

**EXAMINING THE DEPARTMENT OF THE
INTERIOR'S SPENDING PRIORITIES AND
THE PRESIDENT'S FISCAL YEAR BUDGET
2022 PROPOSAL**

OVERSIGHT HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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**OVERSIGHT HEARING ON EXAMINING THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR'S SPENDING
PRIORITIES AND THE PRESIDENT'S
FISCAL YEAR BUDGET 2022 PROPOSAL**

**Wednesday, June 23, 2021
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC**

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in room 1324, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Raúl M. Grijalva [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Grijalva, Napolitano, Costa, Sablan, Huffman, Lowenthal, Gallego, Neguse, Levin, Porter, Leger Fernández, Stansbury, DeGette, Brownley, Dingell, McEachin, Soto, San Nicolas, García, Case, McCollum, Cohen, Tlaib, Trahan; Westerman, Gohmert, Lamborn, McClintock, Gosar, Graves, Hice, Radewagen, González-Colón, Fulcher, Stauber, Tiffany, Carl, Rosendale, Moore, Herrell, Boebert, Obernolte, and Bentz.

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee on Natural Resources will come to order. The Committee is meeting today to examine the Department of the Interior's spending priorities and the President's Fiscal Year 2022 budget proposal.

Under Committee Rule 4(f), any oral opening statements at the hearing are limited to the Chair and the Ranking Minority Member, or their designees. This will allow us to hear from the witness sooner, and help Members keep to their individual schedules.

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that all other Members' opening statements be made part of the hearing record if they are submitted to the Clerk by 5 p.m. today, or the close of the hearing, whichever comes first.

Hearing no objection, so ordered.

Without objection, the Chair may also declare a recess, subject to the call of the Chair.

As described in the notice, statements, documents, or motions must be submitted to the electronic repository at HNRCdocs@mail.house.gov.

Members physically present should provide a hard copy for staff to distribute by e-mail.

Additionally, please note that, as always, Members are responsible for their own microphones. As with the fully in-person meetings, Members can be muted by staff only to avoid inadvertent background noise.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 3(1) and the latest guidance from the Attending Physician, anyone present in the hearing room today must wear a mask covering their mouth and nose if they are not fully vaccinated, or if they are uncomfortable with informing us of

their vaccination status. It is my hope that with everyone's cooperation, we can protect the safety of Members, staff, and their respective families, as they return home. The Committee has masks available for any Member who needs one.

Finally, Members or witnesses who experience technical problems should inform the Committee staff immediately.

I want to take time to welcome our new Member, Melanie Stansbury. She comes to Congress and represents District 1 in New Mexico, retaining the seat formerly held by our guest, Secretary Haaland. Her background expertise on the Committee is going to be very useful, and we look forward to her contributions. I also want to take time to thank Representative Matsui for her contributions to the Committee, as she released her position to accommodate our new Member, and we are very grateful, and want to thank her for her courtesy and her gesture.

Let me now recognize myself for my opening statement.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning, Madam Secretary. I am happy to welcome you to this morning's hearing. I want to thank you for wasting no time in improving our Nation's conservation and Native American policies, which I am sure we are going to hear more about today.

This may feel like a homecoming for you, since you were the Vice Chair of this Committee, and here you are, on the other side of this table, as one of the first Native Americans in a cabinet position, and the first Native woman in that position. It is a pleasure to see you again, and inviting you to testify.

Knowing the Committee as you do, Madam Secretary, you realize that the goal is a deliberate and informative hearing, without too much theatrics. That is the goal. But as you know this Committee, the process sometimes doesn't quite work out that way.

And we have a lot to talk about, and I am sure you are well aware of how many questions we have. But if you will indulge me, just for a moment, I want to recognize the history that we are making today.

In 1789, Congress created three executive departments: Foreign Affairs, Treasury, and War Department. Given our country's history and its relationship with tribes and Indigenous people, these issues were initially housed in the War Department, because the United States viewed tribes and Indigenous communities as pure adversaries.

In 1849, Congress created the Department of the Interior to oversee internal affairs such as water, wilderness, regulation of territories, public lands, and Native Americans. Since then, the Department of the Interior has made contributions to our Nation's history, but the intent of placing Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior was to dismantle Indigenous culture, while re-educating Native Americans so they could become "respectable citizens."

Yet, decades later, here we are, inviting the first Native American woman elected to Congress, and the first Native American cabinet member, to hear about her plans for the

Department of the Interior. The historic significance of this moment should not be lost. A Department that was once in charge of eradicating the Indigenous culture of this country is finally being led by one. Secretary Haaland sits before us today, despite the history of this Department, and I welcome her to this hearing room with the utmost respect and appreciation for the work she has done and will continue to do for people.

Today, we will hear about the most significant issues facing our country, such as climate change, environmental justice, and polluter accountability. I supported Secretary Haaland's nomination because we need someone with her experience, her compassion, her intelligence, and her fair-mindedness in charge of answering these questions.

As I can say from personal experience, Secretary Haaland brings a new perspective to her work. The attributes that qualify her as Secretary of the Interior—compassion, experience, intelligence, and fair-mindedness—is precisely what our country needs at this moment in time. And we welcome her leadership, and look forward to that leadership.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Grijalva follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HON. RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES

Good morning, Madam Secretary. I hope I don't need to say how happy I am to welcome you to this morning's hearing. I want to thank you for wasting no time in improving our Nation's conservation policies, which I'm sure we're going to hear more about today.

You were a leader when you sat on this Committee, you're a leader now, and I believe you'll continue being a leader for a long time to come, so it's a pleasure to see you again and invite you to testify.

We have a lot to talk about, and I'm sure you're well aware of how many questions we have, but if you'll indulge me a moment, I want to recognize what's happening here today.

It wasn't long ago that Native American children were taken from their families and sent to schools designed to wipe out their cultures, their religions and their languages. They were discouraged or prevented from seeing their families. Their hair was cut short, their clothes were replaced with uniforms, and in many cases their birth names were intentionally forgotten. If they expressed themselves in traditional ways, they were met with violence.

In this country, the United States of America, hundreds of thousands of Native children were ridiculed and psychologically tormented for generations until they met totally invented standards of behavior.

The people who committed these crimes claimed Native people don't understand the laws of this country. They claimed Native men and women are inherently lazy. They claimed they needed to be handled this way before they were ready live in the modern world. This all happened within living memory.

Secretary Haaland sits before us today despite those crimes. I salute her.

In this emerging world that seems to have frightened and confused a lot of people, where Native families and Native history are respected and treated with dignity, this Committee has made a few small changes of our own.

As the people here today may have noticed, we've removed the paintings that once hung in this chamber. Images depicting the artist's conception of the lives and traditions of Indigenous people in the 19th century may have once had a home here, but they're inconsistent with the work of a Committee dedicated to improving the current and future lives of Indigenous peoples.

Today's hearing, I believe, is another important step in the modernization of our work and our role. The Interior Department was once tasked with the subjugation and even extermination of Native Americans. Now a Native American leads the Department and is here with us to discuss the most important questions our country faces—questions about climate change, about environmental justice, about polluter accountability, about ensuring equity for all Americans.

I supported Secretary Haaland's nomination because we need someone with her compassion, intelligence, and her fair-mindedness in charge of answering these questions.

I believe compassion is a value that's being lost in government. I saw the importance of compassion when I was growing up in southern Arizona, in a politically very difficult time for immigrants and the children of immigrants. Compassion, not the pursuit of a quick buck, is what defines this country at its best. We can be, and sometimes are, a compassionate nation.

That's why I'm so glad to see Secretary Haaland leading the Department of the Interior. The threat of climate change calls on us like never before to think of others as well as ourselves, and to consider needs larger than our own daily concerns. As I can say from personal experience, she always brings that perspective to her work. This country needs her right where she is.

The CHAIRMAN. With that, I would like once again to welcome you here, Secretary Haaland, back to this Committee. And I now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Westerman, for his opening comments.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Thank you, Chairman Grijalva. It is, indeed, great to be here today. It is good to see you. Not only to see you, but to see you in person and in 3D. This is a good day, when we are finally back in the Committee room. It feels more like what Congress should be, where we are looking across the dais at one another, where we are here, in person, to discuss important issues for the country.

And I am so thankful that we are able to be back here today, thankful for the great work that our country did in coming up with vaccines, and getting those vaccines available, so that everybody has access to it. And hopefully, this is just the beginning, that all of our hearings, and especially our markups—

[Audio malfunction.]

Mr. WESTERMAN [continuing]. Committee Republicans are focused on access, conservation, innovation, and transparency, all of which should be bipartisan and a priority. Unfortunately, the Administration's proposed budget, I believe—and I think we will have a discussion about it today—falls short of many of these goals.

If there is one thing we should all be united on, that is access. And it doesn't just mean access to recreational opportunities, but also access to timber, water, lands for grazing, energy, minerals, and much more. The Administration has taken unprecedented steps to cut off access to critical minerals and vital energy sources, putting Americans out of work, and jeopardizing our energy security.

The budget request does nothing to reverse this tide and, instead, includes deeply flawed logical inconsistencies. For example, this Administration canceled the Keystone XL pipeline permit, yet it supports foreign pipelines like Nord Stream 2, making us and our allies more dependent on Russia.

Additionally, the budget focuses heavily on promoting renewable energy that says virtually nothing about domestically sourcing the minerals needed to support solar and wind energy.

Finally, the Administration also fully funded the Land Water Conservation Fund and other conservation programs, while simultaneously cutting off those revenue sources by halting fossil fuel development. Instead of a misguided preservationist land designation, we must promote access through true conservation. This is more critical than ever, as over 75 percent of our Western lands are currently classified as being in severe drought or worse, an ominous sign for what will surely be another catastrophic wildfire season.

Unfortunately, this is nothing new. Last year was yet another historic wildfire season that burned 10.3 million acres, and 20 percent of that was on DOI lands. This budget includes no serious support for long-term water storage, and does nothing to help us dramatically ramp up the acres in need of treatment to prevent wildfires, two things that are desperately needed right now. Drought, wildfire, and the litany of other crises facing the Department will require innovative approaches to solve. I have no doubt that America is up for the challenge. But sadly, instead of incentivizing new ideas, this budget simply throws money at problems, and uses catchphrases, oftentimes with little to no meaning.

Finally, I am deeply disappointed with what this Administration is passing off as transparency. Not only was this budget released months behind schedule, and on the Friday before a long weekend—a date I believe was chosen in the hopes that nobody would really notice the budget’s release—but DOI has also ignored 87 document requests, and failed to provide two requested policy briefings to the Committee.

Secretary Haaland, as a former member of this very Committee, I know you understand how important it is to be responsive to congressional oversight inquiries. So, I hope you will implore your staff at the Department to take these duties more seriously, and to respond to all of our outstanding requests.

I know many of us on both sides of the aisle share the common goal of wanting to see our environment and our natural resources thrive for years to come. Unfortunately, I believe we are just simply paying lip service to conservation, while actively making it more difficult for us to be good stewards and to take care of our resources and use them wisely.

Again, I would like to thank Secretary Haaland for being here today. It means a lot that you would come over and visit with the Committee.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Westerman, and I want to thank again our witness today, Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland.

Thank you very much for taking the time, Madam Secretary. I won’t go through the—I think you are pretty familiar with the 5-minute rule and all that. So, rather than repeat that whole section of what I have to say, the assumption is you know, and I think that assumption is correct.

Now the Chair recognizes Secretary Haaland to testify.

Madam Secretary, the floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. DEB HAALAND, SECRETARY, U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much, Chairman, Ranking Member. It is an honor to be here, and to see all these familiar faces. I am really happy to be here with you today.

Very quickly, I want to let you know that I am joined by Ms. Rachel Taylor, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Management and Budget. She is here with me today to sort of help make sure that you get the information that you need in full.

Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Westerman, members of the Committee, it is an honor to be here with you today on behalf of the Department of the Interior. I was proud to serve on this Committee, and it is great to be back with so many friends and colleagues. It is deeply meaningful to me, as the first Native American cabinet secretary, to be here on the ancestral homelands of the Anacostan and Piscataway people, speaking before you.

This Committee plays an important role in the success of the Department of the Interior and our many programs. The work that Congress has done on a bipartisan basis to support priorities such as the Great American Outdoors Act, wildland fire, and tribal programs has been integral to the ability of the Interior to meet our mission. And it has had profound impacts on the lives of Native Americans and Alaska Natives in communities across our country. And in that spirit, I come before you today to present the Fiscal Year 2022 budget, and to talk about how we can work together to ensure the Department is ready to meet this moment.

The 2022 budget reflects the important role Interior will play to accomplish the Administration's goals to move our country forward in this unprecedented time. The President's budget responds by proposing \$17.6 billion in discretionary investments in Interior, as well as legislative proposals to implement the American Jobs Plan. The programs you see reflected in the budget request lift up the President's goals of addressing the climate crisis, providing much-needed resources to Tribal Nations, restoring balance on public lands and waters, advancing equity and environmental justice, investing in a clean energy future, and creating good-paying jobs.

I will walk through a few high-level details now, and, of course, look forward to having a discussion with you later on.

First, the budget supports conservation partnership programs that will advance the America the Beautiful Initiative, our Administration's effort to conserve 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 through locally led and voluntary projects.

The request also allocates the full mandatory funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a program I cared deeply about as a Member of Congress, and am thrilled to help direct as Secretary. And it includes \$86 million for the Civilian Climate Corps Initiative.

All told, the budget includes unprecedented investments to address the climate crisis, including more than \$1.9 billion in new funding toward conservation, clean energy, climate science, and fleet modernization.

There is an increase of \$133 million to accelerate and expand activities that support clean energy deployment across Federal lands and waters. It includes more than \$300 million to support

fuels management activities to reduce the risk of wildland fire, funds to help prevent wildfires from taking hold, growing in severity, and threatening communities and resources.

The budget request prioritizes investments in science, including \$200 million in new funds that will help to understand climate impacts, and make better decisions about how to mitigate, adapt, and increase resilience across the landscape in our communities.

It also provides \$300 million to support the President's Reclamation Jobs Initiative, and clean up legacy pollution by plugging orphaned oil and gas wells, and cleaning up abandoned mines.

It includes major investments in Indian Country. The budget includes \$4.2 billion across all Indian Affairs programs, which is \$278 million above Fiscal Year 2021.

We are also focused on strengthening tribal sovereignty, including a proposal for \$150 million to re-establish the Indian Land Consolidation Program within the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

This request also includes important increases for tribal public safety and justice programs, including \$16.5 million for programs like Interior's Missing and Murdered Unit that addressed the missing and murdered Indigenous peoples crisis. We want to put the full weight of the Federal Government into investigating these cases, and martial law enforcement resources across the cabinet and throughout Indian Country.

Finally, to ensure our Nation's legal obligations to tribes are fully met, the budget proposes to shift funding for tribal water settlements, contract support costs, and tribal lease payments to mandatory spending, starting in Fiscal Year 2023.

These are just some of the highlights of this budget request. I look forward to working with the Committee to achieve these important goals.

I commit to you that I will continue to honor and respect the role this Committee plays with the confident expectation that, working together, we can accomplish great things on behalf of the American people.

This concludes my opening remarks. Thank you again for having me, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Haaland follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DEB HAALAND, SECRETARY, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Westerman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Interior Department's Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Proposal.

It is an honor and privilege for me to appear before you today as Secretary of the Interior to represent the Department and our tens of thousands of dedicated professionals. I was proud to serve on this Committee and it is great to be back with so many friends and colleagues.

It is also deeply meaningful for me, as the first Native American Cabinet Secretary, to speak to you from the ancestral homelands of the Anacostan and Piscataway people.

I respect the important role you play in the success of the Department and our programs, and it is my hope and my goal that we can work together successfully on behalf the American people.

Interior's 2022 budget request totals \$17.6 billion. Our 2022 budget request is a \$2.5 billion or a 17 percent increase from the 2021 enacted appropriation. This budget will help implement the President's ambitious vision to lift up the Nation in this unprecedented time by addressing the climate crisis, providing much-needed

resources to Tribal nations, restoring balance on public lands and waters, advancing environmental justice, and investing in a clean energy future.

Interior's wide-ranging programs create economic opportunities and jobs for the American people. As reflected in the Department's Economic Contributions Report for Fiscal Year 2019, Interior's mission activities supported an estimated 1.9 million jobs and \$336 billion in economic output. Interior has an important and unique mission to uphold and honor the Nation's trust responsibilities and commitments to Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities to help them prosper.

The 2022 budget lays out the important role Interior will play to accomplish the Administration's goals to move our country forward. This request includes the President's American Jobs Plan, which provides a longer-term strategy to create millions of good-paying union jobs, rebuild our country's infrastructure, and position America to out-compete others on the global stage.

Interior plays an important role in the President's plan to reinvest in the foundations of the Nation's strength. The 2022 budget addresses the need to invest in America at this critical time, when the Nation faces challenges from a pandemic, an economic downturn, climate change, and a reckoning with racial injustice. As such, Interior's 2022 budget invests in America's future. Programs focus on adaptive management and increasing resilience to the changing climate; creating jobs and economic development; using science to inform; strengthening Tribal nations' self-determination; expanding inclusion of historically underrepresented communities; promoting environmental justice; delivering Interior's core services; and providing effective stewardship of America's national treasures.

A key component of the Administration's investment strategy to address climate impacts on the ground through land stewardship and conservation is leveraging the power of Americans across the country. The Administration recently released a preliminary report to the National Climate Task Force—Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful—recommending a 10-year, locally led campaign to conserve and restore America's lands and waters.

The report provides an overarching framework to implement the President's goal to conserve 30 percent of U.S. land and waters by 2030, which will help address the climate crisis and its impacts on nature, improve equitable access to the outdoors, and strengthen the economy. The report recognizes and celebrates the voluntary conservation efforts of farmers, ranchers, and forest owners; the leadership of sovereign Tribal nations in caring for lands, waters, and wildlife; the contributions and stewardship traditions of America's hunters, anglers, and fishing communities; and the vital importance of investing in playgrounds, trails, and open space in park-deprived communities.

The America the Beautiful initiative is intended to serve as a call to action to support locally led conservation and restoration efforts across public, private, state, and Tribal lands and waters. The initiative welcomes all communities wishing to steward their lands and waters, boost the economy, and support jobs. Supporting these principles, the 2022 budget includes increases across Interior to support local partnership programs.

Consistent with Congressional direction, the 2022 President's budget allocates mandatory funding available through the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). That funding includes up to \$1.6 billion for deferred maintenance projects in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE).

Thanks to broad bipartisan support of GAOA in 2020, \$900.0 million in mandatory LWCF resources is made available annually for conservation and recreation activities managed by Interior and the U.S. Forest Service. In 2021, Interior is providing \$420.8 million, which includes \$19.0 million from discretionary funds, to states and other partners for local conservation and recreation programs through non-federal grants and \$280.7 million for federal programs, including voluntary land acquisition and easement programs in the BLM, FWS, and NPS.

In May 2021, Interior awarded \$150.0 million to local communities through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership grant program. Funded through the LWCF, this competitive program enables urban communities to create and reinvigorate outdoor recreation spaces and connect people and the outdoors in economically underserved communities. The LWCF programs directly support land and resource conservation and increase access to outdoor recreation across America.

In the 2022 budget, Interior proposes to allocate \$700.9 million for LWCF programs, which includes \$19.0 million from discretionary funds. The 2022 budget estimates an additional \$128.3 million will be available for State LWCF grants as a result of revenue derived from certain offshore oil and gas sales in the Gulf of Mexico.

The 2022 budget proposal includes new investments for climate-related investments to conserve and adaptively manage natural resources, increase understanding of how natural resources are changing and what that means, build resilience to protect communities and lands from significant impacts, and contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases. The budget proposal also contains funding for wildland fire management, drought mitigation, and science-based investments that will help the Department and communities prepare for and address the aftermath of natural hazard events. These efforts will be supported by investments for science-driven conservation to align management of the Nation's natural resources with America's climate, biodiversity, and clean energy needs.

To address the growing threat of wildfire to public health and community safety, the FY 2022 request includes a robust increase of \$117.8 million in Interior's wildland fire programs. This features an increase of \$107.4 million for hazardous fuels and burned area rehabilitation programs. This funding will support efforts to manage vegetation and reduce the intensity, severity, and negative effects of wildfire, in line with the Administration's science-based approach to risk management and complementing our other efforts to improve land health and resilience to climate change and reduce carbon emissions. As we head into what is already a challenging wildland fire season due to historic levels of drought in the West, these important investments in risk reduction continue to be top of mind.

The 2022 budget proposes to rebuild core functions and capacities within Interior that have been diminished in recent years with investments in USGS science and staffing, and the core operations of parks, wildlife refuges and public lands. The investments in Interior's budget request also provide a key opportunity for the Administration and Congress to work together to restore levels of investment in programs at the Department and across government, and to lay a foundation for core programs that improve the life of everyday Americans.

To implement the American Jobs Plan, the 2022 budget includes new investments to create good-paying jobs with a free and fair chance to join a union, rebuild the country's infrastructure, address the climate crisis, and position the United States to out-compete other countries. The proposal includes an increase of \$300.0 million to support efforts to plug orphan oil and gas wells, clean up abandoned mines, and decommission offshore oil and gas infrastructure, which will help create jobs and improve the environmental quality of energy communities by addressing serious safety hazards and risks from associated air, water, or other environmental damage.

