimal, public-friendly, long-term solution. So, what are you doing to take this into account?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you for the question, Congressman and, yes, this is a huge issue across the Service as we see more and more folks wanting to come to their parks, and we are trying to work very hard and recognizing that, of course, what works at one park may not work at another.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Well, what you are doing at Yosemite is not working, and yet you don't seem to be taking that into account in plowing ahead.

I have to tell you, candidly, that the gateway communities feel the current park management is entirely insulated and disinterested in their input and feedback. In fact, when I met with them

a few months ago, the park management was invited to attend, but instead they blew us off.

A few years ago, I took note of a sign in the conference room at Yosemite. It posed a question, "Is it good for the park?" Well, I suggested then and I repeat today that that is precisely the wrong question. The right question is, "Is it good for the park's visitors?" And I will tell you, my assessment is that this is an attitude problem that runs deep, deep in the Park Service. And if you can't correct it, we are going to need to find somebody who can.

The best visitor experience that has been reported to me at Yosemite over the years that I have represented it came during the shutdown during the Trump administration. During the Obama shutdown, the Park Service canceled all events, it ordered all businesses to be shuttered, it chained all the entrances, it even blocked turnouts overlooking the Valley so people couldn't even stop to get a glimpse of the park from afar. However, during the Trump shutdown, the park gates were kept open, concessionaires continued to operate. And except for a brief period when the concessionaire had to arrange for alternative trash collections, visitors reported that they had a much better, hassle-free experience without the Park Service being on duty.

Now, what does that say about the park management when their absence leads to a better visitor experience than their presence?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you for the question. Well, first and foremost is that we ended up having to do a lot of remediation during that time period, and we are continuing to do that remediation.

Last summer, I had the good chance of enjoying some of Yosemite, and seeing how many folks come in and truly enjoy it.

The balance under the Organic Act, of course, is how do we protect these cultural and natural resources while ensuring that it is open for the enjoyment of the American public? It is a very tough balancing act that we are looking at, and we want to work very closely with the gateway communities, with your counties, and with you.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Yes, but you are not. That is simple, empty rhetoric. I am telling you that your management is not. And that is the experience of these gateway communities, and it is a growing frustration.

I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. I now turn to the Representative from Oregon, Mr. Bentz, for 5 minutes.

Mr. BENTZ. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank the witnesses for their presence today.

Director Stone-Manning, I have a bunch of questions, no surprise given the size of my district, some 46 million acres, 73,000 square miles, a huge portion of which is Bureau of Land Management-managed.

I want to start with the Fiscal Responsibility Act. And in it there are a number of refinements, amendments to NEPA. And I am just anxious to know if the BLM has initiated rulemaking to incorporate those new time frames for your NEPA work. Have you initiated rulemaking in that regard?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Thank you, Congressman, for the question. We have issued guidance on ensuring that we meet those new



timelines of a year for an EA and 2 years for an EIS, and also the page limits within.

Mr. BENTZ. If you would be so kind as to provide me with that guidance, I would appreciate it.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Yes.

Mr. BENTZ. Now the second question. The Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, I think you now have management duties, authority over it. And, of course, it is in my district. And I have been speaking with some of the ranchers who have grazing permits on that space, and they have been notified that their leases that they have many times had for decades will not be renewed. Is that your understanding?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, we are right in the middle of a resource management plan for Cascade-Siskiyou and, of course, that is a transparent, open, and public process. I am assuming and hoping that your constituents engage in that process.

Mr. BENTZ. Well, that does not answer the question. Of course, they have engaged, and they have said, "We don't want our permits not renewed." So, my question to you is, will their permits be renewed under any circumstances?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, the proclamation that established that national monument allows for grazing.

Mr. BENTZ. Say that again, please.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. The proclamation that established that monument allows for grazing.

Mr. BENTZ. OK. I read the proclamation pretty carefully. I didn't see that in it. So, you are telling me, and I am very happy to hear it, that if it allows for grazing, that is really good news. It is not in the proclamation.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Then I stand corrected.

Mr. BENTZ. Yes, well, I am happy for what you are doing. Don't get me wrong. I want those permits renewed.

The conservation rule, it came up a little earlier and I think you used the word "compatible." It is odd, because that conservation rule suggests that it is on par, conservation, with the other multiple uses. But I would suggest what that does is give the agency authority to, I hate to call it "without regard to rules," but to do whatever it would like. Do you read it that way?

Because if you look at it, if you think about it for a moment, conservation being a preservation sort of a thing, it seems to be the exact opposite of, shall we say, any extractive activity, whether it is grazing, logging, or mining. Tell me how you reconcile the obvious difference between conservation on the one hand, and an extractive activity on the other.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, thank you for the question, and you have gotten right to the heart of why our work is difficult and engaging, the multiple use mission.

And the Federal Land Policy and Management Act has been clear, it is explicitly clear, that multiple use includes managing for recreation, watersheds, fish and wildlife habitat, and natural, scenic, and cultural values. It establishes conservation as a use. And what this rulemaking does is put some consistency in how we lift up that portion of FLPMA to ensure that future generations 30,

40, 50 years from now get to enjoy our public lands the way that we do today.

Mr. BENTZ. Right. I haven't heard the answer to my question. If these are opposite uses, then how in the world will you ever find compatibility?

Because you are saying that, indeed, you could have mining and at the same time conservation.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. The other thing that FLPMA tells us is that we don't have to have all the uses on every single acre. So, a hard rock mine is a great example. We are not going to have recreation and mountain biking in an open pit.

Mr. BENTZ. Excuse me for interrupting. That is not the way I read your rule. I read your rule as imposing upon all activities, multiple use or not, this conservation overlay. But if I am wrong, please provide me with the data so indicating.

I want to go to the O&C lands over which you have management and control. For years, the O&C lands have not been producing the amount or allowed to produce the amount of timber that the law requires. Can you explain why?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, we are upholding the O&C Act, and we are upholding the resource management plan that implements that. ASQ for Fiscal Year 2024 is 132 million board feet.

Mr. BENTZ. Yes, I will just say that the facts that I have here indicate otherwise, but I am out of time.

But if you will provide me with the information that indicates you have been abiding by the requirements of that law, I would appreciate it.

I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. I now recognize the gentleman from Minnesota for 5 minutes.

Mr. STAUBER. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I find it really unbelievable that those are the rules and regs under this Administration. And what I would hope, and at this point, that the loggers that log those, they didn't hit any tree spikes or nails intentionally placed in there. So, those rules and regs are unbelievable for this Administration.

At Voyageurs National Park in northern Minnesota, the Park Service is changing policies relating to Conditional Use Authorizations, or CUAs, which are required for local businesses that provide services that increase access to the park. Under the new policies, local operators can no longer stack CUA applications for similar activities. They must now pay additional fees and submit individual applications for each activity or service they would like to provide for the local community and visitors to the park. These are costing local businesses thousands of dollars in additional fees just to process an application. Some of these operators have shared they will likely have to close up shop because this additional red tape is making it no longer cost effective to operate their business.

To their credit, the leadership at Voyageurs National Park has worked closely with the operators to find a solution, but it is national policies set by the Park Service headquarters here in Washington that are forcing them to make these changes. Director Sams, without partnership operators, would the Park Service be

able to provide the same recreational opportunities that they do today?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you, Congressman. Voyageurs National Park has held discussions, as you have said, and workshops with the public for the past year regarding the plan to manage frozen lake access, of course. This summer the park will embark on the——

Mr. STAUBER. Director Sams, excuse me. I only have a couple of minutes left. Without these partnerships, would the Park Service be able to provide the same recreational opportunities that they do today?

Mr. SAMS. We will continue to work to do our best to ensure that we offer those same activities.

Mr. STAUBER. Without the operators?

Mr. SAMS. No, sir, in partnership with the operators.

Mr. STAUBER. What actions is the Service taking to ensure these small and local businesses are able to reasonably operate and provide access for the American people?

That is the mission statement, right, for the American people to be able to enjoy the parks?

Mr. SAMS. Yes, sir.

Mr. STAUBER. OK. What actions are you taking?

Mr. SAMS. As we are modernizing these concessionaire practices and talking about transparency, and we will work towards transparency in every way so that we can demonstrate that we are getting a fair deal for the American people, we want to ensure that the multiple uses of recreation that happen in Voyageurs, which is a fantastic park, will continue in the future. And I am very proud of the team that is working to ensure that we are providing additional support on what that will look like and how to——

Mr. STAUBER. And that is why I said in my statement, the Park Service Director is doing a good job trying to work but he is following your policies on the CUAs.

So, I would ask you to look into that because I think, if we lose those operators, we are going to lose access to the park for the people if operators go out of business. Will you commit to reviewing the national policies that are running counter to the Service's mission to provide opportunities for public use and enjoyment of our parks?

Mr. SAMS. I will take this concern directly back to my staff and look at our CUAs, and see what we are doing.

Mr. STAUBER. Thank you. I hope these policies are seriously addressed by you. I appreciate it.

Mr. SAMS. Thank you.

Mr. STAUBER. Director Stone-Manning, in the BLM's recent Waste Prevention Rule, the Bureau admits that venting and flaring usually occurs due to pipeline capacity constraints. What steps is the Bureau taking to expedite rights-of-way approval for oil and gas infrastructure that prevent flaring, such as gathering lines?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, thank you for the question. Our folks on the ground work hard every day processing the——

Mr. STAUBER. What steps are you taking to expedite right-of-way approval for oil and gas infrastructure that prevent flaring, such as gathering lines?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. When gathering lines come before us, we jump right to it and go through the process.

Mr. STAUBER. How many gathering line applications are in your office right now, do you think?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I don't have that in front of me. I can get that to you.

Mr. STAUBER. Do you know what a gathering line is?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Yes.

Mr. STAUBER. Explain it.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Are you playing stump the director, Congressman?

An oil and gas gathering line, as the name implies, enables the facility to get their product to the larger pipelines that are going to get it on to the Gulf or wherever it is going.

