

**STATEMENT OF DAVID BERNHARDT
SECRETARY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE
HOUSE INTERIOR AND ENVIRONMENT APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
ON THE
PRESIDENT’S 2021 BUDGET REQUEST**

MARCH 11, 2020

Chair McCollum, Ranking Member Joyce, and Members of the Committee, I am here today to discuss the President’s Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior.

The Fiscal Year 2021 Budget

The Department of the Interior’s mission directly affects Americans across the country. Delivering the Department’s mission creates economic benefits for the Nation through both direct investment and facilitating private sector activities and contributions. According to the Department’s current Economic Report, in 2018, lands under the Department’s jurisdiction generated roughly \$315 billion in total economic output across the country. The Department also grants access to public lands and offshore areas for conventional and renewable energy development. In FY 2018, Departmental lands and waters produced nearly one-fifth of the Nation’s energy, generating roughly \$150 billion in economic output, which included \$7.9 billion in direct energy revenue disbursements to States and the Treasury.

President Trump has been clear in his direction and priorities, setting ambitious goals challenging federal agencies—through governmentwide Executive Orders (EOs) and Presidential memoranda— to deliver better results. The Department has worked consistently to implement the President’s agenda for the Department. Investments outlined in the President’s 2021 budget will allow the Department to advance the objectives articulated in Presidential directives.

The 2021 budget advances key Presidential priorities, including the Department’s new Plan to Transform the Firefighting Workforce, investments in active forest and rangeland management to better protect communities from fire, increased access to broadband in rural areas, advancement of critical minerals exploration and development, and provision of law enforcement needs in tribal communities. While investing in key areas, this budget also supports the Administration’s broader fiscal objectives through targeted reforms and program reductions.

In 2021, the Department will continue to make important operational reforms—revisiting outdated and redundant processes and regulations, strengthening the Department’s ethical culture, and transforming internal administrative operations to deliver better service to customers and employees.

The 2021 budget for the Department totals \$12.8 billion in current authority. The Department continues to have access to additional emergency suppression resources via the wildfire cap adjustment in the event of a severe wildland fire season. The Department estimates there will be

an additional \$7.5 billion in permanent authority available—including grants and payments—for specific activities that do not require annual appropriation.

The 2021 budget continues to prioritize taking care of the lands and resources we oversee, expanding access to those areas for public recreation and enjoyment, and investing to improve the visitor experience at our sites. Funding focuses on delivering our direct mission activities. In 2021, we are proposing several targeted investments to advance specific objectives and deliver tangible results, which include the following:

- Bolstering the Department’s capability to address the wildfire seasons.
- Investing in proactive forest and fuels management activities to reduce wildfire risk.
- Supporting a broadband access initiative to expand coverage in rural and tribal areas.
- Proposing a more sustainable Wild Horse and Burro management strategy.
- Investing in U.S. energy security and ensuring a reliable supply of critical minerals.
- Expanding public access to the Department’s lands for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation.
- Addressing the problem of missing and murdered indigenous people in Indian Country.
- Promoting conservation stewardship focused on recovery and promoting collaborative partnerships.
- Being a good neighbor by continuing support for Payments in Lieu of Taxes, which are relied upon by communities across the country.
- Implementing important internal reforms in regulation and processes, ethics, workplace culture, Freedom of Information Act programs, and innovation through administrative shared services.

The President’s 2021 budget carries forward two significant legislative proposals related to the Department: a package of legislative reforms to improve forest management and reduce wildfire risk and legislation to establish a Public Lands Infrastructure Fund. Detailed descriptions of these legislative proposals and additional proposals for new appropriations language that address other Department priorities, can be found at:

<https://www.doi.gov/budget/appropriations/2021/highlights>

Conclusion

The priorities we have addressed in our request reflect a balanced and responsible approach to ensure continued economic prosperity and resource management. We are focused on taking care of the resources and infrastructure that we have. We are also continuing to make important reforms that will allow the Department and its programs to deliver better service to stakeholders, our customers, and employees.

Chair McCollum, Ranking Member Joyce, this concludes my statement and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.