As part of this proposal, the budget includes \$169.2 million for a new Energy Community Revitalization Program (ERCP), which will help accelerate this remediation and reclamation work on Interior-managed lands and support work on non-federal lands through grants to states and Tribes. The new ERCP will include \$75.0 million to address reclamation and restoration within Interior and also provide \$70.0 million for assistance and support to states and \$20.0 million for reclamation on Tribal lands. The program will provide technical assistance and funding to inventory abandoned mines and oil and gas wells and to support reclamation projects.

As part of a White House forum with federal agencies, states, industry, and labor in March 2021, the Administration announced a commitment by the Departments of the Interior, Energy, and Commerce to increase renewable energy development on federal waters and set a target to deploy 30 gigawatts (30,000 megawatts) of offshore wind by 2030, creating nearly 80,000 jobs. Work is already underway to meet this ambitious goal.

In the first months of the Administration, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) approved the first major offshore wind project in U.S. waters, the 800 MW Vineyard Wind project, which will create 3,600 jobs and generate enough power for 400,000 homes and businesses. BOEM also issued a lease for the first wave energy research project in federal waters off the U.S. West coast, identified a new Wind Energy Area in the New York Bight, and announced intent for environmental reviews for projects offshore New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. The budget includes \$249.1 million in funding to increase renewable energy production on public lands and in offshore waters, which will create jobs and help transition the country to a clean energy future. The funding primarily supports infrastructure permitting for onshore and offshore renewable energy projects such as solar, wind, wave and geothermal.

In anticipation of large-scale development of offshore wind energy on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) is preparing to take on new responsibilities with respect to renewable energy workplace and process safety management, environmental protection, and decommissioning and site restoration. BSEE is also assuming safety and environmental enforcement operational functions for federal OCS offshore renewable energy development.

In 2022, the BSEE budget includes \$9.8 million, an increase of \$9.0 million, to establish a core foundational program to support the development of a safe, robust, and environmentally responsible offshore wind industry in the United States. The funding will enable timely and rigorous industry plan reviews, initiate a robust compliance assurance program, promote science-based renewable energy research, and demonstrate BSEE's commitment and leadership in driving safety performance in the offshore wind industry.

In May 2021, BLM announced final approval of the Crimson Solar Project on BLM lands in Riverside County, CA. The project has the potential to deliver enough energy to power roughly 87,500 homes. The project is located within one of the areas designated for development in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan, identified through a process of extensive review and coordination. The budget includes \$55.6 million, an increase of \$25.0 million, for onshore clean energy programs managed by BLM. This amount includes \$44.6 million in the Renewable Energy program, an increase of \$14.0 million from the 2021 enacted level, and a program increase of \$11.0 million in the Resource Management Planning program to support renewable energy project siting. This funding will support the permitting and rights-of-way work associated with siting new projects and transmission lines. To ramp up to meet the Administration's renewable energy goals, BLM is reviewing policies and resources, working with other agencies to improve coordination, and reviewing current applications that could be expedited.

The 2022 budget includes an additional \$13.0 million in FWS to accommodate increased permitting reviews associated with clean energy. The 2022 budget also includes an increase of \$7.0 million to support clean energy programs and grid infrastructure in the Insular Areas. In the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), program funding for clean energy deployment programs in Indian Country totals \$66.0 million, an increase of \$50.0 million from the 2021 enacted level.

President Biden has challenged federal agencies to leverage the purchasing power of federal procurements to spur the deployment of clean energy technologies and supporting infrastructure and the jobs they create. Interior's fleet includes approximately 30,800 vehicles. The 2022 budget includes \$73.0 million to start transitioning Interior's fleet to zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) as part of a governmentwide initiative. Funding will support either acquiring ZEVs within the owned fleet or transitioning to the General Services Administration's leased fleet, investment in the related charging infrastructure, and planning and integration to effectively support the initiative.

To address abandoned coal mine cleanup, the 2022 budget includes \$165.0 million, an increase of \$50.0 million, for the Abandoned Mine Land and Economic Revitalization (AMLER) program in the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. The program provides grants to the six Appalachian States with the highest amount of unfunded Priority 1 and Priority 2 Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) sites and the three Tribes with AML programs. Grants are awarded for projects that accelerate the remediation of AML sites and encourage economic and community development.

Science is valued at Interior, and it guides management decisions. Science is a cornerstone of the 2022 budget, with strong investments in science across the Department to better support bureau missions, address climate change on the ground, and invest in tools to monitor, measure, and model solutions to important resource challenges. The 2022 budget includes \$1.3 billion for research and development programs, and these investments in mission-specific science provide a new approach to developing and delivering actionable products and reducing barriers between science production and user application.

USGS is Interior's primary science organization, with a broad portfolio related to the earth and biological sciences. The 2022 budget includes \$1.6 billion for USGS, an increase of \$326.9 million from the 2021 enacted level. The budget for USGS includes an increase of \$205.0 million, to make science the centerpiece of the Biden Administration's commitment to tackling the climate change crisis, and another \$83.0 million increase in other research and development, including support for conservation programs, such as the America the Beautiful initiative. The 2022 investments in USGS science span the range of climate adaptation and land change science, carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas monitoring, critical minerals, mine waste reclamation and reuse, hazards monitoring, and water prediction.

The 2022 USGS budget accelerates the development of tools supporting planning, monitoring, and projection, including the Protected Areas Database of the United States (PAD-US) and the Land Change Monitoring, Assessment, and Projection (LCMAP) initiative. These two tools provide solutions to the growing need for conservation planning and information about the fundamental drivers of land change and the consequences of human-caused and natural changes. Collectively, these

investments will accelerate discoveries with the potential to transform America's understanding of the natural world, launch the next generation of Landsat to study and improve life on Earth, and enable U.S. independence from adversarial nations for industrial materials needed for current technologies.

The 2022 budget includes \$60.0 million in USGS collaborative research with the new Advanced Research Projects Agency for Climate (ARPA-C) within the Department of Energy. This high-risk, accelerated research can achieve transformational advancement in climate adaptation and resilience in areas in which industry by itself is not likely to invest due to technical and financial uncertainty. The investment will focus on work in five areas critically important to Interior's mission and to tackling the climate crisis: planning tools to support habitat health and biodiversity, models for drought prediction, predictive tools for wildfire and post-wildfire risk management, coastal change and vulnerability forecasts for planning and disaster response and recovery, and models to assess the potential and risks for geologic storage of hydrogen created using renewable energy.

The Civilian Climate Corps (CCC) is an important jobs initiative that draws on America's strength to work together and build back better to revitalize public lands, infrastructure, and communities—and, in doing so, create jobs. The idea builds from the Civilian Conservation Corps, which put hundreds of thousands of young people to work on public and private lands, providing them with jobs and training to tackle the crises of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. The President calls for a broad CCC initiative in the American Jobs Plan, which stretches across federal agencies and non-federal partners throughout the country.

Complementing this broader effort, Interior's discretionary 2022 budget includes \$85.5 million for CCC work on Interior's lands. In 2022, the CCC program will build upon existing programs and partnerships that share the same objectives—to tackle climate change on the ground, provide a living wage, provide skills and a pathway to employment, and reflect the diversity of America.

The Biden-Harris Administration made its commitment to Tribal nations clear from the start, emphasizing the need to strengthen and respect the government-to-government relationship with Tribes. Underscoring that focus on Indian Country, the 2022 budget proposal includes \$4.2 billion, an increase of \$727.8 million from the 2021 enacted level, across all Indian Affairs programs. The budget invests in core Indian Affairs programs and addresses outstanding gaps in areas such as environmental quality and ensuring Tribal communities are part of the national priorities to address climate change and move toward clean energy.

The 2022 budget includes \$2.7 billion for BIA programs, an increase of \$614.9 million from the 2021 enacted level. The budget includes \$346.5 million to fully fund estimated Contract Support Costs, an increase of \$61.0 million from the 2021 enacted level, and \$36.6 million for Payments for Tribal Leases, \$15.0 million above the 2021 enacted level. The budget proposes to reclassify discretionary funding for Contract Support Costs and Payments for Tribal Leases to mandatory funding starting in 2023. Doing so will provide Tribal nations with certainty that these commitments will be met with a dedicated, predictable funding source.

The BIA request also includes \$150.0 million for a new Indian Land Consolidation Program (ILCP) to enhance the ability of Tribal governments to plan for and adapt to climate change and to build stronger Tribal communities. Reducing land fractionation and achieving Tribal majority ownership in lands enables Tribes to make decisions about land management, use, and protection that facilitate climate resilience.

The new program reflects the ongoing need to continue to address fractionation on Indian lands as the Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations (LBBP), established as part of the Cobell Settlement, ends in November 2022. The program estimates that by the time the LBBP program concludes, 60 percent of the unique locations within fractionated land will not have been visited by the program. Without further efforts, the program expects the number of fractional interests will likely return to pre-program levels within approximately 20 years.

The 2022 budget includes \$395.8 million for BIA Trust Natural Resources Management programs, an increase of \$136.9 million from the 2021 enacted level. The budget increases funding across the full spectrum of Tribal natural resource programs, recognizing their economic importance as well as their contributions to environmental quality and conservation. Within Trust Natural Resources, the budget includes \$61.0 million for the Tribal Climate Resilience program, an increase of \$44.0 million from the 2021 enacted level. The increase includes \$23.0 million to expand Tribal Climate Adaptation Grants, \$11.0 million in additional funding for Alaska Village Relocation Grants, and \$10.0 million for a Tribal CCC. The budget includes \$56.2 million for Minerals and Mining projects, which focus on clean and alternative energy programs, an increase of \$40.1 million from the 2021 enacted level.

BIA's 2022 budget includes \$507.1 million for Public Safety services, an increase of \$38.5 million. This increase includes \$10.0 million to support the *McGirt v. Oklahoma* Supreme Court decision, \$10.0 million to support a body-worn camera initiative for officers, \$8.2 million to continue support for BIA participation in the Federal Opioid Initiative, and \$5.0 million for implementation of the Violence Against Women Act. The budget includes \$116.4 million, an increase of \$10.0 million, for detention and correction programs and \$43.2 million, an increase of \$4.2 million, for Tribal courts.

The 2022 BIA budget includes a \$14.1 million increase to support Human Services activities, including \$3.0 million to expand the Tiwahe Initiative. The Tiwahe Initiative is a holistic approach to addressing overall Tribal community needs that support youth, family, community safety and stability, and cultural awareness. The initiative facilitates collaboration within Tribal communities—which can help to leverage resources, share expertise, reduce duplication, and exchange information about families' needs—to formulate the most responsive approach to provide service.

The 2022 BIA budget maintains strong support for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous American Indians and Alaska Natives initiative, including \$16.5 million for the program, an increase of \$5.0 million from the 2021 enacted level. The 2022 budget also includes specific investments to address environmental quality problems on Tribal lands. Within BIA Construction, the budget includes \$29.9 million specifically to address water safety and sanitation requirements related to BIA-owned drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.

The 2022 budget includes \$270.2 million for Indian water rights settlement activities, an increase of \$71.9 million from the 2021 enacted level. This amount includes \$75.2 million within BIA, an increase of \$30.2 million from the 2021 enacted level, and \$157.6 million within the Bureau of Reclamation, an increase of \$36.8 million, for settlements. The budget proposes to reclassify discretionary funding for enacted Indian water settlements, including these two new settlements, to mandatory funding starting in 2023. Doing so will provide Tribal nations with certainty that these commitments will be met with a dedicated, predictable funding source.

The 2022 budget includes \$1.3 billion for Indian Education programs, an increase of \$110.6 million from the 2021 enacted level. The primary focus of funding remains on support for the day-to-day operations of BIE-funded elementary and secondary schools. Funds will enable BIE to improve opportunities and outcomes in the classroom, provide improved instructional services, and support improved teacher quality, recruitment, and retention. The budget requests \$24.7 million for Early Child and Family Development, an increase of \$3.7 million, to expand preschool opportunities at BIE-funded schools. The budget also invests in postsecondary programs, including \$45.0 million for Tribal scholarships and adult education, an increase of \$10.2 million from the 2021 enacted level, and includes \$5.0 million for the Science Post Graduate Scholarship Fund, an increase of \$2.0 million, for a new initiative providing research internships to highly qualified students from economically disadvantaged rural communities.

The BIE is working collaboratively with Tribes and communities to alleviate the strains imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic on BIE students and their families, as well as on teachers, administrators, and staff across BIE's schools and the Tribal Colleges and Universities. The 2022 budget includes funding to maintain the important investments in distance learning infrastructure provided during the pandemic.

The budget includes \$35.4 million for Education Information Technology, which is an increase of \$20.1 million from the 2021 enacted level. This increase provides critical funding to support upgraded broadband access at BIE schools, including recurring operating costs for network systems, such as annual learning software subscriptions and licenses. These investments will enable BIE to continue delivering education during the pandemic as well as substantially improve the efficiency and quality of education upon return to in-school learning.

To support infrastructure needs, the 2022 budget also includes \$264.3 million in discretionary education construction funds to replace and repair school facilities and address priority maintenance needs at 183 schools. The budget continues to invest in activities that promote educational self-determination for Tribal communities and includes \$94.9 million, an increase of \$8.0 million, for Tribal Grant Support Costs to cover the administration costs for Tribes that choose to operate BIE-funded schools. This level of funding supports 100 percent of the estimated requirement.

President Biden's EO 13985 on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government clearly states the Administration's policy: "The Federal Government should pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all" to include those who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. The

President's call to agencies to advance equity for all is being put into action at Interior.

The Department is taking stock of current programs across Interior that address equal employment opportunity, civil rights, diversity and inclusion, accessibility, workplace culture transformation, and discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation. As part of this process, the Department is working with bureaus and offices to identify gaps, challenges, and best practices and to examine Department and bureau roles, responsibilities, and governance to ensure that any necessary changes are implemented. The 2022 budget includes a \$12.8 million increase across Interior bureaus and offices to better address diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in Interior's workforce.

The Administration's emphasis on equity for all and inclusion is also a part of how Interior executes its core missions. As part of the NEPA process, bureaus and offices must consider the impacts on the natural or physical environment as well as social, cultural, and economic impacts. The Department is committed to ensuring the federal government honors the government-to-government relationship with Tribes and strengthens Tribal sovereignty through meaningful Tribal consultation.

The FY 2022 budget request promotes racial justice and equity in underserved communities by embedding environmental justice and racial equity goals into programs across the Department, with discrete investments in key areas. The NPS plays a particularly important role in ensuring cultural diversity in federal programs and connecting underserved communities to the Department. The NPS is also charged with preserving and caring for structures and artifacts that tell the story of all Americans. Providing outdoor recreation opportunities, the telling of America's story, and preservation of our collective history are an essential element of Interior's mission.

The NPS 2022 budget includes \$15.0 million to expand capacity at more than 16 national park units and programs that preserve and tell the story of historically underrepresented and marginalized groups, including \$5.0 million for the African American Civil Rights Network. The budget includes an additional \$5.0 million for competitive historic preservation grants to increase support to state and local efforts to preserve sites that document the struggle for equal opportunity for African Americans. The budget includes \$10.0 million for construction at the Selma Interpretive Center for a voting rights center that honors the legacy of civil rights leaders, including the late Representative John Lewis.

The 2022 budget expands ongoing programs working to connect new audiences to the outdoors and Interior's mission activities. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service budget includes \$12.5 million for its Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, an increase of \$7.0 million from the 2021 enacted level. The program features 101 national wildlife refuges that are within a 25-mile radius of an urban area, such as Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge near New Orleans. With 80 percent of Americans living in cities, the program is helping people to get outside, engage with their community, and become part of the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts.

EO 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, establishes the Justice40 Initiative that will seek to bring 40 percent of the overall benefits of relevant federal investments to underserved communities. The initiative will focus on clean energy and energy efficiency, clean transit, affordable and sustainable housing, training and workforce development, the reduction of legacy pollution, and the development of critical clean water infrastructure. Interior programs will play a strong role in this initiative to address racial equity and environmental justice through inclusive initiatives, such as Reclamation Jobs and Clean Energy for Tribal Communities, as well as core mission activities to construct drinking water and irrigation systems in underserved communities, encourage open areas and recreation in cities through urban refuges and parks, and increase access to broadband and power in the hard-to-reach parts of America.

The 2022 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help build back America to be better and more competitive as the world continues to change. This includes funding to support a strong, talented workforce at Interior and strengthen the core infrastructure needed to continue to deliver Interior's missions. Staffing declined during the past 4 years by 4,382, or 6.7 percent, from 2017 through 2020. Current staffing is expected to increase so that by the end of 2021, Interior staffing levels will be roughly where they were at the end of 2018.

With the 2022 budget, staffing is estimated to surpass 2017 staffing levels by 3.2 percent. As the Department works to rebuild its workforce, Interior will seek to recruit, hire, and train the next generation of talent that reflects the diversity and strength of the United States. Complementing our diverse workforce, the Department is committed to providing the tools critical for success across Interior.

Interior manages an infrastructure portfolio valued at more than \$330 billion, ranging from large dams and canals in the West to iconic national landmarks across the country. In total, the Department is responsible for roughly 43,000 buildings, 100,000 miles of road, and 80,000 structures. Operations, maintenance, recapitalization, and modernization of Interior's infrastructure are a significant part of annual cost requirements. The 2022 budget includes \$2.8 billion for operations, maintenance, repair, and construction of Interior facilities, an increase of \$241.8 million from the 2021 enacted level. This amount includes maintenance and construction across the Department, including water project construction, maintenance, and dam safety.

Much of Interior's workforce worked remotely during the pandemic, and bureaus and offices worked quickly to adapt and ensure that staff had the right equipment and bandwidth to telework effectively. These efforts increased demand on the Department's networks and heightened attention to the importance of a strong cybersecurity posture at Interior. The 2022 budget includes an increase of \$25.5 million to support the post-SolarWinds Department-wide cyber defense capability and address related gaps identified in specific bureaus.

Interior's central Financial and Business Management System (FBMS) requires modernization, and the budget requests an increase of \$5.0 million for the first year of a 2-year system infrastructure migration to prevent technical obsolescence. FBMS supports the administrative systems requirements of all Interior bureaus for core accounting, budget execution, acquisition, aspects of financial assistance, real and personal property management, fleet management, travel integration, enterprise information management, and reporting. The migration will modernize and transform Interior's administrative operations, strengthen the cybersecurity of federal networks and critical infrastructure, and implement security measures. As part of the modernization of FBMS, the 2022 budget includes an increase of \$4.0 million to support migration to improved cloud hosting with sufficient virtual in-memory servers needed to support the size and complexity of the Departmentwide FBMS system.

The 2022 budget includes a \$17.5 million increase to begin the next phase of the Office of Natural Resource Revenue's (ONRR's) ongoing IT Modernization effort of the Minerals Revenue Management Support System. The modernization is focused on the design, development, and deployment of the new systems and the eventual decommissioning of the legacy system. ONRR ensures that revenue from federal and Indian mineral leases is effectively, efficiently, and accurately collected, accounted for, analyzed, audited, and disbursed in a timely fashion to recipients. Revenue distributions, which totaled \$8.1 billion in 2020, benefit states, Tribes, individual Indian mineral royalty owners, and U.S. Treasury accounts. The modernization will improve the timeliness and accuracy of payments to fund recipients by reducing the need for manual processes.

The President believes we must use every lever at our disposal to meet the moment and make necessary progress. I firmly believe we have the opportunity of a lifetime to strengthen our country, protect our environment, and improve our way of life for generations to come.

I look forward to working with you to achieve these goals. Thank you again for having me. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO THE HONORABLE DEB HAALAND,
SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Questions Submitted by Representative Costa

Question 1. The advancement of the B.F. Sisk Safety of Dams Modification Project is critical for seismic safety and drought resiliency in the San Joaquin Valley. Where does the B.F. Sisk project fall on Reclamation's priority list of Safety of Dams projects?

Answer. The B.F. Sisk Dam represents an immediate, major funding need of the Dam Safety Program. A key component of the Central Valley Project, preconstruction and project formulation activities are planned for FY 2021, with construction activities scheduled to begin in fiscal year (FY) 2022.

Questions Submitted by Representative Lowenthal

Question 1. Thank you for the extensive work that the administration is doing to hear directly from both Members of Congress and communities impacted by oil and gas development. I believe one critical topic that should receive scrutiny as part of your leasing review is federal oil and gas bonding. Minimum bond amounts have not been increased since the Eisenhower administration, and taxpayers are often on the hook to clean up pollution and infrastructure left behind after oil and gas companies go bankrupt or simply ignore their responsibilities.

I know that the review is still being conducted, but I wanted to ask you if reforming oil and gas bonding and protecting communities from shouldering the financial burden of paying for clean-up is something that that Interior is reviewing during this time? Would Interior consider using its current authority to increase bond amount where necessary?

Answer. The Report on the Federal Oil and Gas Leasing Program, prepared in response to Executive Order 14008, was published by the Department in November 2021. The review includes a discussion of bonding practices and includes proposals to address deficiencies in those requirements.

Question 2. Many of the Obama monuments lack management plans and none of the CA Obama monuments have had management plans completed, including Mojave Trails National Monument, Sand-to-Snow National Monument, Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Monument. Does the DOI budget have line items for the CA plans, as well as the others listed below, and when does the Department anticipate work starting on the management plans?

- *California: Mojave Trails National Monument, Sand-to-Snow National Monument, Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Monument*
- *Nevada: Gold Butte National Monument, Basin and Range National Monument*
- *New Mexico: Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument*
- *Oregon: Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument (expansion)*
- *Utah: Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Bears Ears National Monument, Jurassic National Monument*

Answer. The President's Fiscal Year 2022 budget request includes funding to support National Monuments, National Conservation Areas and similar designations, but does not have a specific line item for monument management plans. The Department expects to continue to work on monument management planning efforts in accordance with their respective Presidential proclamations.