Mr. STAUBER. The gathering lines are part of a categorical exclusion, right? CATEX?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. We do have CATEX for gathering lines. And if I recall correctly, this is old, this is from probably 6 or 8 months ago, I think we have only used it one time because we have only had one ask.

Mr. STAUBER. One ask? Are you just saying you have one request for a gathering line in your office today?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. No, Congressman, as I mentioned, that is from about 6 or 8 months ago. But I recall that being the number.

Mr. STAUBER. Would you please get back to our office on the number of gathering lines that are waiting?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I would.

Mr. STAUBER. OK, thank you.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields.

I would like to ask unanimous consent to enter into the record the BLM budget proposal for public domain forest management. The budget makes no mention of the wildfire risk 5-year monitoring, maintenance, and treatment plan for the second year in a row, and actually proposed a decrease in the planned acres to treat from Fiscal Year 2023.

The BLM budget also has a proposed decrease of over a half million dollars, resulting in 50,000 less seedlings being planted for restoration efforts.

Without objection, so entered into the record, the BLM budget proposal.

[The information follows:]

**Activity: Land Resources**  
**Subactivity: Public Domain Forest Management**

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025 President's Budget				Change from 2024 Annualized CR
				Fixed Costs	Internal Transfers	Program Changes	2025 President's Budget	
<b>Public Domain</b>	<i>\$000</i>	10,814	10,814	+276		-63	11,027	+213
<b>Forest Mgmt</b>	<i>FTE</i>	68	68			0	68	0

Other Resources Supporting Public Domain Forest Mgmt.:					
		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025 Estimate	Change from 2024 Annualized CR
<b>Forest Ecosystem Health &amp; Recovery</b>	<i>\$000</i>	3,500	3,500	3,500	0
	<i>FTE</i>	10	10	10	0
<b>USFS Forest Pest Control</b>	<i>\$000</i>	0	0	0	0
	<i>FTE</i>	0	0	0	0

**Notes:**

- Forest Ecosystem Health & Recovery amounts are shown as new budget authority derived from the Federal share of receipts from all BLM timber salvage sales, and from BLM forest health restoration treatments funded by this account; 43 USC 1735a appropriates these funds on a permanent basis. Forest Ecosystem Health & Recovery is used on both Public Domain Forestry and Oregon and California Grant Lands. More information on Forest Ecosystem Health & Recovery is found in the Permanent Operating Funds chapter. Amount for Forest Ecosystem Health & Recovery shown net of sequestration and funds previously not available due to sequestration (i.e. "pop-up" budget authority). Actual and estimated obligations, by year for Forest Ecosystem Health & Recovery, are found in President's Budget Appendix under the BLM section.

- USFS Forest Pest Control amounts are shown as estimated transfers. More information on USFS Forest Pest Control is found in the U.S. Forest Service Budget Justifications. USFS Forest Pest Control is used on both Public Domain Forestry and Oregon and California Grant Lands.

**Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Public Domain Forest**

Management.	(\$000)	FTE
Baseline Capacity – 2024 Fixed Costs	+542	0
Focus on Highest Priorities	-605	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>-63</b>	<b>0</b>

**Justification of 2025 Program Changes**

The 2025 budget request for Public Domain Forest Management is \$11,027,000 and 68 FTEs, a program change of -\$63,000 and 0 FTE from the 2024 Annualized CR level.

**Baseline Capacity – 2024 Fixed Costs (+\$542,000; 0 FTE)** – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must-pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the BLM's mission. The budget includes \$542,000 in Public Domain Forest

Management, which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover the fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 funding levels associated with all other BLM land meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

**Focus on Highest Priorities (-\$605,000; 0 FTE)** – The BLM will continue to focus on the highest priorities of the Public Domain Forest Management program, addressing fire risk to communities, infrastructure, and high-risk ecosystems, while meeting statutory obligations for forest management. The decrease in funding will result in slightly fewer acres treated to restore forest structure and composition for fire and climate resilience compared to 2023 levels. At this funding level, the BLM could plant an estimated 150,000 seedlings, about 50,000 fewer than in FY 2023.

### Program Overview

The BLM manages approximately 56 million acres of forests and woodlands in the public domain (PD) across 12 Western States, including Alaska. The suppression of natural fire from forest ecosystems has led to overly dense conditions that are susceptible to high severity fire, insect epidemics, and loss of climate resilience in many forest types on BLM-managed lands. To address these challenges, the BLM uses best available science in restoring resilience through various silvicultural treatments to modify structure and composition. In addition to forest treatments to restore resilience, the BLM is identifying forests and woodlands affected by tree mortality due to severe wildfire, insect epidemics, and drought that need reforestation to conserve and restore forest ecosystems and to manage carbon sinks. Foresters use appropriate tree species adapted to local conditions and assess local climate trends to develop reforestation projects. The BLM uses various tools to implement these activities including working with States, counties, and Tribal Nations through Good Neighbor Authority. In FY 2025, the BLM will seek opportunities to strengthen government-to-government relations with Tribal Nations through the Tribal Forest Protection Act. The BLM will also support the BIL and IRA by developing forest restoration projects that meet the objectives of these laws. In addition, the BLM is working toward meeting the 2030 reforestation target set in response to E.O. 14072, *Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies*.

PD Forest Management has four primary performance metrics. *Restoration through sales* consists of acres of forest and woodland treatments that are designed to enhance resilience to disturbances such as fire, insect, disease, and drought, as well as restoring ecosystem functions and habitat. *Forest development* consists of acres of silvicultural activities designed to enhance the productivity and sustainability of forests and woodlands such as reforestation, pre-commercial thinning, insect and disease control, wildfire fuels management, and prescribed burning. *Vegetative permits* provide the public with a wide variety of forest and other vegetative materials for personal and commercial use. The BLM sells over 25,000 permits annually for products such as Christmas trees, fuelwood, pine nuts, mushrooms and other edibles, and native plant materials for restoration. PD Forest Management manages for long-term productivity and sustainable harvest of these products. Permit areas are often developed to also achieve forest health goals such as fire resilience thinning. *Forest inventory* consists of collecting and maintaining an inventory of forest and woodland resources and the status and condition of those resources. In addition to these activities, the BLM supports the cost of conducting NEPA analysis, ESA consultation, and site surveys such as archaeology that are required prior to approving forest management activities.

Under the FY 2025 Budget for PD Forest Management the BLM will work to expand forestry projects that leverage ongoing partnerships, such as the Lower Blackfoot River Stewardship Project near Missoula, Montana. This project was developed in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, which purchased these lands from a private industrial logging company to shift from management for maximum timber production to forest management that more closely reflects natural fire regimes and native plant communities. The Nature Conservancy's transfer of these lands to the BLM for management also restored reserved treaty rights to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The Tribes were interested in partnering with the BLM on project development given the area's historical importance as a major travel route for buffalo hunting as well as the Tribes' interest in restoring culturally important plants, such as camas and bitterroot. Thinning treatments on this project will restore fire resilient stand structure and improve forage quality for wild ungulates by increasing vigor and density of native bunch grasses, forbs, and shrubs with a focus on plant species and communities of cultural importance to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.



Family harvesting a Christmas tree on public lands in Wyoming.

The PD Forest Management program continues to strive for efficiencies and employ technology to meet the BLM's goals and to improve public access to programs. For example, the BLM has an online permit system ([forestproducts.blm.gov](https://forestproducts.blm.gov)) where the public can buy fuelwood and Christmas tree permits 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The BLM has sold over 34,000 permits through the new site and has provided a valuable public service to those that do not live near a BLM office to buy a permit over the counter. This website was also effective in maintaining permit issuance during COVID-induced office closures when public contact was suspended. Permittees are provided the permit and maps at the time of purchase via email.

#### Stewardship Contracting Special Exhibit

##### **Background**

This special exhibit addresses requirements of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (as amended, 16 U.S.C 6591c): The BLM shall report annually to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives on:

1. The status of development, execution, and administration of contracts under subsection (b), which states, "The Chief and the Director, via agreement or contract as appropriate, may enter into stewardship contracting projects with private persons or other public or private entities to perform services to achieve

Mr. TIFFANY. Representative Stauber.

Mr. STAUBER. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Real quick, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record this article from the Wall Street Journal entitled, "Why the World Has Gone Cuckoo for Copper," dated May 14 of 2024.

Mr. TIFFANY. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]

### Why the World Has Gone Cuckoo for Copper

The U.S. and China are competing to acquire the metal essential for EVs and data centers. It is also at the center of a \$43 billion takeover battle.

*Wall Street Journal*, May 14, 2024 by Julie Steinberg

<https://www.wsj.com/business/why-the-world-has-gone-cuckoo-for-copper-ef8c385a>

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After one of the world's top copper producers recently hit a financial crunch, the Biden administration started huddling with potential investors about taking a stake in the company's Zambian mines worth as much as \$3 billion.

The search isn't restricted to American companies, with entities from the United Arab Emirates, Japan and Saudi Arabia—all viewed as friendly to U.S. interests—expressing interest in the stake in First Quantum Minerals' FM 7.53% assets, according to people familiar with the matter.

The goal is simple: to keep it out of Chinese control and prevent the Asian superpower from tightening its grip over the global supply of crucial metals and minerals.

The bidding, expected to be concluded later this year, is part of a global rush to acquire more copper, a key component in everything from electric cars to transmission lines and the data centers powering the AI revolution.

BHP Group's record nearly \$43 billion takeover bid for Anglo American, which was rejected Monday, puts a fresh spotlight on the intense demand for copper. While London-listed Anglo produces a range of commodities, from diamonds to nickel, Australia's BHP has made clear that it most prizes the company's copper assets. Anglo rebuffed BHP's first offer last month, and other companies are believed to be weighing rival bids.

On Tuesday, Anglo announced its own turnaround plan, saying it would get out of its platinum, diamond and steelmaking coal businesses—effectively pitching investors on a strategy that makes copper even more central to the company's future.

Chief Executive Duncan Wanblad said on a media call that the company would look at growing its copper business both organically and from potential mergers and acquisitions, such as taking greater stakes in assets it already owns.

"Copper of course is the story of the day," he said.