Questions Submitted by Representative Velázquez

Question 1. Secretary Haaland, your budget justification calls for \$57 million for coastal and marine conservation, representing a \$10 million increase from FY21. New York State, particularly New York City, the country's most densely populated metropolitan area, is disproportionately susceptible to coastal storm damage—including Interior assets such as parks and refuges.

Going forward with this renewed investment, how will the Department, along with other federal agency partners, take a more active role in preparedness and prevention to protect coastal communities like New York?

Answer. Climate change is a serious threat to the lands the Department manages, and to ecosystems, natural and cultural resources, and infrastructure. Protecting and restoring coastal wetlands and removing barriers to tidal exchange help mitigate storm flooding. Coastal features like sand dunes, seagrass beds, and barrier islands help reduce coastal erosion. It is important that our design and construction experts, transportation and visitor use planners, and natural and cultural resource managers have appropriate and relevant information available to foster the best possible decisions concerning the future of infrastructure, resources, and visitor experiences of our bureaus and for coastal assets, and we are working hard to do that. Over 100 climate change vulnerability assessments are available for selected resources in our national parks, and sea level rise projections are available for 118 coastal park units. We are taking a strategic approach to guide decisions regarding long-term investments for facility protection, adaptation, restoration following storm damage, or, when necessary, decommissioning and removal of assets.

In addition, the FWS is working collaboratively with local communities to provide pathways for habitat migration (e.g., removing roads, moving buildings and other infrastructure), to identify common long-term goals, and to define projects that achieve benefits for human-built environments and our precious natural resources. FWS voluntary habitat conservation programs, like the Coastal Program, provide technical and financial assistance to partners and coastal communities to build coastal resilience as well as provide benefits to coastal-dependent fish and wildlife populations. The Service is working to increase the capacity of the Coastal Program to work with partners to support habitat improvement projects, including in urban and rural coastal communities on Long Island.

Question 2. Secretary Haaland, the Department's budget includes an increase of \$7 million for the Fish and Wildlife Service Urban National Wildlife Refuges Program. The program connects urban youth to national wildlife refuges, fosters environmental education and hands-on conservation, and encourages community-based land stewardship; all great opportunities that many children in New York City are not often afforded. As of today, the Urban National Wildlife Refuges Program has no presence in New York City.

What are your recommendations to improve and expand the services this program provides to urban youth, especially in New York City?

Answer. In addition to providing habitat in direct support of wildlife species, the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program allows us to work with urban communities to foster awareness of nature and develop an informed and involved citizenry that will support, and benefit from, fish and wildlife conservation. Our important goals include to know and relate to the community; connect urban citizens with nature; build partnerships; be a community asset; ensure adequate long-term resources; provide equitable access; ensure visitors feel safe and welcome; and model sustainability.

Currently, the FWS has two successful urban partnerships in the New York City area in Yonkers, NY, and Elizabeth, NJ. In Yonkers, our partnership daylighted the Saw Mill River, which was once underground through downtown Yonkers. This created and restored small nature parks and trails in neighborhoods, established a sustainable farm and agriculture center downtown, and provided a ladder of diverse youth engagements from elementary to high school. Nearly 10 community partners are invested, and 50 local youth joined the partnership Green Team.

In Elizabeth, NJ, the partnership aims to connect and engage community residents through conservation-related events, youth employment opportunities, facilitation of environmental education in public schools, and implementation of restoration projects on Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in areas adjacent to the Elizabeth River and the River Trail, Peterstown Community Center, and Phil Rizzuto Park. Over 10 partners are invested, and 850 students engaged in community restoration, education and employment.

Since 2015, FWS with federal and corporate partners have provided more than \$364,000 through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grants to the Yonkers and Elizabeth Urban Wildlife Refuge Programs. We are eager to explore other opportunities to work with urban youth.

Question 3. Secretary Haaland, on August 2, 2018, the previous administration reversed the 2014 ban on the use of Neonicotinoids a group of toxic pesticides, on National Wildlife Refuges. Studies from the National Institute of Health, and numerous public health and environment experts, link neonics to the deterioration of bees, migratory birds, and various species protected under the Endangered Species Act. These studies also indicate that neonics exposure to humans may cause irreversible brain damage.

Given the adverse ecological and health effects of neonics, is your agency considering reinstating the 2014 DOI Secretarial Order to ban Neonicotinoids on National Wildlife Refuges? How can we work together to protect wildlife and public lands from these toxic pesticides?

Answer. Neonicotinoid pesticides have not been used in agricultural practices on national wildlife refuges since the phase out date, January 1, 2016. While the phase out requirement was rescinded by the previous administration in 2018, the FWS has determined that there is no need for neonicotinoid pesticide applications on refuge system lands, instead implementing the long-standing principals of integrated pest management to address pests and invasive species. IPM uses various approaches, including pest biology, environmental information, consensus building, and technology to solve pest problems while minimizing impacts to wildlife, public lands and American communities.

Questions Submitted by Representative Soto

Question 1. Secretary Haaland, last month the Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee held a hearing on my bill, the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act. That bill re-writes the Coral Reef Conservation Act and gives the Department of the Interior new authorities to carry out coral conservation. Can you tell us what types of coral conservation activities the Department carries out, and why it is important that the Department has the authority and funding it needs to do its coral work?

Answer. There are an estimated 8,500 sq. mi. of coral reefs in U.S. waters, and the Department has jurisdiction over 72 percent of the nation's coral reefs. Much of that is within the boundaries of the Pacific Marine National Monuments and within National Wildlife Refuges. Healthy coral reefs reduce incident wave energy and protect coastal areas and communities from flooding and erosion, provide important habitat for marine species, and support tourism and recreational industries, boosting local economies.

Several bureaus in the Department support coral reef conservation activities. The Office of Insular Affairs provides funding through the Coral Reef Initiative and Natural Resources Program to support the efforts of our insular area government partners to develop strategies and programs to manage coral reef systems. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works to manage and conserve coral reef systems under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act. Other authorities, such as the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, allow FWS to work with other agencies to protect reefs and associated wildlife outside of refuge boundaries. FWS collaborates with other federal, state, and non-governmental organizations on research and monitoring and provides funds and technical assistance through the Coastal Program, Coastal Wetland Grants, and other programs for a variety of coral reef work like reef restoration, coral transplantation, sediment reduction, and debris cleanup.

The U.S. Geological Survey maps, monitors, and models coral reefs, including off the coasts of Puerto Rico, Florida, Hawaii, Guam, and other Pacific islands. This work is largely undertaken by its Coastal and Marine Science Centers in St. Petersburg, FL and Santa Cruz, CA. Recent research has focused on coral reefs' role in coastal hazard protection, and quantifying coral growth processes to inform restoration efforts. Finally, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management partners with agencies, such as the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research and the USGS to conduct studies on deepwater corals and ensure these sensitive areas are avoided through science-driven mitigation and monitoring practices.

Question 2. Secretary Haaland, under the Trump administration, the West Indian manatee was downlisted from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act, a decision which I asked then-Secretary Zinke to overturn. Manatees are suffering from an Unusual Mortality Event due to seagrass die offs, boat strikes, habitat pollution, and more, and in the midst of climate change and a biodiversity crisis, this species needs more protections—not less. Is the Department planning to review the best available science to reevaluate this down listing decision?

Answer. The FWS uses the best available science to determine if a species fits the definition of endangered or threatened under the ESA. The ESA requires the FWS to review the status of listed species every five years to ensure that listed species have the appropriate level of protection under the ESA. The West Indian manatee was included in the FWS's Notice of Initiation of Status Reviews published on July 14, 2021. The review is ongoing, and the information gathered in that review will inform next steps on recovery and other actions for the manatee. It is important to note, however, that while the manatee is listed as a threatened species, it does not receive any diminished federal protections compared to those species listed as endangered. Threatened manatees are afforded all protections of the ESA and MMPA, including protected areas and conservation activities.

Question 3. Secretary Haaland, under the declared Unusual Mortality Event (UME), federal funds have been made available to investigate Manatee mortality, are you able to commit to working with Congress to ensure an adequate response is mounted to help protect and save the Manatees?

Answer. Yes. The FWS is actively engaged in an investigation into the root causes of this unusual mortality event so that we can better respond in the future. We are working closely with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and other partners to restore important habitats and helping to make sure that our partners have the resources that they need to adequately respond should this problem arise again next winter. We also are supporting efforts to rescue and

rehabilitate manatees through Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program. While these grants are not in direct response to the UME, this funding will support our partners in their response to this event and future events.

Most recently, FWS has worked with the FWC to approve a Temporary Field Response Station in cooperation with our landowner partner, Florida Power and Light, that will support UME response operations already underway in the central Indian River Lagoon, such as manatee rescues and limited field health assessments. FWC and FWS leadership also approved staff to conduct a short-term feeding trial.

On December 10, 2021, FWS and FWC hosted a joint briefing for staff for the Florida delegation and relevant authorizing and appropriations committees to provide an update on our manatee conservation efforts. We will continue to keep Congress updated on the response to this ongoing UME.

Question 4. Secretary Haaland, your Department is asking for a 20.9% increase for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are you able to ensure an appropriate portion of existing and future funds go to protecting Florida's waterways, reefs, and coasts?

Answer. The FWS operates 31 National Wildlife Refuges and three Ecological Services Field Offices in Florida, with many containing coastal and marine habitats. FWS's Ecological Services program works to protect and recover many listed and at-risk species, such as manatees, throughout the state. FWS federal assistance programs provide grants and cooperative agreements to support conservation of coastal-dependent fish, wildlife, and their habitats. Funds sought in the FY 2022 request will support the Service's Coastal Program to implement habitat protection and restoration projects that benefit coastal dependent fish and wildlife and communities. Since 2015, the Coastal Program has implemented 158 conservation projects in Florida.

Questions Submitted by Representative Cohen

Question 1. The Biden administration's budget requests an additional \$37 million for the Wild Horse and Burro Program, a program that the Interior Department, through the Bureau of Land Management, has long struggled with. A majority of the program's budget is currently being used to remove and warehouse horses in holding facilities, leading both to animal welfare concerns and a fiscal crisis. Historically, the agency has not prioritized fertility control as a viable option to manage horses on the range, instead utilizing removals. However, it has actually been shown that removals were causing an increase in population growth rates on the range rather than a decrease. Over the last few years, the BLM has pursued several attempts to surgically sterilize wild horses as a form of population control using an ovariectomy procedure that the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) has advised against due to risks of trauma and infection. Earlier this year, your Department signaled it would not move forward with a plan finalized during the Trump administration to ovariectomize wild horses in Utah. Rather than performing ovariectomies, the NAS recommended using fertility control vaccines, such as Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP), to most effectively manage populations.

You were strongly supportive of reforming the BLM's practices regarding the Wild Horse and Burro Program during your time in Congress. I was appreciative that you co-sponsored my amendment to the Interior appropriations bill that passed the House directing the BLM to use about 10% of its Wild Horse and Burro Program budget to administer humane fertility control. That provision was ultimately not included in the final spending bill last year, but, as Secretary, you have the authority to make humane fertility control vaccines a priority in order to reduce population growth in a safe, scientifically proven, and fiscally responsible way.

(a) What is your vision for how the Bureau of Land Management can move forward and best deal with its statutory mandate to manage and protect wild horses and burros, especially if Congress supplies an additional \$37 million toward this program?

(b) Can we count on the Interior Department to implement robust fertility control vaccine program to address this issue effectively and protect the health and well-being of America's wild horses and burros?

Answer. With herds doubling in size about every 4 years, we are committed to addressing the growing populations of wild horses and burros, keeping the animals healthy and humanely treated, and ensuring the lands are not degraded and left susceptible to increased fire risk. It is also important that we use the best husbandry and handling practices, as well as the best available science, in implementing a program. The increases requested in the President's Budget will

allow the Department, through the BLM, to better constrain the growth of animals on the range, including through the use of removals and humane fertility control treatments.

Question 2. A New York Times expose revealed that wild horses and burros are ending up at auctions and kill pens where they are destined for slaughter. These animals, which are federally protected from slaughter, were pulled from the range and adopted out through the Bureau of Land Management's "Adoption Incentive Program" where people are paid \$1,000 by the Federal Government to take a wild horse or burro. This is not the first time that BLM wild horses have been found at slaughter, yet the agency to date has not taken responsibility for these animals.

President Biden has a history of being against slaughtering horses in the past. And during your time in Congress, you were supportive of reforming the BLM's practices and approach to wild horse management.

(a) Would you be open to suspending the Adoption Incentive Program—pending a thorough investigation by the OIG—so that we can reassure the American public that we are not using taxpayer money to funnel these federally protected animals to an illegal slaughter?

(b) Would you be open to working with me to find long-term solutions—such as implementing robust fertility control—to address the root problem of roundups and removals that continue to plague the agency and is the reason why we have so many wild horses and burros in holding facilities and in need of adoption in the first place?

Answer. The BLM is committed to the health and safety of adopted wild horses and burros. Recently the BLM announced additional steps it is taking to secure the health and safety of adopted animals. These steps include additional compliance visits post-adoption, application of more scrutiny to potential adopters, increasing warnings to sale barns about the risks of illegally selling wild horses and burros, and certification by independent veterinarians of all title applications for wild horses and burros adopted through the Adoption Incentive Program.

The BLM continues to work with partners and other stakeholders to evaluate potential improvements to the Adoption Incentive Program and welcomes the opportunity to work with Congress to find long-term solutions.

Question 3. It has now been a little over a year since the U.S. Park Police and other law enforcement agencies violently cleared peaceful protesters from the area around Lafayette Square, right before President Trump strolled through the Square for a photo op at St. John's Church. Two weeks ago, on June 9, the Department of the Interior released a review of the actions of U.S. Park Police in and around Lafayette Square from May 29 through June 3 of 2020, leading up to and including the use of tear gas to clear protesters from Lafayette Square prior to President Trump's photo-op in St. John's Church.

The police use of force at Lafayette Square has been examined at several Congressional Committee hearings, including by this Committee last term. However, despite these hearings and the recent report, many unanswered questions remain, including one of the most important questions:

Who ordered the clearing to be so violent and why did they give that order?

Answer. The decision to clear Lafayette Square Park was a joint Secret Service/U.S. Park Police operational decision. The independent assessment conducted by the Department's Office of Inspector General found that the USPP had the authority and discretion to clear Lafayette Park and the surrounding areas on June 1, 2020. The evidence obtained did not support a finding that the USPP cleared the park to allow the President to survey the damage and walk to St. John's Church. Instead, the evidence showed that the USPP cleared the park to allow the contractor to safely install the anti-scale fencing in response to destruction of property and escalating violence occurring on May 30 and 31, 2020.

Question 4. You noted in your response to the OIG report that you are establishing a task force "to review and identify opportunities for improvement in our Bureaus' law enforcement programs." You also mention that Interior will "look comprehensively" at its body-worn cameras and use-of-force policies.

This Committee took a hard look at the body worn camera policies of Interior's law enforcement units and found them to be severely lacking. In particular, protections for basic civil rights are practically absent when compared to model policies.

(a) Is the task force working on improving the polices with an eye to accountability and civil rights?

Answer. The task force will work hard to identify meaningful paths to ensure appropriate policy and oversight are implemented and will do so through a lens focused on equity and utilizing evidence-based decision making. Along with members across the Department's law enforcement components, the task force includes experts from the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Civil Rights, the Office of Human Capital, and other relevant stakeholders. The Department will also seek diverse and objective perspectives on solutions for improvement and leverage opportunities to strengthen trust in our law enforcement programs.

(b) Is the task force looking at the use of force policies through the same lens?

Answer. Yes. The Department is committed to carrying out its mission with honor and integrity, and to fostering a culture of accountability.

Question 5. The June 9 report also let the Park Police off on a technicality. When officers announced a warning to protesters telling them to leave the Square that day, several officers interviewed for the report either did not hear or could not understand the messages. It stands to reason that many protestors in the 7-acre park also could not hear or understand them. It is pretty obvious why it should be policy that a crowd of that size receives clear, audible warnings so that everyone can leave calmly and safely. However, the report found that the Park Police's policy oddly only applies that rule to mass arrest situations. So, per the policy, Park Police were not in the wrong that day since there were not mass arrests. Fortunately, the NPS responded to the report by committing to rewrite the policy to correct this loophole. NPS provided a target date of September 1, 2021, to implement this new policy.

Can you please provide a status update of this policy?

Answer. Based upon the OIG report's recommendation, the United States Park Police are updating relevant policies, which are currently in their policy planning process. This process includes input and review of subject matter experts, comparison with contemporary policies throughout the profession, legal review, and in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement.

Question 6. During the events on June 1, 2020, the U.S. Park Police's authorized use of force was described to allow non-lethal use of force up to pepper balls, which should only be used "if protestors attempted to breach the bike-rack fencing and enter the park" and that tear gas would not be used. That meant that the U.S. Park Police were not equipped with gas masks. However, pepper balls were fired by BOP officers despite protestors not reaching the bike-rack fencing, perhaps due to a misinterpretation of events in the park and inability to communicate in live time with the U.S. Park Police. Additionally, the Metropolitan Police Department did decide to use tear gas on the crowd, causing not only protestors to be affected, but also officers from the U.S. Park Police.

What actions are being taken by the National Park Service to ensure that better live-time communication between multiple law enforcement entities can take place during planned operations such as this?

Answer. USPP is working toward improving its field communication procedures to better manage multiagency operations and to promote operational consistency among law enforcement organizations working jointly with the USPP.

Questions Submitted by Representative Trahan

Question 1. The Merrimack River flows through city after city in New Hampshire and Massachusetts—including diverse "Gateway Cities" like Lowell, Lawrence, and Haverhill. It's an incredibly important natural and historic treasure. It powered America's industrial revolution; it's a drinking water source; and it's a recreational asset. However, accessing the Merrimack River—this incredibly historic urban riverway—still remains a challenge in sections. I'd like to work with the Department on a strategy for connecting trails along the Merrimack—from Nashua to Newburyport. Is that something we can work together on?

Answer. I share your appreciation of the Merrimack River's natural and cultures resources and our commitment to provide recreation opportunities and engagement in river stewardship through the corridor and Interior sites at Lowell National Historical Park and the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge. We look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with you other Members of Congress to ensure that important assets like the Merrimack River are appropriately managed to meet conservation and recreation needs.

Question 2. I'd like to thank the Department for including \$27 million in the Park Service's budget request—under the Legacy Restoration Fund—for Minute Man National Historical Park as well as \$1 million for the Park in the LWCF account.

In 2025, we will mark the 250th anniversary of the “shot heard round the world.” But before we get there, it is vital for the Park to have the resources it needs to address its deferred maintenance backlog—from improvements to the Battle Road and North Bridge trails to the numerous needs of 18th century structures facing Battle Road. So, I greatly appreciate Minute Man's inclusion in the budget request. Is the Department able to provide a fact sheet on the LWCF project at the Park?

Answer. The FY 2022 budget requests \$250,000 for an acquisition project at Minute Man National Historical Park. The project list and project data sheets are public documents and can be found here: DOI Great American Outdoors Act landing page: <https://www.doi.gov/budget/gaoa>.

Question 3. Please consider this an open invitation to come up to the Third Congressional District of Massachusetts and visit some of our public land treasures: Minute Man and Lowell National Historical Park; Great Meadows, Assabet and Oxbow national wildlife refuges; or our Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers—the SuAsCo and the recently designated Nashua.

Answer. Your invitation is noted and appreciated.

Questions Submitted by Representative McClintock

Question 1. After considering some 6,500 public comments, the Trump administration issued a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to raise Shasta Dam by 18.5 feet. This long overdue proposal would store enough water to support more than 3 million Californians annually, allowing for storage in wet years to be used in dry years such as the one we're currently suffering. Will you commit to moving forward with a Shasta Dam raise?

Answer. The Administration is committed to looking at all of the tools available to address drought resiliency in western states, including opportunities to address storage issues, where appropriate. Addressing infrastructure needs is important to this effort. It is critical that we develop additional tools that will ensure local communities are able to meet the challenges associated with a variable water supply.

Question 2. The budget request includes no funding for new water storage capacity despite the West's severe drought conditions. How can the Administration expect to address the Western water crisis without proposing any funding for long-term water storage?

Answer. The Administration is committed to looking at all of the tools available to address drought resiliency in western states, including opportunities to address storage issues, where appropriate. Reclamation is continuing to work on all enacted storage projects and is committed to supporting projects with state and Tribal partners and stakeholders. It is critically important that we develop additional tools that will ensure local communities are able to meet the challenges associated with a variable water supply.

Question 3. Will the Administration support full reauthorization of the WIIN Act?

Answer. We are looking at all of the authorities that we have, including the expiring WIIN Act authorities, in order to maximize our response to the ongoing effects of drought. We look forward to a continuing discussion with Congress on this issue.

Question 4. I've heard from a number of constituents upset with the reservation system for Yosemite National Park. The National Park Service is requiring reservations to enter the park through September 30, citing COVID, despite the fact that California is now fully reopened and the science that demonstrates that COVID does not spread outdoors. Will you commit to ending the reservation system and restoring full public access to the park?

Answer. The day-use reservation system was a temporary system created to address safety and public health concerns resulting from the COVID pandemic and are no longer required to drive into the park.

Question 5. The proposed budget claims to prioritize wildland fire risk reduction. However, earlier this year the Biden administration endorsed the “Protecting America's Wilderness and Public Lands Act,” which would add 1.5 million new acres of wilderness. Over the past 10 years, nearly 7 million acres of wilderness and

wilderness study areas have burned in catastrophic wildfires and many jump over onto other federal, state, and private lands where they cause even more destruction.

How can this Administration claim to be serious about wildland fire management when you are endorsing policies that tie the hands of federal land managers and prevent the necessary treatments our public lands so desperately need?

Answer. The Administration's FY 2022 budget request makes a significant down payment on increasing science-based forest and wildland restoration, including hazardous-fuels reduction and burned-area restoration. It is increasingly clear that climate change and drought are driving more severe fires all year long. While wildland fire suppression remains a core function, it is important that we create greater resiliency in our forests through restoration and management of our forests, rangelands, and other lands.

Question 6. Does the Administration intend to reverse the Council on Environmental Quality's 2020 National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) reforms? NEPA has for decades stifled the ability of our federal agencies to proactively manage their lands. With expedited authority, land managers can carry out management projects before a catastrophic wildfire breaks out, and those fires emit so much carbon dioxide and pollution so as to make a complete mockery of our environmental laws. If the goal of the Administration is to address climate change, I would think that it would want to streamline the regulatory burdens caused by NEPA.

Answer. The Council on Environmental Quality is the lead for all matters related to NEPA, and we defer to CEQ for a response to questions related to that authority.

Question 7. Last year, my home state of California experienced our most catastrophic fire season on record. Of the over 10 million acres that burned nationwide, 40 percent of those lands were in California and we had 1 million acres burn in just a single day. These fires killed 33 people and destroyed more than 10,000 structures. Despite this unprecedented scale of devastation, DOI's budget proposes increasing the amount of land you treat annually by only 360,000 acres.

Secretary Haaland, with all due respect, this is a matter of life and death in my district and DOI needs to increase its preventative work 10-fold, not by the current amount you propose. Will you commit to providing the Committee with a new, more aggressive plan to ramp up the treatments your agency is doing on our public lands in the next 30 days?

Answer. The Biden administration recognizes the urgency of the situation and is moving quickly to address it. The Administration's FY 2022 budget request makes a significant down payment on increasing science-based forest and wildland restoration, including hazardous-fuels reduction and burned-area restoration. It is increasingly clear that climate change and drought are driving more severe fires all year long. While wildland fire suppression remains a core function, it is important that we create greater resiliency in our forests through restoration and management of our forests, rangelands, and other lands.

Questions Submitted by Representative González-Colón

Question 1. The Department of the Interior plays a crucial role in Puerto Rico's tourism and recreation economy. The National Park Service administers the San Juan National Historic Site, which consists of the oldest Spanish fortification system in the United States and is among our most iconic and visited destinations on the Island. In 2019, the park was visited by almost 1.2 million people, who spent an estimated \$71.2 million in our local economy. However, as you may imagine, these numbers took a substantial hit last year due to the pandemic.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also administers five National Wildlife Refuges across Puerto Rico: the Desecheo, Laguna Cartagena, Cabo Rojo, Culebra, and Vieques National Wildlife Refuges. In 2018, they hosted nearly 338,000 visitors. Before the impact of Hurricane Maria in 2017, visitation at these refuges exceeded a half million.

What strategies does the Department of the Interior's proposed budget include to recover and improve visitation levels at national parks and public lands across the country, and thus help promote and support tourism and the local economies of gateway communities?

Answer. The National Park Service has implemented a number of initiatives to help park visitors thoughtfully plan their visits to parks based on their desired experiences and activities, including sharing information via park websites,

Recreation.gov, and the new NPS mobile app. The agency promotes sites that may not be as well-known through campaigns and programs such as Plan Like a Park Ranger, Every Kid Outdoors, the National Scenic Byways Program, and the National Heritage Areas Program. The NPS works with partners to promote parks and facilitate visitation to its units and affiliated areas; many local and state tourism offices have been featuring parks extensively in their marketing and promotion, and we work with them to include messaging that encourages stewardship, such as Leave No Trace and Recreate Responsibly. The tourism sector is a key partner in the promotion of national parks due to the expertise tourism offices and private companies have in identifying likely market segments and delivering promotional messaging that encourages travelers to choose to visit parks.

Question 2. I believe that addressing the deferred maintenance backlog at our national parks and public lands should be part of any strategy to improve visitor access and support communities across the country that rely on park tourism.

In Fiscal Year 2018, the San Juan National Historic had a deferred maintenance backlog of over \$40.1 million—and I fear it may have gotten substantially higher since then. Our five National Wildlife Refuges had a combined backlog of over \$5.5 million as of February of last year.

Yet, despite these numbers, the Department of the Interior has so far only selected one deferred maintenance project in Puerto Rico to receive funding under the Great American Outdoors Act, and that was for Fiscal Year 2021. The Department did not include any projects on the Island for Fiscal Year 2022.

I am concerned that Puerto Rico will not get its fair share of funding available to address the deferred maintenance backlog at the San Juan National Historic Site and our National Wildlife Refuges.

(a) Can I get your commitment that this will not be the case and that the Department will properly consider and review its deferred maintenance needs in Puerto Rico when making future selections?

Answer. Yes, the effective implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act is one of the Department's highest priorities. It is important that each bureau work from established criteria, consistent with the Act, to identify needs and prioritize use of these funds and that DOI bureaus are making strategic investments utilizing all available sources of infrastructure funding at their disposal. We are committed to ensuring that the process for prioritizing these actions is carried out in an objective way.

(b) What efforts will the Department pursue to ensure funding under the Great American Outdoors is not just concentrated on a few projects across a few states? What are the criteria the Department takes into consideration when selecting projects?

Answer. We are prioritizing GAOA funds for larger projects that generally exceed the capabilities of other fund sources, with the goal of making the largest impact in areas with the highest priority deferred maintenance while also considering geographic distribution relative to the NPS backlog. Within the National Park Service alone, we have obligated over \$600 million in GAOA funds since March 2021. Projects proposed for 2022 funding have been sent to Congress as part of the regular budget process and will be included in the Department's budget request.

Question 3. The FY 2022 budget for the National Park Service includes \$3 billion for the Operation of the National Park System, an increase of approximately \$289 million from the enacted level. While most System units would see an increase in funding, I am concerned that the San Juan National Historic Site is one of the few that would essentially receive flat funding, despite the obvious needs at the site.

Can the Department provide an explanation as to why the San Juan National Historic Site would not receive an increase under the proposed budget?

Answer. The FY 2022 request for San Juan NHS is \$3,738,000, which includes an increase of \$93,000 for fixed costs. Additionally, the overall FY 2022 requested increase includes additional funding for natural resource projects and climate vulnerability assessments, which would be eligible to address issues at parks like San Juan NHS.

Question 4. The Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuge headquarters were damaged by the 2017 hurricanes and last year's earthquakes in southwestern Puerto Rico. It is my understanding that the building will need to be demolished.

Can the Department provide the Committee an update on the status of these efforts, including how much funding is needed to rebuild the site and any efforts the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is pursuing to identify the necessary resources to cover these costs?

Answer. The FWS is currently working to modify an existing contract for the demolition and site cleanup of the existing visitor center and office at Caho Rojo NWR. We expect the existing building will be removed in FY 2022. Construction of the visitor center and office is the number one priority in the FWS's Southeast Region. FWS estimates that the design and construction of the new facilities to be around \$8 million. Potential funding sources include the Great American Outdoors Act and the agency's annual Construction and Deferred Maintenance appropriations.

Question 5. In Fiscal Year 2021, the National Park Service selected the stabilization of the San Fernando Bastion at the San Juan National Historic Site as one of the priority deferred maintenance projects to receive funding under the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund established by the Great American Outdoors Act. Planned funding for the project was estimated at \$8,211,934.

Can you provide the Committee the latest status of this project, including the estimated completion date?

Answer. The NPS entered an Inter-Agency Agreement (IAA) with the Jacksonville District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) to update the construction documents, solicit and award the construction contract, and provide construction oversight. The COE requested additional time to revise construction documents originally completed in 2017 to validate the accuracy after Hurricanes Irma and Maria and to meet COE standards before going to solicitation. The proposed schedule submitted by the COE shifts the COE construction award from third quarter award in fiscal year 2022 to third quarter of 2023 with project completion in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024.

Question 6. In 2016, the San Juan National Historic Site was visited by 1,456,553 people. That number dropped to 1,188,780 in 2017 and 910,405 in 2018, undoubtedly due to the impact of the 2017 hurricane season. Visitation numbers somewhat recovered in 2019, with 1,197,345 visiting the site. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown in Puerto Rico, the number of visitors at the San Juan National Historic Site dropped to a historic low of 357,100 in 2020.

(a) What efforts or strategies does the National Park Service plan to pursue to increase the number of visitors at the San Juan National Historic Site, to both pre-COVID and pre-hurricane levels, and thus support Puerto Rico's tourism and outdoor recreation economy?

Answer. Park visitation has gradually increased in 2021. The NPS is currently supporting Puerto Rico's tourism and outdoor recreation economy by providing extensions to commercial operators in the park at no additional expense through the end of 2021, providing alternative space for the farmers market and outdoor exercise classes to continue operations, and implementing a temporary art exhibition to allow local artists to showcase their art inside the forts. We will continue to support the local economy and partner with others to promote responsible recreation and education of this national park and UNESCO World Heritage Site.

(b) Have the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service been in touch with tourism authorities in Puerto Rico and the Municipality of San Juan to promote visitation at the site?

Answer. Yes. The park enjoys ongoing, productive relationships with the office of Tourism and the Office of the Mayor of San Juan. The park is in constant communication with the Office of the First Lady of the Municipality of San Juan; Architect Kirsten Gonzalez, the Director of the Historic Urban Development Center of Old San Juan; the Administrator of La Fortaleza; the Governor's Mansion; and Mrs. Carmen Salgado, ensuring we move forward as a unified front. In July, San Juan National Historic Site officials met with Alejandro Caicedo-Chief Development Officer-Air, Maritime and Hospitality Development at Puerto Rico Tourism Company and Mrs. Tamara Bird, consultant, regarding the protocols and availability of providing tours and accommodation for tour operators and passengers arriving to the historic site by a cruise ship that this month began bi-weekly visits

to the island. The forts, specifically Fort San Felipe del Morro, continue to be the most profiled tourism attractions on the island.

Question 7. How much funding does Puerto Rico currently have available under the State side of the Land and Water Conservation (LWCF) Program? How much projects have been funded on the Island since the program's authorization? How many grant projects has Puerto Rico submitted under the State side of the LWCF Program since 2014, and how much of those have been completed?

Answer. Approximately \$8 million is currently allocated and available to Puerto Rico for the Stateside LWCF Grant Program. States have three years to put forward a complete application and project once they are allocated funding. The total number of projects allocated Stateside funding for Puerto Rico is 177. It would take additional time to research the total number of projects completed or current status. Due to the impacts of recent storms, hurricanes, and earthquakes, Puerto Rico has been unable to provide full updates. Since 2014, Puerto Rico has submitted four LWCF Stateside Grant projects. Those grants, which were awarded, plus three others, have now lapsed with no funds drawn to implement projects. Some of these projects were provided extensions, as requested. NPS has been unable to ascertain from Puerto Rico what work was completed or the status of the recreation park sites themselves, due to storm and earthquake impacts.

Question 8. What is the current cost of the deferred maintenance backlog at the San Juan National Historic Site? What efforts is the National Park Service pursuing to address it?

Answer. The park's deferred maintenance backlog is \$40 million. Due to the location, age, and variety of assets entrusted to the Department, as well as the nature of deferred maintenance and repair, precise cost estimates cannot be determined prior to developing the final design and specifications for any work. The vast majority of the park's deferred maintenance is in its historic fortification walls and masonry. The park is actively engaged in the continued development of a masonry preservation program through a mix of youth crews, contract labor, and professional conservation trade craft. The park has advanced various proposals to address the needs of San Juan National Historic Site across a variety of funding sources.

Question 9. The five National Wildlife Refuges are crucial to Puerto Rico's economy. This is especially true in Vieques and Culebra, where the National Wildlife Refuges cover a large portion of the island-municipalities and support tourism.

(a) What efforts has the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge pursued to strengthen community relations in Vieques and Culebra and support their economies?

Answer. Both refuges are working to maintain and strengthen relationships with the communities and governments of each island municipality. Vieques NWR participates actively in municipal committees and efforts, including Disaster Relief Operations, the Covid-19 Task Force, and the Composting Program. Over 35 special use permits have been issued to operators of wildlife-related small businesses on and adjacent to the Vieques refuge for birdwatching, snorkeling, paddleboarding, and other activities. This, together with operators of transport companies, have resulted in the creation of an estimated 250 jobs on Vieques.

The FWS recently hired a new employee stationed at Culebra NWR that will help to enhance relationships with the community. That refuge is also working closely with Para La Naturaleza and the municipality in developing plans for the restoration of the Culebrita lighthouse, as well as collaborating to improve access, including with trails and the potential for future boat access. These efforts will provide additional tourism opportunities on Culebra. Culebra NWR has a number of ongoing biological studies through cooperative agreements with nongovernmental organizations.

In addition, Culebra and Vieques NWRs have a long history of active participation in the Youth Conservation Corps program, employing 5–10 community youth annually for the past 15–20 years.

(b) What actions does the Department intend to take to help DOD and local authorities expedite the cleanup process in the Vieques and Culebra National Wildlife Refuges?

Answer. FWS participates in the Vieques Federal Facilities Team and the Culebra Technical Project Committee, which includes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Navy, and the Commonwealth. We actively review documents related to the cleanup, participate in Team meetings, and participate in community Restoration Advisory Board meetings. For both refuges, FWS prioritizes areas for cleanup, based on public interest in the areas and the natural resources present.

Vieques NWR has assisted the Navy with equipment and personnel upon request and cooperates in providing sites needed for locating equipment used to accelerate the cleanup.

(c) Please describe any efforts the Department is pursuing, or intends to pursue, to increase the number of visitations and promote outdoor recreation at the National Wildlife Refuges in Puerto Rico, including any efforts or collaborations with tourism authorities and the surrounding municipalities.

Answer. Funding has been obtained for projects to improve access and promote outdoor activities at Puerto Rico's refuges. Projects include repair of the Caho Rojo bike trail; constructing a boardwalk for wildlife observation at Laguna Cartagena NWR; building an observation platform at the Vieques NWR, which is being completed in collaboration with a local nonprofit organization; and repairing roads on Vieques NWR that have improved access to refuge beaches and gazebos/kiosks on popular refuge beaches. Moreover, FWS routinely collaborates with municipal and Commonwealth agencies and tourism entities. Pre-pandemic involvement included providing guided tours and talks, participating in educational fairs and activities, and visiting schools and other organized groups. Many of these activities have continued virtually during the pandemic. We these types of activities will occur more frequently as conditions allow.

Question 10. What is the current cost of the deferred maintenance backlog at each of the five National Wildlife Refuges in Puerto Rico, and at any other U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service site or facility on the Island? What efforts is the Department pursuing to address it?

Answer. The deferred maintenance backlog for national wildlife refuges in Puerto Rico totals more than \$4.8 million. The FWS is updating its deferred maintenance assessment for these facilities. Deferred maintenance projects at these facilities will be considered for funding through the annual budgeting process.

Question 11. Does the Department carry out any programs or engagement efforts with Minority-serving Institutions in Puerto Rico to train or recruit new employees for the Department, particularly for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service?

Answer. San Juan NHS implements recruitment efforts and strategies that provide the opportunity for local hiring, which increase trust and financial acuity. Currently, 99% of the park staff is from Puerto Rico, including the park's superintendent. In addition, the park has competitive recruitment programs in place that are available to the residents of Puerto Rico through partners such as the American Conservation Experience Youth Corp for its Mason Apprentice Program, the Youth Conservation Corps, the Franklin's Promise Coalition, and a student development program with the Universidad Politecnica de Puerto Rico for students in the Master Masons in Historic Preservation program.

FWS has participated in outreach events that serve Hispanic communities to share information on the bureau's mission, programs, and its opportunities. Recent events included participation at the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) Conference and the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) Conference. FWS routinely communicates with representatives of 17 colleges and universities in Puerto Rico to share information on all open FWS vacancies on USAJOBS and tips on applying for these opportunities. Additionally, FWS is collaborating with several conservation organizations to recruit undergraduate rising seniors and graduate students for more than 100 Directorate Fellowship Program (DFP) opportunities nationwide. FWS expects three projects for the 2022 DFP cohort to be in Puerto Rico. One project will focus on the recovery of listed species, including the Puerto Rican parrot, and two other fellowships will be in Culebra and Vieques.

Finally, the FWS South Atlantic-Gulf Region's Gateway Initiative fosters a welcoming culture and connectedness for students and new employees through mentorships and exposure to a wide array of FWS programs and people. The Initiative also is developing innovative tools to connecting students who have successfully completed FWS internship programs with hiring officials to capitalize on the direct hiring authority afforded by the DFP and Pathways Program.

Question 12. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was a pioneer in establishing the first official program to restore native shade coffee plantations in Puerto Rico, helping rural communities, wildlife species, and the Island's economy.

(a) Can you provide us with a report on the history, accomplishments, and challenges of this effort?

Answer. Shade-grown coffee plantations are stable agro-ecosystems that provide habitat, nesting, and feeding for many native, endemic, threatened, endangered and migratory species. They serve as ecological corridors that create buffer zones around natural reserves and provide a smooth transition between urban and natural areas. Shade-grown coffee practices also produce better-quality coffee beans, use fewer herbicides and lesser amounts of fertilizers, increase the life span for the coffee trees, and result in cooler field temperature that helps when collecting coffee.

In 1999, FWS, in collaboration with local nongovernmental organizations, began working through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program to restore shade-grown coffee plantations in the northcentral coffee region of Puerto Rico. In 2009, FWS formalized a partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and private landowners to expand the initiative throughout the island. Throughout this partnership, FWS has provided technical assistance to private landowners, coordinated tree delivery, demonstrated practices in the field, evaluated the implemented practices through research, and promoted education and outreach.

Since its inception, the initiative has restored more than 5,000 acres, planted more than 150,000 shade trees, and benefited approximately 800 properties and landowners in Puerto Rico. The efforts continue to thrive across the island as a result of the commitment of the partners and despite several challenges, including the funding constraints, lack of involvement of the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture, and the need of local regulations to institutionally promote shade-grown coffee plantations over sun-cultivated coffee.

(b) Does the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intend to continue funding shade coffee restoration projects in Puerto Rico through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program? If so, what are the needs to fully implement this?

Answer. FWS plans to continue funding these projects since they are important restoration initiatives benefiting trust species, sustainable agriculture, and private landowners. We recognize the importance of maintaining a strong partnership with the NRCS and local NGOs as the initiative continues, as well as increasing the support from Commonwealth agencies to develop or modify regulations for promoting shade-grown coffee. It is also important to work with partners that may promote shade-grown coffee brands and special eco-friendly and quality certifications to increase its market value and export potential.

Question 13. One of the marine mammal species that falls under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's jurisdiction is the West Indian manatee. We've recently seen an increase in the number of manatee deaths in Florida. Moreover, in Puerto Rico, so far this year seven manatees have been killed due to vessel impacts. In fact, it is estimated that 20% of all manatee deaths reported on the Island may be due to watercraft collisions.

Can you discuss some of the efforts the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently pursuing to address these trends and protect the West Indian manatee population, particularly in Puerto Rico and Florida? Does the Service believe its current authorities are sufficient to carry out this work, or would you need additional legislation or tools to strengthen these efforts?

Answer. In Puerto Rico, like in Florida, boat strikes are the leading human-related cause of death to manatees. In Florida, key tools to address boat strikes are manatee protection areas, speed zones, and enforcement. We are looking for ways to use such tools with our partners in Puerto Rico, where there is a lack of adequate in-water speed zone regulations and enforcement. The Service is currently working to increase boater awareness of manatees and the dangers presented by boats through signs placed in waterways.

We are also supporting efforts to rescue and rehabilitate manatees injured by watercraft collisions through our Prescott Grant program. Over the past two years, the Service provided nearly \$300,000 under the Prescott Grant program to the Caribbean Stranding Network to support their work with sick and injured Antillean manatees.

As for the Unusual Mortality Event (UME) in Florida, the Service is actively engaged in an investigation into the root causes of these mortalities so that we can better respond in the future. We also are working closely with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and other partners to restore important habitats and helping to make sure that our partners have the resources that they need to adequately respond this winter.

Question 14. Last year, Congress included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260) my legislation to make Puerto Rico an eligible applicant location for the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Grants and Drought Resiliency Project Grants.

What outreach efforts, if any, has the Bureau of Reclamation carried out to date to inform appropriate stakeholders in Puerto Rico about WaterSMART Grants and any other Reclamation funding opportunities under 42 U.S.C. 10364 that are now available to eligible applicants on the Island? If no outreach has been conducted yet, does the Bureau of Reclamation plan to engage with stakeholders in Puerto Rico to inform them about these funding opportunities?

Answer. As a first step, Reclamation revised WaterSMART funding opportunities to ensure that the documents clearly state that entities located in Puerto Rico are eligible to apply for funding. Reclamation has also planned a series of webinars to explain each funding opportunity to applicants. Information on the WaterSMART program is available at: <https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/weeg/#>.

Questions Submitted by Representative Stauber

Question 1. When serving in the House, you co-sponsored H.R. 5598, which arbitrarily withdraws more than 234,000 acres of the Superior National Forest from mining. This targets a project that has signed a project-labor agreement with the Iron Range Building Trades, has committed to 21st-century mining practices that are lauded by environmental groups such as dry-stack tailing, and is a \$1.7 billion private investment in an area desperate for economic development. Can you commit to not prejudging any project, even if you co-sponsored legislation that would prejudice a project when serving in the House?