While the U.S. government doesn't have any oversight over a proposed deal, officials have communicated to Anglo executives that they are concerned consolidation could limit the overall supply of copper, said people familiar with the matter. The U.S. is also concerned that China could put pressure on BHP to sell some assets or agree to sell more of its copper to the country to address potential anticompetitive concerns.

For the U.S., the current frenzy highlights the importance of its yearslong effort to build up supplies of the metals and minerals critical to the green-energy transition.

Demand for copper is expected to rise as certain mines close or scale back production. Copper futures are up 20% this year.

The U.S. doesn't have a ministry for mining, a sovereign wealth-fund or much of a domestic mining industry. That has put it at a disadvantage with China, which can direct its state-owned enterprises to invest heavily no matter how commodity prices are performing.

The U.S. government is limited in how much money it can directly pump into projects of national security. That means it must work with private companies at home and abroad, as well as friendly countries with sovereign-wealth funds, to entice them to invest in assets helpful to national interests.

The Wall Street Journal reported last year, for example, that the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have held talks for potential agreements in the Democratic Republic of Congo, under which Saudi Arabia would take stakes in mines and U.S. companies would be guaranteed some of the rights to production.

One of President Biden's senior advisers, Amos Hochstein, is a linchpin of this effort. Hochstein and a small team at the State Department have been flying around the world, meeting with government officials in sub-Saharan Africa one day and with U.S. investors the next.



Regarding copper, “We don’t have a lot of new supply coming online around the world,” Hochstein said in an interview. “What concerns me is even when a discovery is made, it could take between seven and 15 years before the first copper comes out.”

The U.S. has committed more than \$1 billion to the Lobito Corridor to develop local infrastructure, including clean power and a railroad connecting Angola, Congo and Zambia to export critical minerals. Also in Zambia, the U.S. last year urged the U.A.E. to consider investing in Mopani Copper Mines, according to people familiar with the matter.

The effort was successful: Zambia in December chose the U.A.E.’s International Resources Holding as a new equity partner.

Hochstein declined to comment on specific deals.

Hochstein said he and his team have made clear to African governments that the U.S. is trying to put forward an alternative model that won’t result in debt, corruption and environmental degradation.

“We are putting our money where our mouth is,” he said.

A central part of the U.S. effort is the International Development Finance Corp., a federal agency that helps finance projects overseas. The agency agreed to invest \$740 million last year in the mining sector, up from \$245 million it had committed to legacy mining projects.

It is currently in talks to finance a multibillion-dollar copper mine in Pakistan that, when it comes online in 2028, will be among the world’s largest copper projects, according to people familiar with the matter.

An Irish company called TechMet is one of its signature investments. Under the Trump and Biden administrations, the agency has given TechMet some \$105 million in funding and become its second-largest shareholder. An investment firm backed by a scion of the Walton family also invested in the most recent fundraising round, which valued the company at more than \$1 billion.

“We are in a second Cold War,” said TechMet CEO Brian Menell, a South African. “One has to increasingly pick sides. For me it’s never been a moment’s doubt. It is a competition between Western values and dictatorship.”

TechMet owns stakes in lithium, cobalt, nickel, vanadium and rare-earth miners.

Meanwhile, Chinese miners, with government backing, are rapidly snapping up assets. In Belt and Road countries, which don’t include Brazil or Australia, China spent more than \$19 billion last year on metals and mining investments, up 158% from 2022, according to the Green Finance & Development Center at Fudan University in Shanghai. That is the highest level since 2013.

In the latest example, a Chinese firm is in advanced talks to buy Chemaf, a metals producer that is developing a cobalt and copper mine in Congo, according to people familiar with the matter.

At least two Western suitors were interested in buying the company, according to people familiar with the matter, including Chilean Cobalt Corp., or C3, a U.S. company with copper-cobalt operations in northern Chile.

Duncan Blount, chief executive of C3, said he spoke with the International Development Finance Corp and State Department about making a bid, but concluded it would have been too expensive. Still, he said, “They were incredibly helpful on this venture and other projects. They’re keen to see American businesses and entrepreneurs go back into Congo.”

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Mr. TIFFANY. I now recognize Ms. Hoyle from the great state of Oregon.

Ms. HOYLE. Thank you very much.

Director Stone-Manning, hello. I know we have spoken many times before. Today, I specifically would like to discuss with you the Western Oregon Operating Plan, which is an agreement between the Bureau of Land Management, the Oregon Department

of Forestry, Douglas Forest Protective Association, Coos Forest Protective Association, and tribes.

And we have in Oregon a very unique, checkerboard map where private, tribal, Federal, and state lands are all on a checkerboard, so it makes it difficult to fight fires unless we are all cooperating together.

The entire Oregon Delegation, Democrats and Republicans, have made it very clear and signed letters to say that we want the WOOP to remain in place. So, I would like to ask for your commitment to make sure that that happens.

And secondarily, it is my understanding that it is on the table from the BLM to remove Coos Bay and Roseburg from the WOOP because they are wet forests. Let me tell you, we had the Agnes Fire that was down in Curry County coming up into Coos County that burned from July through the fall. We have also had fires in Roseburg, where there is a large population.

The bottom line is that, with climate change, with drier conditions we are seeing fires that are different and that are coming into the wildland-urban interface and putting our populations in danger. We know that it costs more to fight fires in Oregon than it does in other places, and also that almost 99 percent of the forest land that the BLM manages is in the O&C lands, is in Oregon.

So, I would like your commitment on keeping the WOOP in place, and also a commitment to do more research before you even think of moving forward in taking Coos Bay and Roseburg out from the WOOP. Thank you.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, thank you for the question. Of course, protecting our communities and our landscapes is a huge priority for the BLM.

I was pleased to meet with you about WOOP. I have been working with Director Barry Bushue on this topic. He is in negotiations, practically as we speak, with ODF and the Fire Protective Association. I am confident that we will reach agreement by the time that the WOOP is up in June.

And I couldn't agree more, fires are becoming harder, longer, and more intense on the landscape, which is in part why it is so important that we get a handle on the climate crisis, which is why you see the budget before you that you do.

Ms. HOYLE. Thank you. Just to follow up, I know that negotiations are happening. I know that there are financial considerations. I can tell you that what I have seen in the time that I have been in Oregon is that we short change the money up front in preventing wildfires from happening and debris removal, and then we will write an unlimited check when we are losing millions of acres to these extreme wildfires.

And what, again, I want to impress upon you is just because you are looking at the south coast as a wet forest, the fact of the matter is people's lives, people's homes, and our beautiful forests are in danger. And again, it is a very complex area. And what we have seen since the fires in 2020 is great cooperation between the Feds and the state and our private wildland firefighters, our professional firefighters, our tribal fire management and firefighters. We would like to see that continue.

But again, I do not think, and I seriously, seriously hope that the thought of pulling Coos Bay and Roseburg from the WOOP is not something we are considering, and that is off the table. And I really would like your commitment on that.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, thank you for the question.

My commitment is we will actively fight fire and do our job to fight fire all throughout your district. And the agreement of who pays for it, and how and when and where is what is on the table. What is not on the table is doing our part to ensure that we keep people and places safe.

Ms. HOYLE. So, again, to follow up, and I am sorry I am out of time, but I want to be abundantly clear. Representative Bentz and I share Roseburg as a district, the district splits at Roseburg, and the south coast and Coos Bay. It is vitally important that that stay in the WOOP. And if that isn't going to happen, I want to make sure that you alert our office before any decisions are made.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congresswoman, you have my commitment that you will know before any decisions are made.

[Pause.]

Mr. TIFFANY. Does the gentlelady yield?

Ms. HOYLE. Yes, I yield.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentlelady yields. I would now like to recognize Representative Moylan for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding the hearing, of course, and giving us the opportunity to speak with Director Stone-Manning and Director Sams.

Thank you to the panel for being here and regarding the upcoming budget of the National Park Service and how they plan to effectively utilize it.

My district of Guam is home to 50 parks, including the War in the Pacific National Historic Park and Asan, which commemorates the bravery and sacrifice of those serving in the Pacific theater of World War II. It is important that Guam and the National Park Service work together to protect these sites so that future generations can appreciate them as we do now.

Additionally, nearly one-third of my island is owned by the Federal Government. However, our local park officers are stretched thin. They face serious personnel shortages, which impacts their ability to take care of these lands. So, it is critical that the Department of the Interior do everything that they can to conserve and protect our island's natural beauty.

Director Stone-Manning, regarding the 30x30 program, does the Administration consult with local and Indigenous groups on if and how a land should be preserved?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, thank you for the question. Sort of at the heart of the President's America the Beautiful initiative is locally-led, collaborative conservation.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, Director Stone-Manning. Unfortunately, the Administration has shown that it does not care about the local and Indigenous groups' experience on what is best for their lands. Rather, the Administration oversteps and acts without regard to local stakeholders.

I would like to bring to the Committee's attention the Pacific remote island Marianas National Monument, specifically the

Marianas Trench Marine National Monument. This status was granted despite strong local opposition from my constituents and the democratically-elected government of Guam. It is very unfortunate our voice wasn't heard.

Director Sams, in 2019, the National Park Service began consideration for designating Manenggon Concentration Camp as a National Historic Landmark. As the public comment period remains ongoing, could you speak on the ongoing National Landmarks Committee meeting, and provide an update on the general comment period?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you for the question. I don't have that right before me, but I am happy to get that back to you in writing about our most recent meeting on that issue, and provide you all the information.

Mr. MOYLAN. I appreciate that, especially now that we have a special Liberation Day coming up, our 80th anniversary, the liberation day of Guam, and that will be important information I would like to have. Thank you.

Mr. SAMS. Yes, sir. I am hoping to get out there. My grandfather fought in World War II aboard a destroyer, USS Converse, and had talked about the invasion of Guam.

Mr. MOYLAN. I appreciate it. Director Sams, in January 2023, the President signed into law the Guam National Heritage Area Feasibility Study. My office has yet to receive any updates on the status of this study. When does the NPS anticipate the completion of the study, and how can we expedite this?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you for the question. I don't know the exact date, but I will get you the exact date in writing, and give you an update. I am happy to work with you and your staff on that.