Answer. Yes.

Questions Submitted by Representative Moore

Question 1. There have been long-standing concerns that the Antiquities Act allows land management decisions to be made behind closed doors without sufficient input or consultation. To combat this narrative, will you release your monument report to the public?

Answer. Actions carried out pursuant to the Antiquities Act are the prerogative of the President. President Biden restored the protections for three monuments that were significantly cut back in the previous administration in October 2021. As part of the review carried out by Secretary Haaland, Biden administration leaders met with Members of Congress, state and local government officials, representatives of Tribal Nations, and a wide range of stakeholders. The Secretary visited Utah to directly meet with local residents and tour the area.

Question 2. The Department's FY22 Great American Outdoors Act project list earmarks nearly \$220 million of the roughly \$1.3 billion for program administration. This is the exact same amount of the total backlog for National Park units in the entire state of Utah. Why is the Department spending as much as my entire state's backlog on administrative overhead instead of directing these precious funds toward actual maintenance?

Answer. As noted in the NPS budget justification, an estimated 3 percent of the NPS allocation of Legacy Restoration Fund dollars received in FY 2021 through FY 2025 will be requested to fund program administration through the life of the program until the last project is closed out. Any excess funds will be reallocated to projects in the outyears of the program. In FY 2022, \$138 million will be used to complete planning and compliance activities for current and future LRF projects, \$38 million will be used to support and oversee planning and execution, and \$44 million will be used to provide professional NPS project management and contracting services for current and future projects throughout the typical three to five-year construction cycle.

Question 3. The budget only proposes a paltry \$11 million in GAOA funding throughout the entire state of Utah, despite the fact that our state contributed nearly \$93 million in energy revenues last year. What will you do to ensure that, moving forward, funds are divided more proportionally to states that actually contribute into the National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund and have significant backlogs?

Answer. Within the NPS, which is allocated 70 percent of the annual funding from the Act, projects address significant deferred maintenance by targeting NPS's priority assets. Deferred maintenance needs are not spread evenly across park units. Priority projects generally are those that would address a high percentage of deferred maintenance needs and are large scale, generally exceeding the capacity of other fund sources. Over the next 5 years, the NPS plans to invest over \$60 million from existing fund sources into parks throughout the State of Utah for critical infrastructure needs, and we are evaluating our remaining larger infrastructure needs in Utah park units for funding through the LRF or other fund sources. Funding from GAOA-LRF also frees up money from other fund sources like Line Item Construction and Cyclic Maintenance funds to address infrastructure needs and other projects in Utah parks.

Question 4. Arches National Park in my state is on track to have its busiest year ever. The increase in visitation has caused the park to close its gates over 80 times so far in 2021. But Arches has not received any Great American Outdoors Act funding, despite its enormous popularity and roughly \$24 million in deferred maintenance. How is it possible that one of the busiest National Parks in the country received \$0 out of \$1.3 billion? What is your Administration's plan to keep parks like Arches open to the public if you won't devote any money to recreational asset maintenance in these iconic places?

Answer. As noted in the previous response, within the NPS, projects address significant deferred maintenance by targeting NPS's priority assets. Deferred maintenance needs are not spread evenly across park units. Priority projects generally are those that would address a high percentage of deferred maintenance needs and are large scale, generally exceeding the capacity of other fund sources. Over the next 5 years, the NPS plans to invest over \$60 million from existing fund sources into parks throughout the State of Utah for critical infrastructure needs, and we are evaluating our remaining larger infrastructure needs in Utah park units for funding through the LRF or other fund sources. Funding from GAOA-LRF also frees up money from other fund sources like Line Item Construction and Cyclic Maintenance funds to address infrastructure needs and other projects in Utah parks.

Question 5. When President Trump ordered his review of national monuments, he outlined specific criteria for Secretary Zinke to evaluate, including the legality of the original designation under the Antiquities Act of 1906. To what extent did you evaluate whether Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante are consistent with the Antiquities Act's requirements that national monuments be "confined to the smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected"?

Answer. Actions carried out pursuant to the Antiquities Act are the prerogative of the President. President Biden issued his proclamation restoring the boundaries and protections for the three monuments that were significantly cut back by the previous administration in October 2021.

Question 6. In an article in the Salt Lake Tribune earlier this year, Clark Tenakhongva, co-chair of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Council, was quoted as stating: "My real concern is the continual destruction of the sites, vandalism at the sites. Over the past five years, I would say, it seems like there's more people coming once it was exposed as a national monument, particularly people from Utah. The federal dollars just haven't come down to really secure the area the way it should be protected, with resources that should be handed down by the federal government." Why should Bears Ears be enlarged when resources are already stretched so thin and the designation as a monument has increased foot traffic and vandalism in the area?

Answer. Actions carried out pursuant to the Antiquities Act are the prerogative of the President. President Biden issued his proclamation restoring the boundaries and protections for the three monuments that were significantly cut back by the previous administration in October 2021. The Department's budget included significant funding increases to support national monument and conservation area management and operations.

Question 7. Seventy percent of all GAOA money, or roughly \$6.5 billion, will be provided to the National Park Service to reduce its deferred maintenance backlog over a 5-year period. What percentage of the backlog should we expect to be completed by the end of FY 22? How much deferred maintenance do you estimate the National Park Service will have at the end of this 5-year special funding period?

Answer. In the first two years of the LRF program, an estimated \$1.6 billion in LRF funding will be directed toward deferred maintenance needs, a significant portion of the bureau's backlog. NPS is committed to making sustainable investments

through the LRF in order to avoid cycles of rehabilitation, deterioration, and disrepair. Projects that offer NPS an opportunity to reduce long range life-cycle costs receive special consideration in the project selection process.

Questions Submitted by Representative Herrell

Question 1. Lesser prairie chicken numbers have increased from roughly 15,000 birds in 2013 to over 34,000 birds in 2020. This rebound has largely been due to proactive voluntary conservation efforts that have raised over \$60 million to conserve the bird. Last month, the Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it is proposing to list the bird as endangered in Texas and New Mexico despite these strong efforts. I am concerned that this listing will cause undue economic harm on those who are doing the most to save the bird and will dissuade private investment in conservation.

(a) Please explain your rationale in moving to list this species when population numbers are increasing, and conservation efforts and funding are robust?

Answer. FWS considered both population trends and conservation efforts in making its listing determination. The voluntary efforts that are being carried out are significant and this work by the states and our partners is important in the conservation of the bird. But the scientific review carried out by the FWS indicates that challenges remain and that these efforts have not fully kept pace with the threats facing the lesser prairie-chicken. A detailed summary of these analyses and FWS's rationale is available in the June 1, 2021, proposed rule that published in the Federal Register: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/06/01/2021-11442/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-lesser-prairie-chicken-threatened-status-with-section>.

(b) Do you plan to do a full economic analysis before listing the species and before designating critical habitat?

Answer. The statutory provisions of the ESA do not allow the FWS to consider economics when analyzing the status of a species and the threats it faces. While economics are considered when critical habitat designations are developed, the FWS did not propose critical habitat concurrent with the proposed listing of the two Distinct Population Segments. We will always follow the laws enacted by Congress as implement the ESA.

Question 2. In addition to the leasing moratorium, the Department also issued Secretarial Order 3395, which suspended the delegated authority provided to Bureau offices to approve permits and other authorization for energy and mineral development on federal lands. The Committee has received feedback from stakeholders indicating that this has resulted in delays in the permitting process, causing uncertainty for operators in my District. Although the Department rescinded this Order, the Secretary sent a subsequent memorandum to Bureau offices indicating they should continue to send APDs and other authorizations to DC for final approval. This raises concerns about future delays in permitting operators on federal lands.

(a) The APD reports on the BLM website show APD approvals for February and March combined, and separate reports for April and May. January appears to be missing and the combined February and March report covers the time period during which the suspension was in place. This lack of data and transparency prevents the Committee from being able to properly evaluate the backlog created by the suspension policy. Will the Department release this missing data and monthly APD reports going forward?

(b) The backlog of pending permits is severe. According to the Department, 3,666 permits were pending in the State of New Mexico at the end of May. While this is a slight improvement from the 4,200 pending permits at the end of March, it appears that the suspension policy likely contributed to this backlog. Is the Department still requiring BLM state offices to send APDs and other authorizations typically handled by BLM State offices to DC for approval? Can you commit to addressing this backlog in the coming months?

Answer. The BLM is committed to providing transparent and accessible APO data. In February 2021, the BLM announced it would update its Oil and Gas Statistics webpage to feature information on APDs. Because the BLM was completing its long-planned transition to the AFMSS II database, the monthly APDs updates were delayed and published to the website beginning in April. The BLM approved 362 APDs in January 2021, 83 in February, and 441 in March. The Secretarial Order that temporarily elevated review of permitting activities expired

on March 21, 2021. The BLM's career officials continue to process APDs and related sundry activities on valid, existing leases in a timely manner.

Questions Submitted by Representative Bentz

Question 1. In January, the last administration published a rule to right size the critical habitat designated for the Northern Spotted Owl in 2012. The 2012 Critical Habitat designation was devastating for local economies resulting in the annual loss of an estimated \$100 million in Gross Domestic Product, \$66 million in worker earnings, and more than 1,200 jobs. In April, the Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it would be rescinding the January 2021 rule. I strongly urge you to support the January 2021 rule and give it time to work. Additionally, the 2018 Supreme Court decision in Weyerhaeuser Co. v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service clearly stated that critical habitat must be actual habitat for a species. The 2012 critical habitat designation included over 1.7 million acres of critical habitat that wasn't actual habitat.

(a) What steps will you take to ensure that the Fish and Wildlife Service follows the ruling of the Supreme Court?

(b) Will this acreage that is not current habitat be designated as critical habitat again?

Answer. The final rule withdrawing the January 2021 rule and revising the designation of critical habitat for the northern spotted owl published in the Federal Register on November 10, 2021. It became effective December 10, 2021. All the areas designated as critical habitat meet FWS's regulatory definition of "habitat" at 50 CFR 424.02. Since the court ruling in Weyerhaeuser Co. v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), FWS has ensured that every critical habitat designation, including the revised designation for the northern spotted owl aligns with the Supreme Court's decision.

Question 2. A 2020 Species Status Assessment, issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service, highlighted that the most pressing threats to the Northern Spotted Owl are invasive barred owls and wildland fire. A decade has passed since the USFWS issued a revised recovery plan for the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) that identified competition from the Barred Owl as a primary threat to the NSO. Despite this, the USFWS continues conducting a "Barred Owl Removal Experiment" but has yet to develop and implement an actual strategy for barred owl removals and population management. In the absence a barred owl removal strategy NSO populations continue to decline. The BLM has also been required to comply with restrictions on timber harvests under the 2016 Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon until the USFWS completes the barred owl removal strategy.

(a) What steps are you going to take to ensure FWS follows the science?

Answer. The barred owl removal experiment is a significant scientific achievement, and it has withstood three legal challenges from concerned organizations. The FWS is applying the best available science to developing a potential barred owl management strategy, in concert with other involved state, federal, and private stakeholders.

(b) What is the Service doing to manage the main threats to the owl which are wildfire and predation from the barred owl?

Answer. The next steps, which are currently underway, are to develop potential management alternatives that are cost effective, likely to succeed, and that meet all federal and state legal requirements. FWS is actively engaged in multiple efforts to support private, state and federal land managers to mitigate undesirable wildfire risk in spotted owl habitat, including with active intervention. Staff are participating in state-led wildfire task forces, consulting with land managers in fuels reduction projects, and publishing scientific papers recommending active management to reduce wildfire threats and restore healthier forests.

We are also working collaboratively with an interagency team of biologists from multiple agencies, including the USDA-Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Geological Survey, National Park Service, and state wildlife agencies across the range of the northern spotted owl to develop a barred owl management strategy, as well as private-sector scientists. We anticipate a plan will be completed within two years.

(c) Given the existential threat to the NSO, why hasn't the USFWS completed a barred owl removal strategy?

Answer. The best science concludes that managing the barred owl threat is the most pressing near-term conservation need for spotted owls, while long-term habitat conservation remains fundamental to preventing the species' extinction. As noted in a previous response, FWS is working collaboratively with scientists from federal and state agencies and the private sector on a barred owl management strategy and anticipates a plan will be completed within two years.

Question 3. The USFWS has also identified catastrophic wildfire as a serious threat to the NSO.

(a) Will the USFWS be working with land managers at the U.S. Forest Service and BLM to determine what impact the 2012 Critical Habitat designation has had on efforts to reduce wildfire risks in the forests of the Pacific Northwest?

Answer. Other than the need for the land managers to comply with the ESA consultation requirement, there should be no impact or effect on wildfire management efforts. The FWS works proactively and collaboratively with the USFS and BLM to reduce undesirable wildfire threats, both through proactive planning and through consultation on proposed actions.

(b) To that end, since 2012 how many acres of forest health treatments have been implemented by the US Forest Service and BLM in designated NSO critical habitat?

(c) How many acres of NSO critical habitat have been burned by wildland fire in California, Oregon, and Washington since the current NSO critical designation was made in 2012?

(d) How many spotted owl nesting sites and acres of spotted owl suitable habitat have been burned by wildfire since the 2012 designation?

Answer. While the Department defers to the USDA Forest Service for information related to that agency's land management actions, since 2012 the BLM has conducted roughly 149,500 acres of forest health treatments in Oregon and Washington and 3,300 acres of hazardous fuels reduction treatments in California within northern spotted owl critical habitat. The BLM estimates the total area of northern spotted owl critical habitat burned within the perimeter of large wildland fires since 2012 is approximately 1.6 million acres, including 933,000 acres in California, 553,000 acres in Oregon, and 172,000 acres in Washington.

The BLM estimates 300 northern spotted owl nesting sites were within the perimeter of large wildland fires since 2012. Based on the relative suitability model from the 2013 Western Oregon Resource Management Plans, 1.9 million acres of nesting and roosting habitat and 3.5 million acres of dispersal habitat have been burned by large wildland fires.

Question 4. Will you go through a full rulemaking process should you decide to continue your rescission of the January 2021 rule?

Answer. The final rule withdrawing the January 2021 rule and revising the designation of critical habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl published in the Federal Register on November 10, 2021. It became effective December 10, 2021. Comments and materials received from the public rulemaking process are available on Regulations.gov under docket number FWS-R1-ES-2020-0050.

Question 5. Will you commit to strong public input where the Service actually listens to folks on the ground? Could you follow up with the Committee with the dates and times of these engagements?

Answer. As indicated in the response to the previous question, the final rule withdrawing the January 2021 rule and revising the designation of critical habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl published in the Federal Register on November 10, 2021. It became effective December 10, 2021. Comments and materials received from the public rulemaking process are available for inspection on Regulations.gov.

Question 6. Our farmers and ranchers provide some of the most pristine migratory bird habitat across the country, but especially in the west and Great Plains. Ranchers play a critical role in sustaining habitat that is essential in recovering grassland and sagebrush-dependent species. Likewise, farmers are key to sustaining wetland habitat across key breeding, migration, and wintering areas for migratory birds. To ensure that migratory bird habitat is conserved adequately, the Department must work with farmers and ranchers instead of against them through overly burdensome regulations.

(a) Have you been coordinating with farmers and ranchers on conservation for migratory birds?

Answer. Private landowners are among the greatest stewards of the land and are important conservation partners for the Department. FWS works closely with private landowners to conserve migratory birds and their habitat, particularly through the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, which are regional partnerships between federal, state, local, and private partners to support migratory bird conservation. JV conservation activities are collaborative by design involving landowners to implement conservation practices that sustain working lands and resilient local communities. JVs are guided by Management Boards comprised of partner representatives, many of which include private landowners as permanent members. Examples of this coordination and collaboration include:

- The Rainwater Basin JV and Nebraska Cattlemen are working in partnership on a private lands grazing project in Nebraska's Rainwater Basin, a region that is valuable for farming and cattle production and as key stopover habitat for migratory waterfowl. This project is designed to promote cattle production on lands with limited row crop potential, while also enhancing wetland habitat.
- In 2016, the Intermountain West JV and BLM established the Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands Initiative with a goal to catalyze proactive, voluntary, and community-led sagebrush rangelands conservation across public and private lands for future generations.
- In the Northern Great Plains JV there are many unique technical and financial programs available for landowners. The JV encourages producers to work with members of the JV's Conservation Delivery Network to develop a personalized project on their land that best leverages available program resources.
- Over the past 3 years the Central Valley JV and its partners have enhanced over 60,000 acres of privately-owned wetlands and wildlife-friendly agricultural lands across 175 properties in California's Central Valley. These incentive-based programs increase the abundance and quality of habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wetland-dependent species by working hand-in-hand with rice growers and private wetlandowners to implement cooperatively developed management plans for their properties that are designed to enhance their lands for wildlife using this region.

Additionally, our Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program provides technical and financial assistance to landowners interested in restoring and enhancing wildlife habitat, including for migratory birds, on their land. Through the Partners Program we annually achieve over 1,200 voluntary restoration and enhancement projects on nearly a quarter of a million acres.

(b) Please provide examples of recent engagements including the dates of the engagements as well as the attendees.

Answer. In addition to the ongoing partnerships discussed above, during this past year and a half the FWS through Joint Ventures has engaged with private landowners in the Northern Great Plains, with the Winnett Agricultural and Community Enhancement and Sustainability, a locally-led producer group in Montana; attended the Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project's Annual Small Farms Conference co-sponsored by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts in mid-July of this year; and worked through Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Curry and Quay counties NM to promote playa and grassland conservation to over 250 landowners over the past 7 months, among many other engagements with agricultural producers.

(c) Did these engagements occur before you announced that you would repeal the last administration's actions?

Answer. FWS engagements with landowners occur on an ongoing basis.

(d) Will you commit to working with this Committee to find reasonable approaches to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to ensure farmers and ranchers aren't unjustly punished for their conservation efforts?

Answer. The Department and FWS are committed to working with all stakeholders and partners as we reconsider the interpretation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This collaboration is instrumental to developing common sense standards that can protect migratory birds and provide certainty to landowners and project proponents.

(e) Will you commit to emphasizing and scaling up working with farmers and ranchers on conservation?

Answer. Farmers and ranchers are important conservation partners. As noted in the response to the previous question, the Department and FWS are committed to working with all stakeholders and partners as we reconsider the interpretation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This collaboration is instrumental to developing common sense standards that can protect migratory birds and provide certainty to landowners and project proponents.

(f) What conservation actions will the Department take to strategically invest in and encourage voluntary, incentive-based programs to conserve habitat on working farms and ranches?

Answer. The Department is committed to working with all of our partners and stakeholders, including farmers and ranchers, to conserve wildlife and habitat. That commitment is reflected in the President's Fiscal Year 2022 budget request, which supports diverse programs that collaborate with partners and stakeholders to conserve species and restore habitat and provide both financial support and technical expertise, such as the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program, the Fish and Aquatic Programs, as well as the Migratory Bird Program.

Question 7. In 2015, the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers finalized the Waters of the US, more commonly referred to as WOTUS, rule. This rollout was met with severe backlash from rural communities and countless stakeholders, but it particularly impacted farmers and ranchers across the country. The last administration finalized the Navigable Waters Protection Rule last year to provide regulatory certainty for communities and stakeholders across the country, but now, this administration has announced that it will develop "a new rule that defines WOTUS" to "protect water resources."

(a) Is DOI working with the EPA to do a cost/benefit impact analysis of how it would impact BOR projects, BOR supported groundwater replenishment projects and other critical water infrastructure?

Answer. The Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are, and have been, the lead agencies on matters associated with the Clean Water Act, including any potential changes to the definition of "waters of the United States." We understand that those agencies are currently involved in litigation regarding that definition, and the outcome of that matter will determine the path forward.

Question 8. In April, the administration announced the creation of "an Interagency Working Group to address worsening drought conditions in the West and support farmers, Tribes, and communities impacted by ongoing water shortages."

(a) Has the working group met with farmers, tribes and communities on potential solutions?

(b) If so, please provide us the dates of the engagements as well as a list of attendees.

(c) If not, will you commit to meet with stakeholders on this important issue?

Answer. The Interagency Drought Relief Working Group is one of several groups seeking to optimize the way the federal government can respond to the ongoing drought. The Working Group is co-chaired by the Department and the USDA and is working across the government to identify and disburse financial resources and technical assistance for irrigators and tribes impacted by the drought. This effort, among others, was discussed at a stakeholder forum on July 20, 2021, which provided an opportunity to hear from sectors and communities being impacted by the ongoing severe drought conditions. The Working Group will continue to seek input from affected communities and review the status of existing tools and make recommendations on what authorities are needed to address the imminent community needs facing us with drought.

Question 9. Earlier this month, the Fish and Wildlife Service announced it will be rolling back a significant portion of Endangered Species Act reforms put in place by the last administration. These proposed changes will complicate the federal permitting process and reduce incentives for proactive conservation work to help save species.

(a) The Department of the Interior press release states that these ESA regulations were going to be rescinded because they conflicted with climate change objectives. How do the regulatory changes enacted for the "blanket 4(d) rule" conflict with

climate change objectives, particularly since NOAA-Fisheries has long completed 4(d) rules for threatened species. Do you intend to require a default prohibition of take for NOAA-Fisheries as well?

Answer. These regulatory changes made by the previous administration were reviewed pursuant to the direction provided in Executive Order 13990. That order noted that federal government actions must be guided by the best science and be protected by processes that ensure the integrity of its decision-making. The Administration's actions are intended to improve and strengthen implementation of the ESA. To date, the Department has not published a proposal related to implementation of section 4(d) of the ESA. The Department defers to NOAA-Fisheries for questions related to its implementation of the ESA.