Mr. MOYLAN. OK, we will work closely, and I appreciate that. Thank you.

And finally, Director Sams, the National Park Service has designated the War in the Pacific National Historic Park fifth in line with the supplemental funding request, fifth. This is a serious, underfunded, and understaffed Federal park suffering from flood damage, monuments are falling apart, and infrastructure which is on its last legs.

Director Sams, could you speak to what must happen for the National Historic Park to be considered higher priority by your agency?

Mr. SAMS. As I understand it, we have like \$2.6 million to preserve the World War II structures at the War in the Pacific National Historic Park proposed in Fiscal Year's 2025 budget. And we understand that we also have more than \$240,000 in maintenance action team projects that will go towards that. It is proposed in our 2025 budget.

Mr. MOYLAN. But we are still fifth in line with the supplemental funding request. Are you saying that it is no longer there, that you have funded it, or are we fifth in line still for supplemental funding?

Mr. SAMS. I am going to defer to my comptroller on where we are at with that, Ms. Jessica Bowron.

Ms. BOWRON. The Administration submitted a disaster supplemental request in the fall for disasters that occurred in 2023. No

disaster supplemental appropriation was received with the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation, so we are currently evaluating how to best recover from disasters across the country within available funding.

Mr. MOYLAN. All right. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. I now recognize the gentlelady from California, Ms. Kamlager-Dove.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for coming here today.

Director Stone-Manning, we have heard a lot about oil and gas companies over the last few weeks, and not all of it has been good. Just last week, a report came out finding that Donald Trump asked Big Oil for \$1 billion for his campaign. And in return, he would roll back environmental regulations.

Earlier this month, we found out from the FTC that Pioneer Resources, which is currently merging with Exxon, colluded with OPEC to pad their pockets and keep prices high for American families. Market manipulation.

At the same time, Republicans here in Congress are somehow calling it Biden's war on American energy, while at the same time Big Oil continues to break records for both production and profit. It is not adding up to me, but of course it is not, and these conversations we continue to have around that are really exhausting.

Once again, Republicans on this Committee are trying to blame things like environmental regulations and the new BLM oil and gas rule which finally provides a better return for the American taxpayer. I say they are continuing to gaslight the American people. These complaints line up directly with the talking points of Big Oil lobbyists who decried the rule while making record profits and showering their shareholders in billions through dividends and stock buybacks.

In fact, one oil executive actually came here and said he didn't even like to read. He didn't want to read rules. It was just too much, which I find very hard to understand.

One of their biggest gripes is about the new bonding provisions, calling them expensive and onerous. But these regulations will actually provide taxpayers and communities from having to clean up after the oil and gas industry.

But before this final rule, these rates hadn't been updated in over a half century. Between 1951 and now, companies could pay as little as \$25,000 to cover all of their oil wells in a state. Between 1960 and now, companies could pay as little as \$10,000 to cover all their wells on a lease. These rates haven't been updated to account for inflation, nor have they tracked technological advancements, including well depth, which substantially increases mitigation costs.

So, to do a little comparison, Director Stone-Manning, wind and solar projects on public lands must also be bonded to ensure that the public lands they are sited on are reclaimed after a project. Is this correct?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Yes.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. OK. It is my understanding that BLM set minimum bond rates for wind and solar in 2016, and that the

regulations dictate that those minimums be adjusted for inflation periodically. Is that correct?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Yes.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. OK. So, just for the record, these regulations require wind and solar developers to pay as much as \$20,000 per wind turbine, or \$20,000 per acre of solar panels, or \$10,000 per acre for solar in priority areas. Considering some proposed wind projects consist of several hundred turbines and some solar projects are thousands of acres in size, it is not a stretch to say that these bonds can often be quite more expensive than bonds covering oil and gas wells.

Last question for you. Do you know of any utility-scale wind or solar projects on Federal public land, or even on just BLM land that are orphaned or abandoned?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I do not, Congresswoman.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Right. Neither do I. Yet, we have oil and gas wells that have been orphaned and abandoned.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Yes.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Yes, OK. So, I just think it is worth noting that I have never heard of a pollution disaster caused by end-of-life solar or wind projects, unlike the environmental and public health crises my constituents deal with every day due to oil and gas wells.

We have heard so many complaints from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and from industry about the new \$150,000 minimum bond for oil and gas leases, or the new \$500,000 minimum for a bond covering of all wells statewide. But if wind and solar companies can afford to insure their sites are mitigated and reclaimed, then the multi-billion-dollar oil and gas company certainly can do that as well. Do you agree?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I do agree, Congresswoman. And, of course, what it is going to do is it protect the American taxpayer so that they are not left holding the bag in the future.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The lady yields. I now recognize the gentleman from Montana for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROSENDALE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am sorry that I can't see you behind that large stack of regulations that you presented there. I appreciate you holding this crucial budget hearing today.

The BLM plays a vital role in management and facilitation of our land out West, especially in Montana, where BLM land comprises nearly one-third of our state. However, under the current radical administration, we witnessed a harmful trend where BLM's land management decisions are working against the very communities and residents the agency is meant to serve.

Whether it is the lack of leasing opportunities, the war being waged against the coal industry, or the ongoing efforts to restrict access to Montana's productive lands, it is clear to me that, despite being from our great state, Director Stone-Manning and her agency's priorities are at complete odds with what is in the best interest of Montana. I am eager to hear from both her and Director Sams about why they believe they deserve a \$120 million increase in total funding.

Ranking Member Neguse, I am sorry that you were not here to hear the filibuster from Ms. Porter and Mr. Levin about revenue and the income that these lands are supposed to produce, because what they failed to reference is the fact that capacity and rental fees have been reduced for renewables, renewable energy, capacity and rental fees by 80 percent. By 80 percent. And that is after they have already been heavily, heavily subsidized by the taxpayers across this nation.

Director Sams, speaking of reducing fees, why did the National Park Service relinquish control of RFK complex, instead of leveraging it for our park system's benefit when it was rented to DC for just \$1?

You want to have conversations about fees? It was rented for \$1 to capitalize on the revenue potential, instead of the money going to help make a dent in the \$22 billion deferred maintenance backlog. That could have easily been a valuable revenue source to support the projects that you are requesting.

Mr. SAMS. Thank you for the question, Congressman. When we looked at this and spoke with the District of Columbia and keeping it within the Federal family, we recognize that the District has an opportunity to be able to really take over jurisdiction, and shifting administrative responsibility to the District so that they can actually see some better use of it.

Mr. ROSENDALE. And are they going to be collecting revenue for the development of this 160-acre site?

Mr. SAMS. That would be a question best asked to the District than to me, sir.

Mr. ROSENDALE. So, sir, you are leasing them the ground for \$1. They are going to generate a development of 160 acres of some of the most prime real estate in the country. And you don't think that they are going to generate revenue, or didn't think to ask are they going to generate revenue, and possibly that some of that revenue should be going back to the taxpayers so that we could utilize it for our park system?

Mr. SAMS. Sir, it is Congress who will be leasing that to them, at the direction—

Mr. ROSENDALE. Based upon the recommendation of the National Park Service. So, we don't know about the revenue that the District of Columbia is going to generate from 160 acres, but we are very concerned about someone who is developing the resources to help heat our homes and power our vehicles to push freight across this country. And yet, on the other hand, we are going to reduce the leases and the revenue that is generated by renewables for the capacity and rental fees by 80 percent. But the District of Columbia is going to make sure that they collect and retain all of the revenue.

Director Stone-Manning, I hear you talk about the transition to a clean energy economy. And while that may be this Administration's goal, it is not the law, especially when it comes to land use. And we continue to hear about the manipulation of policy by rule change, not by law change, and that is very problematic for most of the people that are sitting in here. And quite frankly, it should be disturbing for anybody, Republican or Democrat. We can't have

rule changes overriding what the law and the intent of the law was.

In your budget testimony, you emphasize the importance of this funding for your clean energy projects. I am curious to hear how covering a currently productive swath of land with acres of glass for such an unreliable, intermittent use of energy that meets your definition of conservation, especially when compared to the generation of work and management by ranchers and farmers on that land.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, first of all, it is nice to see somebody from Montana. I know we don't always agree, but Montana pride rises above that, I hope.

I think I heard your question to ask—

Mr. ROSENDALE. How would you explain that covering over hundreds of acres of land with solar panels meets your definition of conservation.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Yes, thank you for the question. It is why we are working on the Western Solar Plan as we speak, so that we make sure that we, because it is still development, it is carbon pollution free, but it is still development, that we drive that development to the most appropriate places on the landscape as possible, just like we drive all of our development to the most appropriate landscape.

Mr. ROSENDALE. OK, so Montana coal producers allocate a significant portion of their revenue annually to reclamation projects. And I have been out on those projects, and they are actually quantifiably and measurably more productive after they have extracted their resources and then do the reclamation efforts. Visiting any of these sites would reveal no trace of past mining activity.

Why is this practice, which involves productive use followed by restoration to its original state, more productive, again, not considered land conservation?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, the concern, of course, with that work is the coal that is burned, right? It is not about the landscape that is reclaimed after the coal is dug up. The concern is about driving our economy towards a clean energy economy.

Mr. ROSENDALE. And, again, we continue to hear about going to a clean energy economy. But, again, we are superseding the law, and the intent of the law, and the Taylor Grazing Act, and the use of those lands by abusing the rulemaking process.

Mr. Chair, thank you so much for my time. I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields, and I will recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Neguse, for his questions.

Mr. NEGUSE. Thank you, Director Stone-Manning and Director Sams, for your testimony and for indulging the Committee here. And I know that it has been a robust hearing thus far, and I suspect that will continue.

Director Sams, I really wanted to ask you a series of questions. Before I do so, I will just take one moment to again thank Director Stone-Manning, your agency, for the steps that you took to protect the Thompson Divide. And, of course, as you know, we are very much engaged in an effort here in the Congress to make those protections permanent through the CORE Act, which myself and Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper have introduced. And it has



variations. Iterative versions of it have passed the House multiple times in the last several years. Our hope springs eternal that we will be able to get that across the finish line.

But in the interim, the protections afforded to the Thompson Divide by virtue of your agency's decision are incredibly important to the folks in Colorado, and I just want to express my gratitude to the agency for taking that step. To the extent you would like to expound on that, I am happy to give you an opportunity.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Thank you, Congressman. I just wanted to say that the thanks there goes to the leadership of Secretary Haaland.

Mr. NEGUSE. Director Sams, I want to also say thank you for the work that you do and the National Park Service does every day. Of course, as you know, Rocky Mountain National Park in my district is considered a crown jewel of the NPS system, and I am grateful for the partnership that we have with folks there.

I want to talk a bit about wildland firefighting. As you know, we have raised this issue at prior hearings with respect to the challenges that our wildland firefighters are facing in terms of government housing rates. And we sent a letter, myself and a number of my colleagues, on a bipartisan basis to both you and Chief Moore earlier this year. I received your response, or a response that was sent on behalf of your agency, last month.

What I am hoping you can kind of help me understand is, I recognize that the NPS has certain constraints that you all are operating under, particularly as it relates to OMB's circular guidance. But clearly, that guidance, as it is being implemented and interpreted today, is having disastrous impacts for Federal wildland firefighters who are facing exorbitant rent increases. And I am wondering what conversations you have had with your colleagues at OMB about necessary changes that should be made to the circular that would still comport with Federal law, but would enable your agency to address what is clearly an emerging crisis.

Mr. SAMS. Congressman, thank you for the question.

I started out my career as a wildlands firefighter. My son is currently a wildlands firefighter for the Oregon Department of Forestry. And housing, of course, is a critical issue for any of our firefighters. And recognizing that we knew that there were going to be rent increases this year, I have asked for those to be extended out over a couple of years, and have received permission to do so, and we are implementing that.

But that being said, we are working very closely in trying to figure out exactly where the increases are happening in the different markets, how can we balance those out, what other authorities both the Secretary and I have to be able to try to mitigate for those increases and develop more public-private partnerships to expand our housing, and so that we can make it more affordable for our firefighters and our frontline NPS staff.

Mr. NEGUSE. Well, I would say I appreciate that, Director Sams, and I would hope, with respect to the decision that you just described with respect to extending the rent increases over a period of years, that you could provide our office with further clarity on that, because I was unaware of that, and that would be something very important for us to be able to communicate back, us, meaning

collectively the Members who sent that letter, to the constituents that we have heard from and the Federal wildland firefighters that we have heard from.

I would also just say, while I am supportive of NPS and DOI's efforts to increase their housing stock, as reflected in the budget submission that you all have sent over this year, just in full candor, I am going to personally apply a much more discerning eye towards supporting any investments in increasing the housing stock absent some direct communication from OMB, from NPS, from DOI, from the relevant authorities that you all would like to see some deviation, some new statutory authority or change in the underlying organic statutes that would give you the ability to address this problem.

Because you can imagine, I mean, if we just simply allocate more dollars for you all to secure more housing and you all then, by virtue of the 4-year periodic comparable rent analysis that you do with this new housing, come back to us and to the Federal wildland firefighters and say that the rent increase is going to be sustained in out years because that is the way the market is functioning, we haven't really addressed that fundamental problem.

So, I would implore you to let us know what we can do on the statutory side. I happen to think, having reviewed the OMB circular, that the Administration can take a variety of different steps that would give you some flexibility, which it sounds like they may have already done, because in the letter that we got from the NPS, and I appreciate very much the Chairman's indulgence, it said here, I will just quote from you, from this letter, "The NPS does not set its own rents, nor does it have the authority to disregard rental implementation requirements to pause or to reverse rental changes." This is from, I forget the name of the gentleman within your agency, one of the assistants, well, I don't know the right title here, but in any event, that is very different from what you just described. So, my point here is, I do think there is room in the OMB circular. And if it requires us advocating for the same, we are happy to do that.

Again, I thank the Chairman for his indulgence.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. I will now recognize the gentleman from Utah.

Mr. CURTIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member. I would like to start with my comments directed to Director Sams, but they also apply to the BLM, as well.

And I know this will shock you, I want to give you a compliment, both of you, and just say that over and over again I hear positive feedback about members that work for both BLM and National Park Service on the ground in Utah. And we certainly have our differences with both your agencies, particularly as it relates to the Washington, DC side, but I am constantly told how helpful the people are on the ground.

And I want to bring up a specific case, Director Sams. I have in my hand a letter, and I would like to ask that it be submitted for the record, from Katherine Hammond, Regional Director of Glen Canyon National Parks, talking about working with a group of people, our houseboat owners on Lake Powell. And I know that they have had a number of internal meetings and external

meetings with these houseboat owners to build a good relationship, and I just want to tell you they are doing a good job, and how helpful that is to me when they work to build these good relationships, and how much that is appreciated back in the district.

Mr. TIFFANY. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

**United States Department of the Interior  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
INTERIOR REGIONS 6,7, & 8  
Denver, Colorado**

Hon. John Curtis  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

April 30, 2024

Dear Representative Curtis:

Thank you for your letter on October 18, 2023, regarding Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. The director has asked me to respond.

I wish to convey my thanks to your office for facilitating a meeting on December 19, 2023, between Glen Canyon NRA staff and the Lake Powell Houseboat Association, represented by Bennett Group DC, to better understand the request for the establishment of a Lake Powell Recreation Advisory Committee as requested in your letter. Your staff member Jake Bornstein was instrumental in facilitating this meeting.

During the meeting, Glen Canyon NRA Superintendent Michelle Kerns provided updates on the progress to restore access at Lake Powell and the 2023 Disaster Supplemental funding that will be invested at Glen Canyon to preserve recreational opportunities. The Houseboat Association president and Superintendent Kerns have agreed to meet quarterly to share information and progress. The Houseboat Association has agreed that this local approach will lead to a successful, collaborative working relationship with Glen Canyon NRA.

Thank you for your support of our parks and working to ensure the best outcomes for our stakeholders. If you have any questions, please contact Superintendent Kerns.

Sincerely,

KATE HAMMOND,  
*Regional Director*

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Mr. CURTIS. Thank you. And that is Superintendent Kearns. Superintendent Pace has been recently selected to lead the Canyonlands and Arches National Park area. And as you know, in my district, there are few districts like mine in the entire country, with two national parks and the beautiful areas that we have. It is part of Bears Ears and other areas.

When she was first appointed, she came to my office and met me. We established a great relationship, and I just wanted to give her a shout out, as well, and I appreciate that relationship. She has a very hard task because our national parks in Utah are being what we call loved to death. And there is a tremendous pressure to put a reservation system in, and they have experimented with several reservation systems. And we would just like to ask you to be personally involved in that, because if we get it right there is a lot of good. And if we get it wrong, it can really be a detriment to the

economy of the area. And just making sure that we work with our local stakeholders to make sure we get it right is very important. So, I appreciate that and wanted to bring that up.

Also, Director Stone-Manning, part of my district is Bears Ears, and we constantly, of course, as you know, have a very difficult issue going back and forth between administrations on the actual use of this land. But the theme that does not change as we go back and forth between administrations is lack of resources. At the very least, it is probably 1.3 million acres, and we just don't have the people on the ground to manage 1.3 million acres, and the people that are coming to see the antiquities and things like that.

So, we would like to continue to emphasize the fact that we need more resources in the area to manage this land, regardless of where we end up on the designation. It just needs more resources, and we would love to have your help with that.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, thank you. And given this is a budget hearing, we would welcome the help. Don't let me stop you.

Mr. CURTIS. Well, it is priorities, right? It is priorities. And it feels like, to those of us in that area, that this has not been a priority. This is 1.3 million acres. And I think the number, if I am not mistaken, is two, maybe four law enforcement BLM agents to manage 1.3 million acres. You can see the impossibility of that problem for them.

And Director, you won't be surprised that the BLM conservation rule is hugely problematic in my district. I hardly have an opportunity to speak here where I don't bring up the fact that 90 percent of these counties are Federal land, 90 percent. And the fact that there can be arbitrary decisions thousands of miles away that impact grazing and recreation and other uses on the land without appropriate input. There was not a single hearing in Utah on this rule, not a single one. The people of Utah had no opportunity to express in person their concerns, and I just want to speak for them today to say they are very frustrated. They are very concerned with this ruling.

And as you know, I am sponsoring the WEST Act to repeal that, and would love to have conversations with your organization about the end goal. We actually share the same end goal. We all want to preserve and protect and make sure this land is there for our grandchildren. But how we get there and who gets to make those decisions is incredibly frustrating to my district.

And I have used all my time, so you don't get a chance to respond, but I think I have made my point.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields, and I will recognize Ms. Leger Fernández for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you very much. And thank you, Director Stone-Manning, Director Sams, and Comptroller Brown for being here today. Thank you very much, actually, for the hard work that you have put in that I think this paper recognizes.

I want to see this as the thousands of public comments that you have received, the careful study of how do we protect our public lands and our public resources, because we must remember those are American resources. They belong to us. And in order to figure

out how to best go along, protecting them, ensuring that we receive the royalties that are due us, that we protect it for those future generations, that we honor the creation that they reflect for those who hold those places sacred, whether from a Christian perspective, a Catholic perspective, or an Indigenous perspective, it takes time, and I know you have done that. So, I want to start by thanking you for that work.

In particular, with regards to the onshore oil and gas leasing rule, royalties make up a really important part of my state's budget. As you know, we have a lot of public lands, we have a lot of Federal lands. And we benefit from those oil and gas royalties. Can you describe how drafting the final onshore oil and gas leasing rule, how did you make sure you coordinated with the public? That is, the people who actually own these natural resources, as well as the oil and gas companies who are making record profits right at this time.

Can you share a little bit about the coordination and the input you received from both sides?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congresswoman, thank you so much for the question.

And, of course, so much in the oil and gas rule that you see before you is implementing what Congress asked us to do through the Inflation Reduction Act with the increases of royalty rates.