(b) Will you commit to notifying Congress (or this subcommittee) prior publishing any of the substantive changes proposed by the Press Release before you publish them in the Federal Register?

Answer. Yes; our goal is to always provide Congress with notice of significant regulatory and other actions when they are made.

(c) Several of the regulations described in the press release state that there are "other potential revisions also under consideration."

(c)(i) What are those other potential revisions?

(c)(ii) When is your timeline for providing clarity on these revisions?

(c)(iii) Will you commit to notifying this subcommittee on what those revisions will be?

Answer. The FWS and National Marine Fisheries Service are working together to review the regulations and determine what proposed revisions to the regulations are appropriate. On October 27, 2021, the Administration published in the Federal Register proposals to rescind the December 2020 final rule establishing a regulatory definition of "habitat" and the final rule that clarified how FWS would consider and evaluate areas for exclusion from a critical habitat designation. We anticipate that additional proposals will be published for public review and comment as they are developed. The Department's goal is always to provide Congress with notice of significant regulatory and other actions when they are made.

(d) The press release states that DOI intends to coordinate with federally recognized tribes before any regulations are finalized. Will you make that commitment to states, since they are charged with the management and protection of all non-ESA listed species?

Answer. It is the FWS's practice to coordinate with states before regulations are finalized, and we will do so here.

(e) Does the DOI support and will you commit to provide funding for the development of candidate conservation agreements on federal lands?

Answer. The Department supports the FWS's long-standing engagement with other federal agencies to help develop Candidate Conservation Agreements (CCAs) covering federal lands. While federal land management agencies are responsible for funding their share of the cost of CCAs on their lands, funding has long been in the FWS's budget for providing technical assistance to interested landowners, and the FY 2022 budget request seeks additional funding to increase capability for such assistance.

(f) Does the DOI support and will you commit to provide funding for candidate conservation agreements with assurances on private lands?

Answer. The Department supports the FWS's long-standing engagement with non-federal landowners to develop candidate conservation agreements with assurances (CCAAs) on private lands. As noted above, the FY 2022 budget request seeks additional funding to increase capability for such assistance to interested non-federal landowners. In addition, through the use of the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Conservation Planning Assistance Grant program, the FWS now provides funding to states to help landowners who need financial assistance for developing CCAAs on private lands.

(g) Will you commit that DOI will consider all four representative concentration pathway models when making a determination about the "foreseeable future" in listing or critical habitat decisions? If not, what is your scientific basis for selecting one model over another.

Answer. When making a determination under the ESA about the foreseeable future, the FWS must be able to reasonably determine that both the future threat and the species response to the threat are likely. The ESA requires that the FWS use the best available scientific and commercial information when making listing decisions. The Department will always follow the law and the science in its decision-making.

(h) Please describe the language in the 2018 listing regulations that state that economics will be considered for listing decisions.

Answer. The ESA is clear that listing determinations must be made solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available. The Service has never considered the economic impacts of a listing decision.

Question 10. In May, the Fish and Wildlife Department announced that it would begin a review of the land management plans for the Sage Grouse. As you know, the 2019 plans developed by the last administration were supported by all of the western Governors involved including Democrats. In a call with Fish and Wildlife Service staff after your announcement, Service staff committed to including these 2019 plans as a part of the review.

(a) Can you confirm that the 2019 Plans are a part of the review?

(b) When do you anticipate the review will conclude?

(c) Have you had any roundtables or meetings with stakeholders who are leading the way in conservation as a part of the review?

(d) If yes, could you send us information on those meetings including dates and participants?

(e) If not, will you commit to holding engagement sessions with states and stakeholders throughout this process?

Answer. Coordination is critical for success in greater sage-grouse conservation, and the Bureau of Land Management is committed to working with our stakeholders, including states, Tribes, stakeholders, and the public throughout the planning process. BLM is working in cooperation with the FWS, U.S. Geological Survey, USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service, the USDA Forest Service, states, Tribes, and stakeholders, to review the 2015, 2019, and 2020 land use plans and supporting analyses to assess what further actions may be needed to support sagebrush habitat conservation and restoration.

Question 11. In recent conversations between the Fish and Wildlife Service and stakeholders, Service employees have expressed that they would not be using single species management and they would instead favor a multiple species approach to conservation. This is welcome news to hear as we have seen the devastating effects of single species management. We are aware that some groups of species are in decline and working lands are essential to sustaining these species. We believe it is important to work through existing partnerships in a proactive, non-regulatory to conserve habitat the meets the needs of multiple species.

(a) Will you support your employees in this approach to ensure we aren't robbing Peter to pay Paul with species conservation?

Answer. Collaboration with our partners and stakeholders and efficient implementation of actions is critical to the recovery of species. It is also important that the actions we take comply with the law and are supported by the best available science. The Department will always support its employees with these goals in mind.

(b) Will you take steps to support existing partnerships that can deliver proactive conservation at scale?

Answer. Yes, the FWS' FY 2022 budget request includes an \$18.1 M increase in Recovery funding in order to fund projects that will meet our highest priority actions to prevent extinction and achieve recovery for listed species. Many of these projects will utilize existing partnerships to undertake these strategic priorities.

Question 12. In your Senate confirmation hearing, Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) asked you about input from "stakeholders . . . who have some sort of economic interest" in the national monument designation process. You answered that "everybody deserves a say" in it. Concerning the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, have you met with fishermen, seafood processors or any other representatives of coastal communities that would be most affected by a reinstatement of a ban on commercial fishing? If so, who?

Answer. President Biden issued a proclamation on October 8, 2021, restoring the protections and boundaries for this important marine monument. Prior to that action by the President, staff at the Department and at the Department of Commerce engaged with stakeholders, including with indigenous organizations, fishing industry representatives, New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, the Atlantic States and Marine Fishery Commissions, and a variety of businesses, scientific, nonprofit, and conservation organizations.

Question 13. I understand that Department staff had a brief phone call with concerned fishing industry leaders in March. Each participant was only allotted five minutes to defend their livelihood. Can you commit to meeting with commercial fishermen for more than five minutes before making a recommendation to the President on reinstating the commercial fishing ban?

Answer. As noted in the previous response, President Biden issued a proclamation on October 8, 2021, restoring the protections and boundaries for this important marine monument.

Question 14. According to a recent report from the Washington Post, the Department is advocating for President Biden to reinstate the commercial fishing ban in the marine monument. What scientific studies did your staff base this assessment on, if any? Can you please turn those over to us? Or is this just a rebuke of President Trump's actions last June?

Answer. As noted in the previous responses, President Biden issued a proclamation on October 8, 2021, restoring the protections and boundaries for this important marine monument that were put in place during the Obama Administration and removed during the previous Administration.

Question 15. Do you believe that former President Obama's original proclamation designating the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument should have also banned recreational fishing?

Answer. As noted in the previous responses, President Biden issued a proclamation on October 8, 2021, restoring the protections and boundaries for this important marine monument.

Question 16. Have you had any conversations with recreational fishing groups or environmental groups concerning the marine monument? If so, who, and when?

Answer. As noted in a previous response, prior to the issuance of the proclamation by President Biden, staff at the Department and at the Department of Commerce engaged with stakeholders, including with indigenous organizations, fishing industry representatives, New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, the Atlantic States and Marine Fishery Commissions, and a variety of businesses, scientific, nonprofit, and conservation organizations.

Question 17. Are you aware that all eight of the regional councils created under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and charged with managing our nation's fisheries have spoken out against a commercial fishing ban in the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Monument?

(a) If so, why haven't you taken their unanimous opinion into account?

(b) In your confirmation hearing and in responses to QFRs you repeatedly stated that a top-down approach to conservation was not the best option, so why are you advocating for it here?

(c) Does the Magnuson-Stevens Act even matter anymore if you won't heed or even take into consideration the advice of the experts who manage our nation's fisheries?

Answer. As noted in a previous response, President Biden issued his proclamation on October 8, 2021, restoring the protections and boundaries for this important marine monument that were put in place during the Obama Administration and removed during the previous Administration. Prior to that action by the President, staff at the Department and at the Department of Commerce engaged with stakeholders, including with indigenous organizations, fishing industry representatives, New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, the Atlantic States and Marine Fishery Commissions, and a variety of businesses, scientific, nonprofit, and conservation organizations.

The CHAIRMAN. I want to thank you again, Madam Secretary, and now the Members will have an opportunity to ask questions. I am going to begin by recognizing, in order of seniority.

Mrs. Napolitano, if she is available and has any questions, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, it is great to see you, and congratulations, again. My whole premise of recycled water is, unfortunately, we see far too little in Title XVI water recycling projects. You go from 63 million to 4.5 million, and in the WaterSMART, 55 million to 15 million. I understand we have over 400—almost 500 million—in line, already-approved projects to be approved, to be funded.

Somehow we are not looking at recycling as a way of combating drought. But in the West, even Arizona, New Mexico, California, and Nevada are sadly in need of funds to be able to increase their water supply by recycling.

Increased investment in Title XVI would have advanced dozens of water recycling projects. Like I said, they are already approved, feasibility studies, simply waiting for Federal funding for the share. And how much demand are you seeing from water districts from Title XVI grants, currently?

And are the current funding levels sufficient to meet the current demand?

As you know, the Colorado River Basin has been in drought for more than two decades, with no end in sight. The stakeholders are working to advance new drought-proof water supply to help respond to the challenges. It includes a proposal for a regional recycled water project led by Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, in collaboration with other states that would generate enough water for a half million families.

Can you tell the Committee whether the Department will help advance regional drought projects like these to help bolster water security for communities across the Colorado River?

I don't understand why the drop. It should be increased. I requested \$500 million to be added to Title XVI. I understand Mr. Huffman and Chairman Grijalva looked more at \$750 million, because there is such demand, and there is a new move to—

[Audio malfunction.]

Mrs. NAPOLITANO [continuing]. I don't know whether you can answer that right offhand, but I would like to be in touch with you to see how we can work this out. It is just not enough. And the diminishing of the budget for that really is hardest on the 17 Western states' ability to combat drought.

Could you answer any questions?

Secretary HAALAND. Congresswoman, thank you so much for the question, and I want you to know that we understand how severe the drought is in the West. We care about it deeply. We work on it every single day. And the programs that we have in place we absolutely want to support. We feel that there are many tools we can use, and we are going to do our best to use every single tool.

I would love to give Rachel an opportunity to go into a few more details about Title XVI and the WaterSMART program.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Thank you.

Ms. TAYLOR. Thank you, Madam Secretary, and thank you, Congresswoman, for the question on this.

As the Secretary said, we are mindful, especially in the grip of such a historic drought, that all tools need to be used in the toolbox.

With respect to your question on the Title XVI funding, we would be happy to follow up with your office regarding the demand for applications, and have a longer conversation with that.

I would note that the President's budget request includes, as part of the Jobs Plan, \$2.5 billion for Western water resilience. And water recycling and reuse projects have been called out, specifically. I know that that plan—the details are still being worked out, and that is something that I fully intend to work with the Committee, and work with you all on.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. That is just minimal funding. The funding that is required because of what is already approved, it is way beyond that. And I would like to have a conversation with you on that, because it affects not only California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Arizona—and the Colorado River is at an all-time drought, and it is getting worse. It is critical. It is very imperative that we take steps to be able to fund programs that will help with the water resiliency in many of those areas, and I look forward to it, to work with you, Ms. Secretary.

Thank you very much, and I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady yields. Let me recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Westerman.

You are recognized, sir.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Haaland, probably a little-known fact by most Americans is that 40 percent of the land along the Southern border is Federal land that falls under the management of DOI. This year, already, there have been 105,000 pounds of methamphetamine seized, and an astonishing nearly 6,500 pounds of fentanyl. That is enough lethal doses of fentanyl to kill 1.4 billion people, four times the population of the United States.

My first question is, what is the Administration's plan to ensure that DOI's lands on our Southern border are protected?

And why didn't the Department budget request any money specifically for this purpose?

Secretary HAALAND. Ranking Member, thank you so much for the question.

And with respect to any of those budget requests, of course, we are always going to be happy to meet with you and give you any details that you like. But if Rachel has something to add there, I would appreciate it.

Ms. TAYLOR. Yes, I would be happy to follow up on the numbers. I mean, I think we are taking a look at the manpower issues, and also the environmental issues that are related to the border. So, I would be happy to follow up with you on that one.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Yes, I would be interested in following up, and especially talking about the environmental issues on public lands, where illegal traffic is going across.

Just as another part of that, according to the DEA, Mexican traffickers are the principal suppliers of most illicit drugs on

reservations in Indian Country. A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to travel in the Southwest and visit with a lot of tribal leaders. And unprompted, every place I stopped, they talked about the problem with illegal drugs on their tribal lands.

So, as this border crisis allows for more dangerous drugs to flow into our country, how will you work specifically to combat the flow of illicit drugs on tribal lands?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you very much, Ranking Member.

One thing I can say is that the President, essentially, wants to use an all-of-government approach for many of the issues that cross our departments. And, of course, the Department of the Interior is one department that might deal with issues of that nature, but there are others, as well.

I would like to, honestly, get together with other members of the cabinet to discuss the issue, and we would be happy to revisit this issue with you.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Thank you, Secretary. The Administration's budget supports the 30x30, which is based on a similar global initiative. In April of this year, 245 non-governmental organizations signed a letter criticizing the Global 30x30 initiative over concerns that it could displace up to 300 million Indigenous peoples, and lead to serious human rights abuses by conservation organizations and enforcement agencies.

How can this Administration claim to support Indigenous peoples at home, when one of your main priorities is based on a global initiative that has sparked serious human rights issues and concerns over Indigenous peoples around the world?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much, Ranking Member. The America the Beautiful Initiative—we are looking at it as a collaborative effort. We feel it is one that can bring our country together, that can unite us in a conservation effort that would, actually, invite tribes. President Biden has made it a priority of his administration to ensure that we have robust tribal consultation across the government. We intend to make sure that we carry that out. We have already spoken with many tribes and stakeholders regarding the America the Beautiful Initiative, and in that spirit, the collaborative spirit, we will move forward with it.

I thank you for your concerns. And, of course, we will look at all the issues with respect to this initiative, and make sure we are informed as we move forward.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Thank you, Secretary. I know from previous service with you on this Committee that justice for Indigenous people is very important to you.

We are currently investigating the World Wildlife Fund for potentially using Federal grants for eco-guards who raped, murdered, and forced Indigenous peoples from their homes in the name of conservation efforts like 30x30. DOI's budget provides an additional \$6 million for the Fish and Wildlife Services International Affairs Division, which has been at the center of this controversy.

Why are we using taxpayer money to fund organizations with serious human rights abuses?

And will you commit to continuing the Trump administration's freeze on that grant funding to organizations like WWF with histories of such abuse?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you, Ranking Member. I can guarantee you that all of these grants and so forth, they undergo very stringent reviews. And I will take your comment and your concern back to the Department, and make sure that they will look at that.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Thank you again, Madam Secretary. I am out of time. I have more questions I will submit in writing.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields. Let me recognize Congressman Costa for his questions.

Sir, you are recognized.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee.

Madam Secretary, we are so proud that one of our own members from this Committee would be chosen to be the Secretary of the Department of the Interior. And the President—it is fitting and appropriate for the first Native American to serve in this very important position. And I, for one, I know we will be looking forward to continuing to work with you in this important partnership.

I want to talk about drought in California and the Western states, and also a bit about the fire issues with our parks and forests, and coordination between your efforts and the U.S. Department of Agriculture that has a large responsibility on forest management.

I don't have to tell you we have extreme drought conditions in the West. In California, with climate change, obviously, they are increasing with the intensity. This may be the worst drought since 1977, 1978, yet there are more demands on California's water system—and, I would say, for the West, the Colorado River and others—than ever before in our history.

Therefore, we have to work together. The governor has proposed a \$5.2 billion drought resistance plan to help the state in a host of different areas. I know this budget that you are talking about here today was proposed earlier. Things have only gotten worse since this budget. I would urge you to take another look at it.

Frankly, I agree with my colleague, Grace Napolitano, on WaterSMART and a host of these areas. We need to plus them up. In Congress, I am going to do everything I can to do just that in some of our infrastructure packages.

One of the areas that is very important in this funding effort is also trying to balance transfers when they can in our water system. We are looking at some opportunities in July. We just had an important water workshop—bipartisan state and federal officials—Ernest Conant was representing the Department.

I asked you earlier, but I want you to urge every bit of creativity and thinking out of the box when we have windows of opportunities to transfer molecules of water that are so much needed. We have some of our farm communities that we are going to have, literally, hundreds and thousands of acres of land fallowed, maybe a million or more. That results in unemployment to farm communities, and campesinos and farm workers of 40 to 50 percent in the last severe drought we had in 2008 and 2010. Those are communities and people hurting.

Do you care to respond?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much, Congressman, and I share a deep concern with you about the drought. It is an issue that we work on every single day. There are members of my senior staff who are on this issue day in—

Mr. COSTA. By the way, I am glad that Tonya and Camille, you have working relationships with all of us, now are part of your team, or will be.

Secretary HAALAND. Yes. So, I just want you to know that it is important to us, and we are taking, there again, an all-of-government approach to this issue. As we mentioned, the \$2.5 billion for Western water resilience, we are happy to work with you on that number, and would, of course, welcome anything—

Mr. COSTA. Right. On that point, we have an effort that—I think we have bipartisan support for the restoration of the Friant-Kern Canal, the Delta-Mendota Canal, and the California Aqueduct. The governor has money in his budget, and we are looking at that as a part of our effort.

Dam safety is also a critical area. And I want to revisit that with you. Let me move quickly, because time has elapsed here.

I toured Yosemite National Park. I know you are plussing up our National Park System, and I understand you have had conversations with Secretary Vilsack. But the horrific fires we have had in the West, are so, so devastating in all of our districts.

I suggested that there is a joint role and responsibility between Interior and USDA with the Forest Service. Are you working together to update the forest management plan? Because it not only affects our forests, but our national parks, as well.

And the maintenance is needed. The superintendent, Cicely Muldoon, great superintendent, gave me a 3-hour tour of all the updates that are needed in Yosemite, and that is just one of our crown jewels of our national parks.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much. Yes, Secretary Vilsack and I meet regularly regarding this issue. And I am happy to ensure that I take your concerns back to him.

Mr. COSTA. More to be continued. I have run out of time, not questions. But we need to work together, and I look forward to doing just that. Thank you.

Secretary HAALAND. Congressman, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields, and I believe Mr. Gohmert is recognized for his time.

[Pause.]

The CHAIRMAN. Going to Lamborn? OK.

Mr. Lamborn, sir, you are recognized.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Madam Secretary, it is good to see you. I remember you used to sit right over there not that long ago. Now you have a different seat, a little more power, perhaps, but I am going to just jump right in, because of limited time.

There is this comprehensive review that is going on for oil and gas leasing on Federal lands. Thank goodness a Federal judge has issued a temporary restraining order against that because of all the jobs and energy that would be hurt because of that ban. But is this going to result in a permanent ban on Federal lands of oil and gas production when this review is completed?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much, Congressman. And it is nice to see you, as well. Thank you for welcoming me here.

The pause on oil leases, as you know, was for new leases. There are still millions of acres that are open, and thousands and thousands of permits that are actually working right now. The decision of the court is under review in the Solicitor's Office. They are working with the Department of Justice, as well, to review that decision. Of course, we will abide by any decision that we are ordered to, and we will be happy to be in touch with you as to next steps.

But I just want to make sure you know that the pause is on new leases, not existing leases or permits.

Mr. LAMBORN. But do you anticipate a permanent ban of production for new leases when the review is done?

Secretary HAALAND. As I have said many times, gas and oil production will continue well into the future. And we believe that that is the reality of our economy and the world we are living in.

Mr. LAMBORN. Does that mean you would favor new production in the future?

Secretary HAALAND. I have always said that I am going to absolutely follow the law. The reason for the review, of course, we want to make sure that taxpayers, the American taxpayers, are getting a good return on, essentially, their investment.

Mr. LAMBORN. With that in mind, about \$10 billion comes in to the Federal Government from oil and gas leases, currently. And a lot of that is used for the national park backlog, and conservation efforts, and other really good incentives, and the rest goes into the Treasury.

How are we going to replace \$10 billion if there is a permanent ban, which you are sort of in doubt about?

Secretary HAALAND. No, I don't think there is a plan right now for a permanent ban, Congressman. But as I said, the review will come out early summer, and we will assess the gas and the fossil fuel programs at that time.

And, of course, we are happy to talk with you further. If you have any questions, you are welcome to give us a call, and we are happy to make sure that we are approaching it in a transparent manner.

Mr. LAMBORN. When it comes to mining, I am really concerned, because we need to have continued production of lithium and rare minerals in the future, if nothing else, for electric vehicles, plus computers, cell phones, and everything else that we use these important substances for. Yet, mining has such a hard time getting established in the United States under current environmental and the Department of the Interior regulations. It takes 10 or 12 years to open a mine.

So, how can we meet the need for lithium and critical and rare earth minerals, when it takes so long to do mining in the United States?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you for the question, Congressman. And, yes, we understand that critical minerals are important to the future of our technology. And President Biden, of course, believes in energy independence.

I think that the United States and the Department of the Interior want to make sure that any mining that is done takes into consideration the environment. We have to make sure that we are doing things with respect to the environment, that workers are protected in mines, and so forth.

And I am fortunate to work alongside a tremendous number of USGS scientists who understand this issue very well.