But we held many public meetings, both in person and virtually. We got over 200,000 comments on the rule that we pored over. And the final product is a result of what we heard both from Congress and what we heard from the public.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you very much. And as you can see, 200,000 comments takes up a lot of space.

I want to really make sure that we get to an issue that was sort of big picture. I want to get to a little hyper-local issue that I think affects other places, as well: the Valles Caldera National Park and the Santa Fe National Forest. As you know, Director Sams, there has been a significant number of cattle that are routinely found in the park. I get a lot of texts and comments about that. In fact, you are going to be hiring wranglers for the next 6 months, every day, to gather the cattle up.

As you know, in the state of New Mexico, we are a fence-out state, meaning landowners are responsible for fencing out livestock if they don't want them on their property. While I know you are not subject to those Federal laws, it is a tradition, and it is important to make sure that we do the maintenance ahead so you do not have to have 6 months of wranglers in the park, and that we can preserve the resources of the park.

Can you actually commit to maintaining the portions of the Valles Caldera fence within the Park Service's jurisdiction, and let me know what steps you are going to be taking to address challenges or barriers to ensure the proper upkeep of this very important asset?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you, Congresswoman, for the question. I come from a ranching family. I understand the importance of being accountable for your own cattle and/or horses. We ran over 300 head of cattle and 100 head of horses.

That being said, and recognizing the issues that we face at Valles Caldera, we are working very closely with the U.S. Forest Service on a management plan for that. We are looking at how exactly we can continue to build the fence out, and then the responsibilities each of us will have on maintaining that fence. I am happy to get that information and more specifics on that back to you directly in writing.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you. And I think this need to coordinate with all kinds of different agencies and jurisdictions, including the ranchers, including the Forest Service, making sure that what we are looking at is bringing back both on Forest Service land the health of the grazing lands, and then keeping those fences up. Good fences make good neighbors.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentlelady yields, and I would just mention that those are not comments.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. But they reflect the comments.

Mr. TIFFANY. Those are the new rules that have been proposed by the Bureau of Land Management during the Biden administration.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you. I was just pointing out that I am sure that they reflect the comments that they have received, the 200,000 on just one rule. So, thank you very much for the clarification, Mr. Chair.

Mr. TIFFANY. I would now like to recognize the gentleman from Georgia for 5 minutes, Mr. Collins.

Mr. COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Stone-Manning, during a May 1 hearing before the Full Committee, Secretary Haaland testified that since President Biden has been in office, since January 2021, we have approved mining or mining modification permits since the President has been in office. That includes five critical mines. Of these five mines that have been permitted under this Administration, how many are critical minerals?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, thanks for the question.

Again, it is roughly 40 mines, 5 of which are critical minerals, a couple of lithium, barium, zinc.

Mr. COLLINS. How many of them were permitted from start to finish under this Administration?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I would have to get back to you on that question. I know the vanadium mine was start to finish, but I would have to get back to you on that question.

Mr. COLLINS. How many received EISs under the previous administration?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Again, I would have to get back to you. I know that the lithium mine, Thacker Pass, the EIS was under the previous administration. We did the notice to proceed.

Mr. COLLINS. How many mine or mine modification permits has Interior denied under this Administration?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I don't know the answer to that question. I don't know of one that we have denied.

Mr. COLLINS. Do you know how many are awaiting an EIS?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Yes, I just asked for that number, and I think it is 90. But I will get back to you.

Mr. COLLINS. How many are awaiting a record of decision?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Well, the record of decision comes after the EIS.

Mr. COLLINS. So, that is still 90?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Yes.

Mr. COLLINS. OK, do me a favor. You said you are going to get back in touch with us. Can you make sure that you do by the end of this month, May?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I am happy to get you that information.

Mr. COLLINS. All right, thank you.

Also, Amos Hochstein, the Special Presidential Coordinator for Global Infrastructure and Energy Security, said that we don't have a lot of new supply of copper coming on-line around the world. And what concerns me is, even when a discovery is made, it could take between 7 and 15 years before the first copper comes out. Now, that was his quote. Do you share those concerns regarding copper supply?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I don't know about the global market supply of copper. I do know that when a proposal comes before us, we dig in. We spend, on average, 5 years on a hard rock mine EIS.

Mr. COLLINS. What, if anything, are you all doing to expedite your reviews to ensure that we don't run out of the supply, since the deposits that are active right now, they are being depleted.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. As I think you know, we worked with the Interagency Working Group on Critical Minerals to identify how we can get more efficient in our work. Congress, of course, I think can play a role in that, but we are diving into the report and working hard to turn those around.

And, again, an EIS, on average, for a hard rock mine is somewhere between 4 and 5 years.

Mr. COLLINS. All right, thank you. I tell you what, I am going to yield back to the fellow hiding behind the large stack of rules. I think it is our Chairman back there.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. If I might add one thing, we, of course, are going to follow the Fiscal Reform Act that now tells us to get those EISs done in 2.

Mr. COLLINS. All right.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields.

Director Stone-Manning, I am assuming when you do the so-called renewable projects, you do a NEPA analysis, is that correct?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Yes, Congressman.

Mr. TIFFANY. As part of that NEPA analysis, do the people that conduct it, do they evaluate how many endangered species are going to be killed as a result of those so-called renewable projects?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, we work closely with the Fish and Wildlife Service when section 7 is implicated.

Mr. TIFFANY. Yes. Isn't it accurate that we see a lot of deaths of eagles and other endangered species as a result of especially the wind turbines, and actually the solar panels also?

Because was it the Ivanpah project out in California, I might not have said it right, it is over a decade old, that they referred to the birds as flammers when they went through the solar array because they were torched. Will there be a full analysis of the number of

endangered species that are going to be killed as a result of building these projects?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, we work every day with the Fish and Wildlife Service as we do our permitting work to ensure that we are complying with the Endangered Species Act.

Mr. TIFFANY. Yes, does that concern you that we see the number of deaths of endangered species with these so-called renewable projects?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, the biodiversity crisis facing our planet concerns me every day.

Mr. TIFFANY. I would like to now recognize the gentlelady from Wyoming.

Oh, I am sorry, the gentleman from Washington, Mr. Newhouse.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know it is difficult, you can't see us from up there, but thanks for the opportunity to join on the Committee today for this important hearing.

I also want to welcome our panelists this morning. Thank you both for being here.

Director Sams, it is good to see you again, and I have to say it is good to have a fellow Pacific Northwesterner in a position of national responsibility. So, good to see you.

I want to focus the Committee's attention on something that is of huge concern that is happening in my district. The National Park Service, in conjunction with the Fish and Wildlife Service, recently decided, and I might add against the will of the majority of my constituents, that they will be introducing grizzly bears into my district. You heard me correctly. Grizzly bears. The Federal Government has finalized a plan to airdrop these bears into the North Cascades ecosystem.

So, Director Sams, quickly, could you tell us how does airdropping apex predators into the NCE fit with the National Park Service's mission of preserving the natural and cultural resources of the National Park System?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you, Congressman. It is nice to see you again, and I appreciate our work in the past and I look forward to continuing our work in the future.

The National Park Service is directly responsible for implementing the Organic Act, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, of course, is responsible for implementing the Endangered Species Act. These laws require the agencies to recover, protect, and preserve threatened and endangered species as a public trust to ensure future generations benefit from the same wildlife resources that we enjoy today.

Restoring a population of the North Cascades would help advance the recovery of the species currently listed as threatened in the Lower 48.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. I might point out that grizzly bears, as you know, have not existed in this ecosystem for decades. So, the NPS truly is not preserving a grizzly park, nor does it support the NPS's goal.

And I found this on your website in the About Us section, your goal of creating close-to-home opportunities for kids and families to get outside, be active, and have fun. I just have to say that it is



a little too close to home for my constituents, and certainly is not going to be fun.

In reviewing the President's proposed NPS budget for Fiscal Year 2025, I noticed that it proposes \$194,000 for one FTE to function as a cultural liaison for Indigenous communities at the North Cascades National Park, Lake Chelan, and Ross Lake National Recreation Area. Now, I assume that this includes danger pay, as you also stated in your testimony the most valuable resource the NPS has are its employees.

However, I did not see a justification to support the translocation of grizzly bears from their existing ecosystem into the district, nor did I see any educational campaign or public outreach to inform my constituents, the people that live up there, and visitors who come to the area that they must be aware of grizzly bears.

Could you tell us how much your agency is allocating to activities surrounding the establishment of the bears in the NCE, including the protection of your employees and the inhabitants?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you for the question, Congressman. As you know, we had this discussion. My people have lived with grizzly bears for 10,000 years, and their demise has only been in less than the last 70 years, really, in that effort.

And looking at it, we know that we have been able to manage them as a species in the National Park Service, whether that be at Yellowstone or Grand Tetons. As a matter of fact, my own family experienced them one night when a ranger came by to tell us a mama bear grizzly and her cubs were coming through, and we woke up and made sure that we were protected. And then, as soon as they made their way through, we went back and went to sleep with no problem out in the woods.

To your specific question, I am going to defer to my colleague here to talk a little bit more about the funding process, but I can tell you we are committed to providing education in the community, and we are working very closely with Washington's Fish and Wildlife staff, too.

Ms. BOWRON. I think, in addition to the specific funding that is proposed as a programmatic increase for North Cascades, there is also more than \$100 million proposed to restore the capacity that is lost in Fiscal Year 2024 across every park and every program, so that the parks aren't absorbing that lost purchasing power and they have additional funding to serve visitors and protect resources.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. OK. When your agency coordinated with the Fish and Wildlife Service to follow through with this, what I saw as a pre-determined plan to bring the bears into the area, was the safety of your Park Service agents and the people who surround this ecosystem of consideration?

Was their safety ignored, just like my constituents believe that their concerns were, because the Federal Government knows best?

I also want to ask, did the NPS consult with other Federal agencies besides Fish and Wildlife Service?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you, Congressman. I will have to go back about all the other agencies we may have spoken with along with Fish and Wildlife.

But yes, we have a very robust training program about safety and working in and around apex predators, whether that be grizzly bears, wolves, or mountain lions, and such. And we will ensure that we provide that also to the general public when they actually intermingle or may have a chance in back country of coming across such apex predators.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Let me let you know that I asked the Acting Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection if he was aware of this new threat, because they have agents up in that area, CBP agents, operating the northern border. And surprisingly, he was not aware.

I just have to say that the example of this in my district, it is certainly not the first or probably won't be the last time the Federal Government, in my view, overstepped its bounds, particularly when it comes to endangered and threatened species.

The people's concerns up there are valid. I think they need to be listened to. And I think, with all the discussion that we have had this morning about other issues that are facing the Park Service, I believe that this money could be going to real issues that the Service is facing, such as the wildfires, which you brought up, the housing issues, the shortages, the road repairs. But instead, it is going to be going to this purpose that I think is going to appease a lot of outside environmental organizations.

It is my job to ensure that the voice of the people of central Washington are heard, and I want to let you know that the majority of the people in this area staunchly oppose apex predators being airdropped, literally airdropped, into their backyards using their own tax dollars.

So, I appreciate you being here, and I look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue that is not going away and we have to solve.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for going over time.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. I now recognize the gentleman from Texas for 5 minutes of questions.

Mr. HUNT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, ma'am, for being here, for your testimony. I really appreciate you. I thank you all. I also want to thank you for your support, actually, on the approval of the Copperhead and Loving Pipeline project. This pipeline is an essential project to our country's domestic supply of oil and gas. It will further our energy independence and security, and bring good-paying jobs to an economically deprived area.

And I want to take this opportunity to thank you for supporting my bill, H.R. 7377, the Royalty Resiliency Act. This common-sense fix will allow operators to pay the correct amount of royalties up front, saving taxpaying dollars in the long run, and alleviating the present honor accounting nightmare. So, thank you for working with my office for that.

Moving on to the President's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request, ma'am, President Biden's budget request includes funding for an additional 104 full-time employees to your agency. How many of these new full-time employees will work in the Carlsbad, New Mexico BLM field office? Do you know, ma'am?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I don't. I do know that we are trying to tackle the vacancy issue in the Carlsbad office. We have 115 FTEs working there now, and a table of organization that allows for 170, and we are working hard on that.

But also, I am so proud of them for reaching record highs on the number of permits to drill that they are getting out the door despite those staffing shortages.

Mr. HUNT. OK. The Carlsbad office is the most active BLM office in the entire country, as you just articulated. And in 2023 alone, the office received 2,500 APDs. And, unfortunately, the office is only two-thirds staffed. So, while you commend the workers that are putting out record output, we still have quite a long ways to go, and I think we can accomplish that.

Earlier this year, I wrote to Ms. Melanie Barnes, then-Staff Director of BLM in the New Mexico Staff office, to inquire about this shortfall. And according to the response that I received, the Carlsbad office still has a shortfall of 55 employees, several who are critical to the APD process and approval of these agreements. So, we need to make sure that we do continue to move forward and just get better and work harder, because they are drastically behind.

And can you please commit to me today in good faith that you will continue to communicate with my office on your efforts to be proactive as possible, to make sure we get these numbers back up and get a fully-staffed office in Carlsbad?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I would commit that we will keep you apprised.

Carlsbad is tough. Like so many places in the West, housing costs are going through the roof, and it is hard to recruit. But we are working on it every day.

Mr. HUNT. OK, thank you. I believe that given the importance of BLM in New Mexico, the field office, that the COVID-19 pandemic, it is over, it has been over. There are a lot of people that are working from home still. So, when we have shortages like this, and people working from home, and COVID has been over for a very long time, I will also ask if your office would commit to getting these people back to working full-time to alleviate some of these numbers, as well, if you don't mind.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, we are following department policy on both telework and remote, and so many of those jobs at the field level. The office is a car in the field, right? And catching up on e-mails, either at home or at the office, is a small part of the work. The work is really out on the ground.

Mr. HUNT. All right. Thank you very much, ma'am.

And lastly, just on Monday, I was in Midland, Texas. And the reason why I was in Midland is because, I don't know if you know, I am from Houston, Texas. Their entire energy corridor is in my district. The two hubs for energy are in my district and Congressman August Pfluger's district in Midland. So, there are some synergies there that we are hypersensitive to and focused on.

And I visited a company, and I have three applications here with me. This is the first one. It is roughly seven pages. This is Texas. This is also why Texas is growing so fast, because we like to get things done in Texas.

The second one is the New Mexico one. This is 41 pages. Better, but still not the Texas standard.

This is BLM's APD. This is 220 pages. And I am not trying to be insulting, but this is why companies have a very hard time when operating outside of Texas, and why America is hurting, because we have to do better than this. This disincentivizes companies to want to work hard to increase their oil production that the world drastically needs.

Ma'am, I am asking you, can we please work together to get this looking more like Texas in the not-so-distant future?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I am very much interested in results, and we are producing record highs off of our public lands of oil.

And I heard you last week when you said to the Secretary, "But I want more." I hear you.

Mr. HUNT. OK, good.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. But we are producing record highs while we are also upholding the law.

And as you know, a lot of our work is held up in court, and I want to make sure that when we go to court, we win.

Mr. HUNT. But you do understand that whenever a company sees this much bureaucracy, it does disincentivize them to try to do more. Does that make sense?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I hear what you are saying, but please also know that public lands are doing their part to fuel this country.

Mr. HUNT. I understand. Thank you very much for being here. Thank you for your cooperation.

I yield back my time. Thank you.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. I now recognize the gentleman from Virginia for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOOD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Sams, where does public safety, the safety of people, rank in terms of importance or priority in national parks policy?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you for the question, Congressman. It is paramount to us.

Mr. GOOD. OK, great to hear. And how about the threat of wildfires for communities near national parks?

Mr. SAMS. Also very paramount to us.

Mr. GOOD. Great, glad to hear that. So, the Park Service does have concerns if a community in a forested area would have only one escape route in the event of a wildfire, you would be concerned about that?

Mr. SAMS. We would be very concerned about that.

Mr. GOOD. Very good, glad to hear. As you know, last year in Hawaii, a devastating wildfire broke out in Lahaina, and 115 people died because there were only two ways in and out of the town, and people were actually trying to take refuge from the flames. Five years ago, in November of 2018, the infamous campfire broke out in California and resulted in 85 deaths, representing the deadliest fire in California history. At least seven of those deaths were attributed to people being trapped in traffic jams, trying to escape. And then 7 years ago, in 2017, the Tubbs Fire ignited also in California, and led to a 6-lane highway being

engulfed in flames, creating serious evacuation issues that resulted in 22 fatalities.

My district is home to the Wintergreen community in Nelson County in Virginia, which is located within the Blue Ridge National Park, and it only has one method of entry and exit for a community that has as many as 10,000 people at a time. For over 30 years, the Wintergreen Property Association has tried to obtain approval from the National Park Service to build a 400 foot long, 10–12 feet wide emergency gravel road to connect the only road in Wintergreen to the Blue Ridge Parkway to create an exit.

[Slide.]

Mr. GOOD. Actual photo here, you can see the orange part there is the 400 feet that we need to be approved by National Park Service to connect to the Blue Ridge Parkway, just the little orange, 2 inch line there on my photo, anyway.

They have completed all the necessary studies confirming that little to no negative environmental impact or threat to endangered species would take place. But again, there is only one means of entry and exit for Wintergreen. The whole community is down here, and they can only go down. They can't go up at this point, which, again, at any given time might have as many as 10,000 people.

But the National Park Service has repeatedly indicated that an emergency exit connecting the Blue Ridge Parkway across National Park Service land to prevent the loss of life is “likely inconsistent with the use of such lands for parkway purposes,” and then also cited the lack of precedent set forth under the National Park Service Organic Act.

Wintergreen has, in response, proposed that the emergency exit road would be under the control of National Park Service, with a gate that would remain locked at all times for a gravel road that would only ever be used, hopefully never, but only ever be used in an emergency. And, again, the hope that that would never be the case. But the NPS, National Park Service, claims they have no authority to issue the permit under the National Park Service Organic Act.

In December 2023, just now 5 months ago, the Wintergreen community filed their latest application. They have been trying for 30 years, thank God it hasn't been necessary yet, for an emergency exit, which is pending review.

Again, you can see the diagram here. This would be a non-invasive, gravel road, allowed to be grown over, again, gated off, under the control of NPS, that would only be used in emergency. Can you answer to why this has not been approved?

Mr. SAMS. Thank you for the question, Congressman. I do not know, but I will get back to you in writing about this, and thank you for bringing it to my attention. I will look into it more deeply.

Mr. GOOD. I appreciate that. It would be great if it could just be approved, because that would be faster. Thank you for your willingness to look at that. Both Senators in Virginia have expressed their support for this to me, as they have advocated for it, as well.

I do have a bill, the Blue Ridge Safety Act, which would more clearly grant you the authority to issue one permit a year in cases where there was an emergency. I would hope not to have to wait

for the legislative will to do that through both houses of Congress and the President. It is a common-sense bill that would allow Wintergreen to take these appropriate measures to ensure their safety of the community.

So, thank you for your commitment to look at that, and hopefully that you will support that, and hopefully, we will never need to use it and it will just be grown over with gravel underneath, and be very limited, but just a 400-foot access road that would prevent loss of life unnecessarily. So, thank you, Director Sams.

I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. I now recognize the gentlelady from Wyoming.

Ms. HAGEMAN. All right, thank you.

Director Stone-Manning, I have visited the disaster on our southern border three times. And there are millions of acres of BLM lands in our southern border states such as New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, et cetera. How many times have you visited the border states to find out firsthand how the invasion of illegal aliens into our country has affected those lands?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congresswoman, I have visited the border once.

Ms. HAGEMAN. OK. When was that?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. That was in fall, late fall of 2021.

Ms. HAGEMAN. You haven't been back?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. To the border? No. To the southern states, yes.

Ms. HAGEMAN. OK. Have you, as the Director of the BLM, undertaken any type of NEPA analysis to evaluate the environmental impact of uncontrollable illegal aliens crossing the border?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congresswoman, I think you might be talking about the garbage that we were talking about earlier in the hearing. Is that what you are referring to?