Mr. LAMBORN. OK, thank you for your answer. Let me just conclude by saying I hope we don't have to rely on other countries like China that have horrible environmental policies. They are dirty, they pollute. Let's have some U.S. production. And we can't just rely on recycling.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields. Let me recognize Representative Sablan.

Sir, you are recognized.

Mr. SABLAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, welcome back to the House, and congratulations on your being selected and confirmed as Secretary of the Interior. Thank you also for your public support of the UNDRIP, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. That was awesome. And also, Madam Secretary, I would like to work with you, since your Department, your Office of Insular Affairs, is supposed to be our greatest advocacy in the Administration for the insular areas, the territories like my district, the Northern Marianas.

And, Madam Secretary, as you know, responding to climate change is a priority of this Committee. And it is especially important to my constituents in the Northern Mariana Islands, who are on the front line of the negative impacts of climate change. So, I congratulate the President and your Department for almost doubling to \$15 million funding for the Energizing Insular Communities Program in your Department's budget.

Congress has been plussing up this line item for the last several years. I am not convinced the Department has been using this money as effectively as it could, however. In 2014, former Congressman Donna Christensen's legislation mandating that Interior create energy action plans for all the insular areas was enacted, Public Law 113-235. But the Department has not used the Energizing Insular Communities funding to implement that law.

There are supposed to be energy action plans for each insular area, to reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels, develop domestic sources like wind and solar, which we have in abundance, and to improve the efficiency of the infrastructure. The plans are supposed to include both engineering and financing guidelines for implementing and sustaining these improvements, and a timeline for putting the plans to work with specific project milestones.

And lastly, and this is particularly important, Madam Secretary, this is not work that the Interior Department throws to the insular governments and says, "Good luck, it is up to you." No, this is work that the Interior Department is supposed to lead Federal agencies in getting done. Obviously, we will have to work with each insular

government, but the law puts the burden on the Department of the Interior.

I am very heartened to see that President Biden seems serious about the Energizing Insular Communities Program, and is doubling funding for that.

Madam Secretary, if I may ask, may I have your commitment to implement Public Law 113-235, and create these energy action plans for each insular area?

Secretary HAALAND. Mr. Sablan, thank you so much for the question, and I want you to know that your community is extremely important to me, and to all of us, and I am absolutely going to take all of your concerns and comments back to the office.

You must know Nik Pula quite well. I will make sure that he knows and understands. We are going to make sure that we are moving this forward. And I thank you for the question.

Mr. SABLAN. Yes, thank you. And, yes, I do know Mr. Pula, and we have been encouraging the office to comply with the law. And the law also requires that the Department provide annual reports to Congress on the implementations of the law. So, Madam Secretary, respectfully, I also ask—could we have your commitment that you will be making those annual reports to Congress on the implementation of that law?

Secretary HAALAND. Yes. Thank you, Congressman.

Mr. SABLAN. All right, thank you.

And the law also requires you to create teams of technical, policy, and financial experts to assist each of the insular areas in developing and implementing their respective plans. May I also have your commitment, Madam Secretary, that you provide this Committee with the names of the experts for the team for each insular area, so we can be assured that the planning and implementation is in good hands?

Secretary HAALAND. We will follow the law, we will follow the policies, we will make sure you get what you need, Congressman.

Mr. SABLAN. Thank you. And if I may, Madam Secretary, I would like for you to know that you have an open standing invitation to come visit the Northern Marianas.

And finally, Madam Secretary, I know it is not the jurisdiction of this Committee, but I was sort of heartened to see that there is some money that is indicated or identified in the President's budget that is meant to maintain and improve the conditions of Bureau of Indian Education schools in Indian Country, which is really sorely needed. But thank you for that also.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. COSTA. Would the gentleman yield for a question?

Mr. SABLAN. Yes.

Mr. COSTA. When was the last time a Secretary of the Interior visited the Northern Mariana Islands, Mr. Sablan?

Mr. SABLAN. Not in the 13 years I have been here, but it has been a while.

It has been a while, Madam Secretary.

The CHAIRMAN. With that, the gentleman yields.

And I believe Mr. McClintock is—sir, you are recognized.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, after considering some 6,500 public comments, the Trump administration issued a final supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to raise Shasta Dam by 18½ feet. This long-overdue proposal would store enough water to support more than 3 million Californians annually, allowing for storage in wet years so that we have it in dry ones, like the one we are currently suffering. Would you commit to moving forward with the Shasta Dam raise?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you very much. I will have to take that question back to the Department, and my staff will be in touch with you and your office, sir.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. As you know, it is desperately needed. We had record rainfall a few years ago, and we had to open the dams and release that water, because we had no place to store it.

The Shasta was designed to be 800 feet of elevation. It is currently 600 feet. So, this raise is about 700,00 acre-feet of water, and it has been languishing for many, many decades now. And if, in fact, your budget request includes no funding for new water storage capacity, despite the severe drought conditions that we are suffering in the West, I wonder, how can the Administration expect to address our Western water crisis without proposing any funding for long-term water storage?

Secretary HAALAND. Congressman, thank you so much. Water storage is, absolutely, one of the tools that we are looking at, with respect to water conditions and drought in the West. And I appreciate you raising that, and will be very happy to follow up with you on that specific issue.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. I have just raised two critical questions for the people of the Western United States, and I have gotten answers to neither of those questions. And they are simple and fundamental to the responsibilities of this government.

Let me try a third time. Earlier this year, more than 200 Western water, agriculture, and urban organizations sent a letter to Congress and to the White House requesting an all-of-the-above approach to funding Western water infrastructure to be included in any infrastructure stimulus package.

The reclamation provisions of the WIIN Act expire this year. Do you support WIIN Act reauthorization?

Secretary HAALAND. Yes, the WIIN Act has been very helpful to many communities.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. So, the Administration will support its full reauthorization?

Secretary HAALAND. Let's see. We are working to send recommendations to the Energy and Water Subcommittee, pursuant to the 2016 WIIN Act to allocate funding for water storage, desalinization, and water recycling.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. All right, thank you.

I have heard from a number of constituents who are upset with the reservation system for Yosemite National Park. The National Park Service is requiring reservations to enter the park through September 30, citing COVID, despite the fact that California has now fully reopened, and the science demonstrates that COVID does not spread outdoors.

Will you commit to ending the reservation system, and restoring full public access to the park?

Secretary HAALAND. I appreciate the question. Of course, I feel it is my duty to make sure we are consulting with folks on the ground. And, certainly, we would talk to the superintendent of that park, and be happy to have the conversation with NPS—

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Well, these restrictions continue to have a devastating impact on the gateway communities that depend upon tourist travel to Yosemite for their very economic existence.

Secretary HAALAND. Yes. Thank you, and—

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. One of the goals that we set in the Majority was to restore the Federal Government as a good neighbor to the communities that are directly impacted by the Federal lands. Consulting the superintendent is not consulting the communities. I will assure you the communities are in desperate need of lifting these restrictions, which have no foundation at all in science.

Secretary HAALAND. Well, Congressman, if I may, I am pleased, overall, with President Biden's work to help make sure that our country is getting vaccinated. And I know that things are definitely—

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. But that has nothing to do with the science, that has clearly shown that COVID very, very rarely spreads outdoors. And in fact, by ordering people indoors, I think that the government made a huge mistake. But we can discuss that later.

One more question. You claimed to prioritize wildland fire risk, but earlier this year the Administration endorsed the Protecting America's Wilderness and Public Lands Act, which would add 1½ million new acres of wilderness. Over the past 10 years, nearly 7 million acres of wilderness and wilderness study areas have burned in catastrophic wildfires, and may jump into other federal, state, and private lands, where they cause even more destruction.

I wonder, how can this Administration claim to be serious about wildland fire management, when you are endorsing policies that tie the hands of Federal land managers, and prevent necessary treatments of our public lands that are so desperately needed?

The CHAIRMAN. Madam Secretary, Mr. McClintock's last question. The time is up. If you wish to answer it, or send the question to the Committee in a response in writing, that would be appropriate, as well.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much. I appreciate very much your questions, and we will absolutely respond in writing. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. The gentleman yields.

Mr. Huffman, sir, you are recognized.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Madam Secretary, it is a great honor and a pleasure to address you as our new Secretary of the Interior. Thank you, and welcome back.

One of the most important things I think that you and your colleagues in this Administration have done is to thoughtfully reconsider, and in some cases reverse, ill-conceived policies of the last administration. And this certainly includes the decision to suspend the oil leases in the Arctic Refuge, which were rushed through during the waning days of the last administration.

These leases were announced just minutes before the mob of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol on January 6. They are of dubious legality. They are a terrible idea, policy-wise. They are deeply unpopular, and I applaud you for suspending them. I urge the Department to take the next step, and to throw them out entirely, so that we can keep working on permanent protection of that very unique and pristine place, the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge.

We have already talked a bit about climate impacts here this morning. And in my district and in California, of course, we are feeling some of the worst of these impacts, with wildfires and drought. The concerns that my colleague, Jim Costa, raised about the very real hardship that farmers are feeling in the Central Valley are real. But there are also other interests at stake with this drought, and I thank you for engaging with me on the critical conditions in the Klamath Basin, because we have tribes, we have fishermen, we have ecosystems. All of them are suffering.

But you wouldn't necessarily know that there are all these other stakeholders and interests by looking at the previous administration, because your predecessor always had his thumb on the scale for his former lobbying clients. And I am so glad that, after a century of giving a free pass to the fossil fuel industry and others, and a revolving door of special interests, that this Administration is taking a new approach.

One thing I want to suggest is, in agreement with what a couple of my colleagues have already suggested, this drought, I think, does merit reconsideration of some of the budget amounts for Title XVI, and WaterSMART. Given the severity of this drought—WaterSMART, in particular—water conservation is the fastest way we can bring better water management online. It is decades faster than any type of new dam someone might propose to build. It is cost effective, it has local matching funds, and it really makes a difference quite quickly in drought-stricken communities. So, to see that line item actually decrease in the budget was troubling for many of us. And I hope you will continue to work with Congress to find an appropriate level of support for that critical program.

I am also glad that we are talking about more than just the band-aids, the triage from these various climate impacts, that you and your colleagues in this Administration are looking upstream at the drivers of these climate impacts. And in that regard, I want to thank you for something that you have already been criticized about this morning by my colleagues across the aisle. This is a moment that, of course, compels us to reconsider the century of impunity that the fossil fuel industry has had with respect to our public lands. And the fact that you have put a pause on Federal oil and gas leasing is entirely appropriate.

But a lot of the sky-is-falling doom and gloom that we are hearing from fossil fuel interests about this, I think, is misplaced. So, I want to ask you about all of the stockpiled permits and leases that are out there, even in the face of this pause, that are going to continue potentially to move forward. This is not as if someone just flipped a switch, and shut off oil and gas development on public lands.

Could you speak to that, and the fact that, as I understand it, companies already have access to over 26 million acres of land, and the current leasing pause does not affect existing oil and gas production, or all of those stockpiled leases and permits?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you, Congressman. And, yes, there are millions of acres of leased land. Also, over 8,000 approved drilling permits currently that are waiting to be used. So, we recognize that the oil and gas production continues, even in the face of the pause on new leases.

Mr. HUFFMAN. I appreciate that. I understand that a judge has put a temporary pause on that moratorium. And in light of that, and just the disruption that nationwide injunctions have when people do this kind of forum-shopping and manage to secure a nationwide injunction, I want to urge you to communicate to President Biden the necessity of declaring a climate emergency, which would bolster his authority in the face of those type of legal challenges, and I think it is entirely appropriate, if we are serious about this crisis.

And, of course, I invite you to come and visit my district, where we need to talk about many natural resource issues.

I also am glad that you brought up the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, because it is an acute issue in my district. And we would love the chance to host you, and talk about that. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

I yield back.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I believe that Mr. Gosar is recognized.

Sir.

Dr. GOSAR. Yes, can you hear me?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, you are heard.

Dr. GOSAR. OK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Madam Secretary. Welcome back to the Committee.

In your budget, you have a significant amount of money for tribal water settlements, which I think is important for us to settle many of these outstanding water commitments, particularly as the West faces what could be an epic shortfall of water.

The tragic closing of a Navajo generating station in northern Arizona has deeply hurt the region and the people that depended on the revenues on this decision. One challenging decision we will have to have from this event is the redesignation of water left behind with the closure of NGS. The NGS closure leaves behind the potential redesignation of 34,100 acre-feet of water, more than 11 billion gallons, for other uses each year from the Colorado River. This water is an opportunity for the region to settle old tribal water agreements, but also create new opportunities in the region.

While Arizona is entitled to use this portion of the Colorado River's flow, it is important that we work to keep the water in the region to ensure that we have job creation and settle other challenges to the river. It is unfortunate that this decision will have to come at a time when the Colorado River is in such deep drought conditions. However, you are still facing this challenge.

While I know that you will receive significant pressure from the environmental groups to return the water to the river flow, or for other entities who think they can take this water from Arizona, or

for their own use, I hope that you will work with me and the delegation to ensure that the water stays in Arizona and in the region to solve the problems, and coordinate with the EPA to solve the subsurface cleaning up of the area.

Madam Secretary, would you commit to working with us to keep the water from NGS in the northern Arizona region to solve local community and regional problems, settle historic tribal water needs, and to ensure that the damage done by the close of NGS is mitigated by keeping the water in the region?

Secretary HAALAND. I appreciate the question very much, Congressman, and it is nice to see you, as well.

We are happy to work with you, and happy to have our office reach out to your office, and make sure that we are speaking on this issue. And I appreciate knowing your position on it.

Dr. GOSAR. Thank you, ma'am. I would now like to turn to another issue facing the Navajo Nation.

As we heard at our hearing last week, the Navajo Nation is in the process of moving to advance the development of significant helium resources on the Navajo Nation. As you know, the Bureau of Land Management, as directed by Congress, is closing the National Helium Reserve this year, and preparing to sell off that asset. This closure means our Nation will need more helium resources, especially considering that our helium is on our national critical minerals list.

One area that is a critical challenge is the importance of the Nation being able to move forward with their development in a timely fashion. As you know, drilling permits processed by the BLM and the Bureau of Indian Affairs are not often processed in a timely fashion, and often can create conflicts between the two agencies. However, this development by the Nation will be more successful if they can proceed in a timely manner to correspond with the new market opportunities created by the closure of the BLM reserve, and to get that project up and running effectively.

Finally, we know that the Russian Federation is working to develop their own helium resources to compete, and we cannot delay our domestic development, then watch Russia speed their own development up and harm our efforts.

Therefore, would you work with me and the Navajo Nation, when they come, to ensure that the permits that they will need will be processed in a timely fashion, and that the historic bickering between the agencies that has slowed permitting in the past is limited to ensure that the Navajo Nation can develop their own resources, create jobs, and provide a critical resource to the Arizona and American economy?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you, Congressman, for the question.

First I will say what I mentioned before. President Biden believes in energy independence, of course. We are working toward that.

And also, tribal consultation is a priority of this Administration. So, we will absolutely ensure that we are consulting with the Navajo Nation on any of the issues that they would like to consult on. And, of course, we are happy to continue to reach out to your office, as well.

Dr. GOSAR. Yes, it is very important to the coordination to be streamlined. I know that on the west side, the Colorado Indian Tribe had problems with water mitigation, and even wanted to leave the Indian Services and go to the Bureau of Reclamation. So, if it all could be established to streamlining that process, it would be worked out fabulously.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much, Congressman.

Dr. GOSAR. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

I believe that Mr. Lowenthal—Congressman, you are recognized for 5 minutes, sir.

Dr. LOWENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Haaland, thank you for being here with us today. We miss you in the House of Representatives. Even though you see this background, I am not really at the beach. And we all miss you here on the Committee, and I will always treasure when our Committee took our field trip to Chaco Canyon with you.

But I would like to talk about a couple of issues. One is offshore wind, and the second one is the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

As far as offshore wind, I would like to ask about offshore wind development off the coast of California. The Department of the Interior has made significant progress in the past few months on offshore wind, including some important breakthroughs on the West Coast. What are some of the unique challenges on the West Coast, and how is the Department working with stakeholders to overcome them?

I know you are working closely with the Department of Defense, for example, but I know that there are other areas where you are also engaging. What are the next steps for offshore wind development on the West Coast?

And how do you plan to hear from stakeholders like tribes, fisheries, and the maritime industry?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much, Mr. Lowenthal. I didn't think you were at the beach, but thank you for clarifying that.

Of course, we are very proud of the work that we have been able to advance on offshore wind. You have heard about several of our projects getting off the ground. And it was a pleasure to meet with Governor Newsom recently to announce the two areas in the Pacific that could support 4.6 gigawatts of clean energy to power 1.6 million homes. That is an exciting opportunity, and it is wonderful to think about and to work on.

We are always committed to active engagement with stakeholders. We have done that, and we will continue to do it. We want to make sure that everybody has a voice in how these projects move forward. And, of course, we are happy to also consult with you, as well. So, if you want us to contact anyone in particular, we are happy to do it. But we feel very confident that we try to do an excellent job at ensuring that voices have a seat at the table.

Dr. LOWENTHAL. Thank you, and we will contact you.

Secretary Haaland, thank you for your Department's work to undo the damage that the last administration did to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The reality is, the whiplash of how MBTA is interpreted is bad for everyone. Companies don't have certainty about

how the government will view the impacts of their 30- to 50-year projects on birds. Birds themselves get unnecessarily killed.

I know your Department is leading the way on the deployment of renewable energy, as we just spoke about, to address the climate crisis. And I think we have a real opportunity to get both bird conservation and wind energy right, right from the start. The budget request for the Fish and Wildlife Service includes an extra \$18.2 million for migratory bird management.

How will those funds help with the responsible deployment of clean energy, and the necessary update to MBTA implementation?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much, Congressman. I will talk briefly, and then I will hand it to Rachel, in case she has anything to add.

But, right now, the Fish and Wildlife Service is reviewing public comments on the proposed rule, so we will consider appropriate next steps. We will move forward on that.

And if Rachel has anything to add, I would invite her to.

Ms. TAYLOR. Thanks so much for the question, just a couple of points.

Obviously, migratory bird management is going to include habitat, it is going to include data collection. You are going to have to have a good handle on the health of species, moving forward.

The budget does include additional planning activities for the Fish and Wildlife Service, as well, which will help resolve, potentially, and advance some of the conflicts related to clean energy projects. And we want to make sure that we are in full compliance with the ESA, as we move forward with the President's agenda for clean energy. Thank you.

Dr. LOWENTHAL. Thank you, and I look forward to continuing to work with you and the Administration on this issue. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields. Thank you, Mr. Lowenthal. And let me recognize Representative Graves.

Sir, you are recognized.

Mr. GRAVES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, congratulations. Good to see you again. I don't know why you would take that demotion from your previous perch, but congratulations to you.

Madam Secretary, do you know how much oil was imported from Russia in May or June of last year to the United States?

Secretary HAALAND. Congressman, I don't have that figure at the top of my head.

Mr. GRAVES. All right, let me make sure—it came out of my mouth incorrectly—imported to the United States from Russia. So, last May and June, it was none. It was zero. And this was during the Trump administration. Do you know how much has been imported for May, and projected to be imported for June, from Russia?

Secretary HAALAND. I don't have that figure on the top of—

Mr. GRAVES. It was nearly 6 million barrels for the month of May, and it is projected to be in excess of 7 million barrels for the month of June, Russian oil imported to the United States. And this is under the Biden administration, compared to the Trump administration.

It is very baffling to me to see how we are seeing shutdowns, moratoriums, pauses, or whatever term you want to use, for production in the United States, whenever it does have a big impact on jobs, economy, and we are increasing our reliance upon economies that I wouldn't consider to be friendly.

We are also, effectively, facilitating the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, expanding markets for Russian oil by withdrawing the sanctions, President Biden's withdrawal of sanctions on Russian intelligence operatives that are building the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Very concerning.

But I think you probably know where I am going to go with my question now, and I want to follow up on Mr. Lamborn's question, as well as Mr. Huffman's. As you know, there was a court case, and I believe it was June 15. The judge effectively withdrew the pause, or the moratorium, on oil and gas production. I want to understand. Today is June 23. This was a 44-page decision that was issued on June 15. I heard you say in response to Mr. Lambert, as well as verifying Mr. Huffman's comment, that there still is a pause in place. But to me, that seems inconsistent with what the judge ordered.

So, I just want to better understand the current status within the Department of the Interior. Is there a pause right now, or is there not?

Secretary HAALAND. We are going to follow the decision of the court. And, currently, the decision is being reviewed by our Solicitor's Office, our Department, and the Department of Justice, and we are going to abide by that decision.

Mr. GRAVES. Has anything changed within the Department from when that judge issued the decision to today?

Are you beginning to move forward on, what is it, Lease Sale 257? Have you published in the Federal Register?

Secretary HAALAND. No, we have not, to my knowledge, published in the Federal Register.

Mr. GRAVES. So, what has changed since the decision was made?

Secretary HAALAND. What has changed? Well, we are reviewing the decision, we are reviewing the judge's—

Mr. GRAVES. But it is 44 pages. I mean, you have a whole legal team, you have a Solicitor's Office, you have some very talented people. And it is 44 pages. So, I want to understand what has changed.

The judge said you can't do that, that it is illegal, so I am just trying to understand how things have changed.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you, Congressman. I will be happy to make sure that I get you a detailed answer on your question. And we will be happy to revisit that.

Mr. GRAVES. I would really appreciate that. This is very important to me, and I know you know that. Every time this issue would come up when you served on this Committee, it is very important.