Ms. HAGEMAN. No, I am talking about have you undertaken any kind of an environmental analysis to determine the impact of the horde of millions of people crossing that border illegally and crossing BLM lands. Have you done any kind of an environmental analysis to determine the impact that they are having on our Federal lands?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Not to my knowledge.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Does the BLM intend to start trying to find a way to house illegal aliens on our Federal lands?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congresswoman, that is not in our mission.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Just 2 weeks ago, I had the opportunity to question Secretary Haaland about various Wyoming priorities, and one of which is the entire Wyoming Delegation has written to you about multiple times, and that relates to the Rock Springs RMP.

When I asked Secretary Haaland if she had heard about it, or if she was familiar with it, she stated that she had not. Director Stone-Manning, have you read the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congresswoman, I believe the next day the Secretary, in a subsequent hearing—

Ms. HAGEMAN. No, I am asking you. The question for you is, have you read the Rock Springs RMP?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I have read the main chapters of it, but not all the appendices.

Ms. HAGEMAN. But you have not read all of it.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Not all the appendices, no.

Ms. HAGEMAN. OK.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. That is what my staff does.

Ms. HAGEMAN. In that Rock Springs RMP, the BLM chose alternative B, which would establish over 1.8 million acres as areas of critical environmental concern, and it would impact grazing, as well as oil and gas development, mining, and will lead to the end of existing leases, where we have productive uses that generate revenue for the state and for the nation. It destroys recreation and vehicle access, and contains all sorts of broad, so-called protections that aren't relevant to protecting the environment at all.

In late 2023, a former BLM employee, who was actually a participant in the drafting of the Rock Springs RMP, testified to Wyoming's Joint Federal Natural Resources Management Committee that the BLM preferred alternative received very little time and effort in their development. In his own words, he said, "The science and the work was all done on alternative D, as in dog. We sat down and in 1 week we did alternative B and C together. And after that was done, we sat down with the cooperating agencies and we spent the next 5 or 6 years developing alternative D."

Do you think it is appropriate to completely rewrite and upend the management plan for 3.6 million acres of land, based on a plan that was put together in 1 week?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congresswoman, I can't speak to a former staffer at the BLM, but I can speak to the team in Rock Springs who was working day in and day out on that plan, and I——

Ms. HAGEMAN. They were working on the plan, but not on alternatives B and C.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I am, as I was saying, I am proud of their work, and I am proud of how they are incorporating what they are hearing——

Ms. HAGEMAN. Do you believe that a 1-week review would comply with the requirements of FLPMA?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I am sorry, what was the question?

Ms. HAGEMAN. Do you believe that a 1-week review of a particular alternative for a Resource Management Plan that would cover 3.6 million acres would satisfy the requirements of FLPMA?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congresswoman, we are spending more than a week on this plan.

Ms. HAGEMAN. My question is, would a 1-week review for an alternative on a plan that covers 3.6 million acres of land satisfy the requirements of FLPMA?

Clearly, the answer is not, that it wouldn't, would it?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I believe it is a hypothetical question, Congresswoman.

Ms. HAGEMAN. In the first 3 years of the Biden administration, the BLM held four onshore oil and gas lease sales in Wyoming totaling 194,000 acres and generated \$44 million in revenue. Conversely, the Trump administration held 13 lease sales over its first 3 years, leasing 2.2 million acres and generating \$431 million in revenue. The BLM has brought in a tenth of the revenue, as

compared to the Trump administration. And as you know, half of that revenue goes to the state of Wyoming, and half of it goes to the Federal Government.

How do you intend to replace that kind of revenue into the coffers of the Federal Government if you are going to deny our ability to generate revenue on 48 percent of the surface estate in the state of Wyoming?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congresswoman, there are 10 million acres that are leased in this country that are not currently being used. There are over 7,000 permits to drill that are not being used.

Ms. HAGEMAN. So, the answer is you don't have an answer to that question.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congresswoman, we have 10 million acres that are not being used that are leased. We have 7,000 permits that are not being used that industry could use tomorrow. They are choosing not to.

Ms. HAGEMAN. You actually know so little about the industry that you don't even know how that system and process works. That is what is apparent by your answer to my question.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentlelady yields.

So, Director Stone-Manning, the issue of FLPMA has come up a couple of times. And you are familiar with the coordination requirement in FLPMA, right?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Yes.

Mr. TIFFANY. You know how it is much different than—we hear the terms “collaborate,” things like that. Coordination is much different, isn't it?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Our cooperating agencies help make our work better.

Mr. TIFFANY. But “coordination,” that term is clearly defined, and is much different than, like, just cooperating or collaborating. Isn't that correct?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I don't think I know where you are going with this question.

Mr. TIFFANY. Well, I would go in this direction. We heard from the gentleman from Guam how his constituents were not heard, that they were not included in the process. He expressed concern, and he was very mild about it and respectful, but it was clear he was saying that on the issue he had in the Mariana Islands, that they were not being heard.

We heard from the gentleman from Utah, not a single hearing in regards to Bears Ears, is that correct?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, regarding the gentleman from Guam, we don't manage lands on Guam.

And regarding the gentleman from Utah, we held public meetings all over the West in capital cities that were easy to get to. We also held meetings online virtually, so that people can participate from their homes.

Mr. TIFFANY. Did you coordinate with the local municipalities?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, we work very closely with the state of Utah.

Mr. TIFFANY. You coordinated, treated them as an equal at the table when you were doing the process? Is that what you are



saying? Because coordination is a very specific item within FLPMA that—you must sit down and work with local governments, local and state governments, as equals. Did you treat them as equals?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. I think he was referring to the Bears Ears plan and the Grand Staircase plan, and we do work with local entities to take their concerns into consideration.

On the public lands rule itself, we did that work with, easily, 100 staffers at the Bureau whose job it is to implement and manage on the ground every day.

Mr. TIFFANY. Did you fully coordinate with the governing entities in Utah, including local governments?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. On the public lands rule? No, we did not. They did have a chance between draft and final, however, during a 90-day public period—

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you for letting us know that you did not coordinate, because it is a different process than simply a hearing.

I want to go to some testimony from Secretary Haaland from a couple of weeks ago, and it had to do with the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, their regulation. Didn't the tribes up there ask for an extension on the provision that you folks put in place? Didn't they ask for an extension, and weren't they denied?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, we granted two extensions in the public comment period for the NPRA rule.

Mr. TIFFANY. So, the tribes are lying to us, saying that they did not get the extension? Because that is what they told us, they did not get an extension in a hearing here before the Natural Resources Committee.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I can't speak for the tribes. What I can tell you is we extended the public comment period twice.

Mr. TIFFANY. A BLM employee said, "I wish we could give an extension. In other contexts, we might have that kind of time, but I am happy to regale you with the ins and outs of the Congressional Review Act. But, unfortunately, we are on a schedule with this one that we don't have any control over. So, we just don't have that kind of time for this rule," as a result of denying the extension. Did you instruct your employee to say that?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I did not instruct that colleague to say that. I can tell you that we met—

Mr. TIFFANY. Is that employee still working for the Bureau of Land Management after making a statement like that?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, she doesn't work for the Bureau.

Mr. TIFFANY. Did you issue any sort of directive in regards to this, whether it was formal or informal, to say that we are going to get you around the Congressional Review Act by doing this in such a manner? Did you issue any directives?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, we worked very hard on this rule and many others. And the timing is what the timing was. We have worked for the last 2½ or 3 years on these rules, and here we are.

And as you know, I don't know what the deadline is for the Congressional Review Act, because it moves every year, right?

Mr. TIFFANY. By the way, I was just handed a note. The tribe asked for 90 days. They got 30.

So, we hear all this happy talk from the Administration, and we heard it from you today also, in regards to we are so serious about working with the tribal interests around the country, we believe in Nation-to-Nation collaboration, and things like that, but you didn't do that in Alaska. You didn't take into account their request.

Does this Administration only work with the tribes when it serves your interests and not necessarily the tribe's interests?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, I am so proud to work under the historic leadership of Secretary Haaland. We engage with tribes at the Department like we never have in our history. By my count, we met with folks on the North Slope 17 times. Then we had three public meetings on top of that. So, we listened very hard to what they say. And the final rule that we promulgated recently incorporates in part what we heard from them.

Mr. TIFFANY. And you would not give them the extension that they wished for. A tribal interest in Alaska asked for a 90-day extension, and the Bureau of Land Management did not give that to them. Isn't that correct?

Ms. STONE-MANNING. What we were able to do is continue in government-to-government tribal consultation, which is not dictated by a public comment period. The public comment period shut down, but the government-to-government consultation continued.

Mr. TIFFANY. You have a long history of anti-natural resource utilization in this country, both private and in public. It certainly appears that you are continuing that in your role as the Director at the Bureau of Land Management, and it is terribly unfortunate for the American people that we continue to see these types of actions that are leading to what is harming the American people at this point, with inflation, higher energy prices, the denial of energy projects, and the anti-natural resources utilization mentality that exists with this Administration. We see it all over the country. Americans see it all over the country. And you can deny it if you wish to. But that is not the case.

Ms. STONE-MANNING. Congressman, what I am proud of is that 10,000 people who work for the BLM that I have the honor of overseeing created \$232 billion in economic output last year. It is remarkable work.

Mr. TIFFANY. And those 10,000 people are harming 300 million in the United States of America.

I would like to thank both the witnesses for your testimony and Members for your questions.

Members of the Subcommittee may have some additional questions for our witnesses today, and we will ask that the witnesses respond to those in writing.

Under Committee Rule 3, members of the Subcommittee must submit questions to the Subcommittee Clerk by 5 p.m. on Monday, May 20, 2024. The hearing record will be held open for 10 business days for those responses.

If there is no further business, without objection, the Subcommittee on Federal Lands stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:50 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

[ADDITIONAL MATERIALS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD]

**Submission for the Record by Rep. Malliotakis**

**Erosion continues at Gateway National Recreation Area Great Kills Park—  
silive.com**

<https://www.silive.com/galleries/757EGGXSZBEFPPFROTJXPFA5IFA/>