And the last question I have for you, last year, in my home state, depending on how you want to count, we had somewhere between five and seven storms that pounded coastal Louisiana, resulting in the loss of life, devastation of communities, the economy, wiping out areas, and ecological damages, substantial economic damages

to one of the most productive, ecologically productive areas in the coast of the United States.

When you stop energy production, you stop the revenue sharing that, under our Constitution in Louisiana, is committed to hurricane protection, to flood control, and restoring the coastal ecosystem. What would you say to those people at home that are going to suffer as a result of this decision to stop energy production, and stop the investment in the resiliency of those communities?

Secretary HAALAND. Congressman, first, I would like to just say how sorry I am. I know there was loss, the losses that your community has suffered. And I am extremely sorry for the losses that they have suffered in these terrible weather patterns that are happening because of climate change.

So, I just want you to know that production on existing leases continues. As I have mentioned before, there are millions of acres of leases currently that are moving forward. There are over 8,000 permits to drill that aren't being used as of yet. So, we want to make sure that you know that there is production still happening in this country.

Mr. GRAVES. Thank you. And I do want to follow up with you, please.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you.

Mr. GRAVES. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. The gentleman yields. Let me recognize the gentleman from Arizona, Representative Gallego. Sir, you are recognized.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Secretary. What was happening in the economy last year, around May and June 2020 that may have affected oil demand? Can you think off the top of your head?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you for that question, and I believe it was the pandemic.

Mr. GALLEGO. Yes, yes. I believe the total—

Mr. GRAVES. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GALLEGO. No.

Mr. GRAVES. I am happy to choose another month.

Mr. GALLEGO. No, I do not.

So, just to be clear, that probably affected our demand for foreign oil, since we essentially shut down the economy, so people weren't going to work, factories weren't going. So, I just want to be clear about that.

Madam Secretary, thank you, and it is good to see you again. I am also very grateful that your Department has made it a priority to review President Trump's illegal shrinking of Bears Ears National Monument, and I was glad to see that your Department recommended a full restoration of the monument to President Biden.

As you know, Bears Ears is a sacred place for Indigenous people in the region. And the longer it goes without full protection, the more the land is vulnerable to vandalism, destruction, and extraction. Given the urgency of restoring protection of Bears Ears, can you provide any update on when a decision on this matter will be announced?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much for the question, Mr. Gallego. And, of course, that is entirely up to the President. It is under the prerogative of the President. The Antiquities Act is something that the President exercises. So, that, of course, would be a question for President Biden. And we will await his decision, as well.

Mr. GALLEGO. Can you describe the tribal consultation your Department did during the review process, and whether your Department has taken into account the tribe's request to expand the monument to their full 4.9 million-acre request?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you very much for the question. And yes, we did—I traveled to Utah, and I met with the Bears Ears Intertribal Coalition. We did speak with tribal leaders separately. There were tribal leaders who attended several of our town halls that we had during the time I was in Utah. So, we took the tribal consultation issue very, very seriously. And I appreciate the question.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

And we have heard repeated complaints from my colleagues across the aisle about lack of local input into this Bears Ears National Monument. Secretary Haaland, can you confirm that you have met with local Utah stakeholders—obviously, the tribes involved—but actual local Utah stakeholders, the county governments, local governments also, while going through this process?

Secretary HAALAND. I absolutely did, yes. I think we had six town halls, where a number of those elected officials participated. And we welcomed farmers, ranchers, outdoor business owners, folks who owned stores and retail operations. And we even met with some children who came in. So, we felt we had a good overall sense of what the community—what was on their minds.

Mr. GALLEGO. And then, as the former Chair of the Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples, I am glad to see your budget includes a 28 percent increase in funding for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Can you highlight the importance of this increase in addressing some of Indian Country's dire infrastructure needs?

What else do you need from Congress to begin to meet these needs?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much. I would love to give the floor to Rachel for specific needs, but thank you for raising the issue of infrastructure. That is something that is absolutely important.

Ms. TAYLOR. Thank you, Madam Secretary, and thank you so much for the question.

I think this budget, overall, is very strong for tribal programs. And I think we include both infrastructure and programmatic increases.

A few things that are worth mentioning within the Bureau of Indian Affairs are the additional commitments to trust natural resource management programs. There is a significant investment for climate resilience and work that would be done with tribes on the ground that are addressing climate needs, including potentially relocation issues.

And then we have public safety and justice programs that are also highlighted, which we all know are of need of additional

resources. And that includes a 13 percent increase, including the Missing and Murdered investments that the Secretary mentioned earlier.

It is important to note that the budget maintains investments in public safety construction, in Bureau of Indian Education construction. We are very grateful for the additional resources for BIE schools through the Great American Outdoors Act.

So, I think that, overall, the budget includes some balanced investments for Indian Country that are well deserved. Thank you.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, and thank you, Madam Secretary.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair recognizes Representative Hice.

Dr. HICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And Secretary Haaland, again, as you have heard many times today, welcome back, and congratulations on your new position.

You may remember, from the time when you were here, that my particular district is rich in history in this country. And one of the Revolutionary War sites was the Kettle Creek Battlefield site. And we are pleased that this past year, Kettle Creek was given the status of a National Park Service affiliated site. And I want to thank everyone on this Committee, both sides of the aisle, for participating in that action. That is very appropriate, and it was very much welcome in our district, and also for the Department of the Interior for the role in that, particularly under the Trump administration, while we were working through all those details.

I would like to say that, since this current Administration, our office has reached out a number of times to the Department of the Interior to try to finalize the events for Kettle Creek, and the presentation of the NPS arrowhead to the site. Unfortunately, to this point we have had little to no communication with them. And I would like to know if you have any updates, if you have any information on the event, or the awarding of the arrowhead for Kettle Creek.

Secretary HAALAND. Congressman, on the top of my head I do not, but I will make sure that I go back this afternoon and ensure that somebody contacts your office and lets you know what the status is on that. Thank you for bringing that up to me today.

Dr. HICE. Thank you. We really would appreciate that.

Secretary HAALAND. Yes, of course.

Dr. HICE. As you can imagine, that is a big deal for our district, and particularly those that have worked tirelessly, literally for decades, to get recognition of Kettle Creek. I welcome working with your Department, and would, in advance, invite you to be a part of that ceremony when it takes place. We would be honored to have you.

With that, if I could transition, looking at the budgetary proposal here, the increase is pretty staggering, 17 percent. I think that is a significant amount. How in the world are we going to pay for these increases?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you very much for the question, Congressman. And that is a question that I could actually turn over to Rachel.

If you can, answer that, Rachel.

Ms. TAYLOR. Certainly. I think the President's budget includes more than the Interior Department, and so there are some assumptions for revenues and tax policy that are associated with it.

The President has made clear that he views this as a balanced budget—balanced, in the sense of a budget that reflects the priorities of the Nation, and is going to produce the kind of economic growth that is necessary, that will help address some of the needs.

So, I would reflect you back to the bigger budget picture, and realize that Interior is just a piece of that, and that we feel that these investments that the President has given us in his budget request are very vital to fulfilling the Department's mission.

Dr. HICE. Well, I understand that, but that doesn't really answer the question of how are we going to pay for any of this, be it the Department of the Interior or the broader budget, as a whole.

And I know there have been proposed tax increases, which will weigh heavily on the American citizens. And I think it is only fair that the American people know what is coming, and how these types of increases, be it with Interior or any other department, raising such budgets—what is being proposed, it is going to fall on the taxpayer, and we need an honest assessment of that.

I would also bring up, regarding the Interior portion here, it seems to me that the National Park Service maintenance backlog is not addressed at all in this. I can't find it or forest management, as has already been brought up. What are the plans to address those issues?

Ms. TAYLOR. Thanks for the question. I can take on two pieces of that.

With respect to the forest management and the fuels reduction budget, the budget actually does include some increased funding. We have between—with the Interior bureaus, we have a \$100 million investment that includes forest health programs, fuels management, and burned area restoration that would address some of the treatments that you are describing.

Then, with respect to the maintenance backlog, the budget does include a 13 percent increase for the National Park Service, overall. We are sustaining investments, and drawing on the Great American Outdoors Act that this Committee supported—which has become vital for the Department. We have about \$1.6 billion across the Department that is going to address the deferred maintenance backlog that you mentioned, and is going to make the investments that are going to help us get ahead of that issue in a better way. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields. Let me recognize Representative Neguse.

Sir, you are recognized.

Mr. NEGUSE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Secretary Haaland, for being here today. It is wonderful to see you again. We all appreciate your excellent leadership at the Department of the Interior the past few months.

As you know, my state of Colorado is home to many beautiful public spaces, including millions of acres that are under the management of your Department. I also appreciate you considering the valuable contributions that Coloradans bring to the Bureau of Land

Management, as you consider the location of the agency's headquarters.

As Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, and as a proud Coloradan, I look forward to continuing to work with you. And, again, I am very grateful for your leadership.

As you know, Secretary Haaland—and we have discussed this privately—Colorado has experienced record-setting wildfires in the last year. The East Troublesome and Cameron Peak fires both occurred in my district last year. They are now the first and second largest fires in the entire history of Colorado. The East Troublesome fire resulted in the closure of Rocky Mountain National Park, and at one point even jumped the Continental Divide before finally being contained.

Wildfire management requires coordination between Federal agencies and state and local governments. But the Department of the Interior is primarily responsible for the management of more than 8—or, excuse me—9.6 million acres in Colorado. Department-wide, the Fiscal Year 2022 budget for wildland fire management programs requests \$1.44 billion, which includes preparedness, suppression, operations, reserve fund investments, fuels, rehabilitation, and other important programs.

I was proud to lead a bipartisan appropriations letter with Representative John Curtis and the Wildfire Caucus, urging increased funding for these programs in this year's budget. And I wonder if you could expound a bit on how the Department of the Interior is working with states, tribes, and other partners to leverage these resources, and ensure better wildland fire outcomes and post-fire recovery for federally managed lands in Colorado and across the country.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much, and I appreciate the question, Congressman.

Yes, I mean, now we are not thinking of fire seasons any longer, we are thinking of fire years, because one season just melts right into the other. And if it is anything like it was last year, then we definitely have a lot to prepare for.

I want you to know that I am in frequent communication with Secretary Vilsack. We are working together on these issues. We have done joint briefings with the Interagency Fire Center in Boise, and we are working very closely with the Forest Service, with states, with tribes, with local communities. We are making sure that we are all working together. It is the folks on the ground in those states that know their communities far better than we do.

We are also working hard to ensure that we are hiring more folks who can be on the front lines. We are actively supporting wildfire incidents management teams across several geographic areas. We are doing what we think is everything we should be doing. Of course, we always welcome, are open to conversation and input from this Committee. And we would welcome anything, any ideas or anything you would like us to pay particular attention to.

But we feel very good about the communications that we are having across the board with those communities.

Mr. NEGUSE. That is wonderful to hear, Secretary Haaland. And you certainly have a partner in me, and in the bipartisan Wildfire

Caucus, and we remain willing and able to help in any way that we can. We have been in touch with Secretary Vilsack, as well.

In the final minute that I have, I wanted to just briefly touch on another topic that I know you care deeply about, as does President Biden, which is the Climate Conservation Corps, the proposal that he has announced within the American Jobs Act, which, of course, we are very excited about here on Capitol Hill. There is momentum building regarding his plan.

We have proposed a similar plan, a Civilian Climate Corps proposal for \$10 billion of investment to do reforestation and other important critical work on our public lands. And I just wonder if you might, consistent with the broader subject matter that we have been discussing, touch on whether or not restoring natural fire regimes and conditions, as well as post-fire recovery, could be the type of activities that the CCC would participate in, if we can get this fully funded here on Capitol Hill.

Secretary HAALAND. I appreciate that. And, yes, that is one of the initiatives that I am super excited about. I think it would be a wonderful opportunity to bring folks in as their opportunity to perhaps start a career in conservation. And, as I said, we are open to ideas, and certainly want to keep these conversations going. I know you are extremely passionate about this issue, so we would welcome your input into the ideas that you have.

But, of course, we are thinking these folks are going to restore our wetlands on our coastal areas, they are going to remove invasive species, fuel reduction in forests, and so forth. But, of course, I think the list can go on.

Mr. NEGUSE. Thank you, Madam Secretary. We look forward to welcoming you to Colorado.

With that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields.

Representative Radewagen, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Thank you, Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman, for holding this hearing today, and thank you, Secretary Haaland, for your testimony. It is good to see you all again in person, and I thank the Chairman and Ranking Member for working to get us back here on the dais safely. We aren't at 100 percent yet, but we can see the light at the end of the tunnel, and I encourage the American people to take note of their example. If you haven't yet, please get vaccinated, and encourage those around you to do the same, so we can all enjoy each other's company once again.

Before I get into my questions, I also want to thank Secretary Haaland and the Administration for including a level funding request for the American Samoa operations account with OIA. There has been a knee-jerk tendency for the budgeters over the years to include the account in across-the-board cuts, and it remained stagnant through decades of inflation, until recently. So, I appreciate that you acknowledged the importance of this account by not touching it.

That said, the recent pandemic has highlighted weaknesses in our health infrastructure. And I have a request with the appropriations to not just maintain funding, but to increase the

account for development and planning for a desperately needed new hospital.

At an Indigenous Peoples Subcommittee hearing last week, we received testimony from several witnesses, including Chairman Ned Norris of the Tohono O'odham Nation, about the state of their healthcare infrastructure. And their descriptions could just as easily apply to the territories as to Indian Country.

Madam Secretary, I sincerely appreciate your dedication to Indian and insular healthcare issues, and I will continue to rely on you to help address this problem. Both Congress and the Administration need to approach this for both sides. And I look forward to working with you.

Shifting gears a bit, not all tribal fee-to-trust applications are the same. Madam Secretary, how will you and your team prioritize and process discretionary fee-to-trust applications?

And with what local consultation process will you conduct, if there is neighboring tribe or local jurisdiction opposition?

And for discretionary off-reservation fee-to-trust applications, will you commit to keeping the Indian Affairs manual update signed by Assistant Secretary Sweeney last August, which memorialized multiple years of national policy memoranda?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much for the question, Mrs. Radewagen. I appreciate the question.

I want to let you know that I had a very nice conversation with Governor Lemanu just last week. So, we are in close touch with the folks in your community, and just appreciate the opportunity to support you and their mission.

The fee-to-trust applications, I would really appreciate an opportunity—if I can get our Assistant Secretary to make sure that we can get a briefing, or have a conversation with your staff on this issue, just so you can have all the details you need. It is important to us. And, of course, as I mentioned, tribal consultation is an absolute priority of President Biden's administration, and we are committed to that.

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady yields. Let me recognize Representative Levin.

Sir.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. You are recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Secretary Haaland, it is wonderful to see you. Just know that you are missed here, in the House of Representatives. I miss sitting with you and, hopefully, you are very proud of the two new great Representatives from New Mexico, who are sitting up here where you used to sit. But it is just great to see you in such a position of influence now.

And I want to thank you also for conducting a comprehensive review of the Federal oil and gas leasing system, and for appearing before members of this Committee, so we could provide direct feedback on the Administration's ongoing review.

I think you know that preventing new offshore oil and gas leasing in my state of California is extremely important to me and to the constituents that I represent. The local tourism, recreation, and coastal economies that employ so many of my constituents rely

on clean beaches and healthy oceans, and that is why we have co-sponsored the American Coast and Ocean Protections Act.

Under the last administration, as I think you may remember, your predecessor, Secretary Bernhardt, when I asked him, "What comfort can you provide me that you will not pursue drilling off the California coast," let's just say he provided no such comfort. And really, it was very clear that fossil fuel interests came first. And it is why we need Congress to permanently protect the Pacific from the dangers of new oil drilling.

Secretary, I understand that the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management needs to develop a new, 5-year leasing program by 2022. So, I will ask you a similar question to what I asked your predecessor: Can you commit here today that you will listen to my constituents in coastal Southern California before making any final decisions about new offshore drilling?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you for the question, Congressman. And, of course, as I mentioned earlier, I feel very confident about our team's ability to make sure we are reaching out to stakeholders. It is one thing that we are very committed to. So, yes, I make that commitment to you, that we will ensure that we are reaching out to stakeholders for these issues.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you. Incredibly refreshing to hear that.

And can you commit to working with us in Congress, as we work to permanently prevent new drilling off California's coast?

Secretary HAALAND. I am always ready and willing to work with you, Congressman.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you so much. I want to turn to smart, renewable energy development on public lands.

I applaud the Administration's desire to achieve 100 percent carbon pollution-free power on our grid by 2035, and, certainly, our public lands should be part of that solution.

As I talk to some of those who are working on these projects for renewable energy generation on public lands, I have heard that costs like acreage rents often don't reflect fair market value. BLM in California recently adjusted rents in Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties. But I want to be sure that you are looking at this comprehensively.

What action does the Department plan to take to address the high costs of rents and fees for wind and solar projects on public lands?

Secretary HAALAND. I would love to see if Rachel can answer that question. And, of course, we are ready to provide any details on the record too.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you so much. We look forward to following up.

Finally, drought-prone communities that rely heavily on water imported from basins hundreds of miles away are working to enhance local supplies, including by investing in ocean desalination. I have the biggest de-sal plant in the Western Hemisphere in my district.

The American Jobs Plan recognizes the Western drought crisis and the need to maximize the resilience of our land and water resources. Do you think that an infrastructure package should support a broad portfolio of water supply infrastructure projects, including local solutions like desalination, where appropriate?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you for the question, Congressman. And, of course, I understand that that is an option. It is one of the tools, as I mentioned, and know that that could be a source of water for coastal communities.

And I also want to just mention that the American Jobs Plan includes Western water resiliency, and desalination is one of those tools in the tool box.

Mr. LEVIN. Well, thank you so much, Madam Secretary. I look forward to working with you on all of the items we just discussed. And congrats again, and we are so excited for the next few years. Thank you so much.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields.

Representative Fulcher, you are recognized for 5 minutes, sir.

Mr. FULCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, just let me add my name to the congratulation list to you, and also thank you for your demeanor and attitude in interacting with us, and just how you conduct yourself. I am thankful for that.

Madam Secretary, Representative Lamborn and Gosar already brought up this topic, but I want to just explore it a little bit further. It has to do with critical minerals and rare earth elements. As you know, there are many of those that are needed for homeland security purposes, many of those that are needed just for common consumer use, just to keep our daily lives coherent, if you will.

According to the USGS, China currently provides 85 to 95 percent of our rare earth elements, and that is problematic for a whole host of reasons. They are our enemy, and I know firsthand, because I have done business there for years. This is not an entity that generally wants to see the United States succeed and prosper. Also, they harvest in a very non-environmentally friendly way when they do that.

Now, we have those critical minerals in the United States, but many of those are on public lands. In my own state, those public lands comprise nearly two-thirds of land mass, and in our Nation, nearly a third. But harvesting is prevented, for the most part, by a preservation type of policy. And that policy just simply doesn't allow it, due to regulation, or law, or lawsuit, et cetera. And therein lies the conflict I want to talk with you about.

Recently, the Administration put out the 30x30 initiative, 30x30 report, and it focuses specifically on a conservation policy which, theoretically, would allow for some responsible harvesting of things that we need so badly. But in your articulation with the America the Beautiful report, your recommendations focus on a preservation-type language, which recommends even more wilderness designations, monuments, and so on and so forth, which simply just would not allow for any of that.

Please talk to me about that. Are we going to proceed with, in the future, looking at a conservation-type approach, where you can, theoretically, responsibly do some of this harvesting? Or are we going to go all out and just say, no, this is preservation, we can't touch it at all?

Which will it be in your Administration, Madam Secretary?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much for the question. I believe the America the Beautiful Initiative has emphasized a conservation model, and that conservation model is meant to ensure that we are collaborating with folks, that we are bringing in, keep us voluntary. We want private landowners, we want Tribal Nations to be a part of the initiative. It is not meant to be any other way.

So, I want to assure you that conservation is the word that we use when referring to America the Beautiful. And that includes—during the time we were writing this review, that my team was writing the review, we consulted with many stakeholders: farmers, ranchers, folks in the outdoor economy. Those voices were all a part of the conversations that we had. And it is truly meant to be a voluntary and collaborative effort.

Mr. FULCHER. In that sense, will you commit within your Administration to support a policy that would allow responsible harvesting of the critical minerals and rare earths that we need in this Nation?

Secretary HAALAND. With respect to critical minerals, of course, we understand that it is important to an innovative economy. And President Biden recognizes the importance of critical minerals for the future of our country. And, of course, we want it to be done in an environmentally responsible way, with attention paid to ensure that workers are safe, and so forth.

We believe very strongly we can support our economy and the environment at the same time.

Mr. FULCHER. And I want to try to get one more very quick question in. But let me just close it up by just commenting.

Madam Secretary, we only have two options: we either get it from someone else, or we do it ourselves, responsibly. And the someone else is not our friend. So, please just contemplate that.

Lastly, before I run out of time, 58,000 acres burned last year, many of that on our public lands, Department of the Interior lands. Do you have any idea what type of upscale will be needed in order to prevent such things from continuing to grow?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much for the question. Perhaps that is one that Rachel might be able to give some details on.

Ms. TAYLOR. Thank you for the question. I think you have touched on a really important question. And we go back to the cohesive wildfire strategy, which talks about fire-resilient communities, and supporting response efforts. And one of the pieces of that is making sure that the land is healthy, and that we have the appropriate resources. So, I would—

Mr. FULCHER. Rachel, I apologize, but I am out of time. Any of that data that you would be willing to share in writing, that would be great.

Ms. TAYLOR. I would be happy to do that, yes, sir.

Mr. FULCHER. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir. The gentleman yields. The Chair recognizes Representative Porter.

You are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. PORTER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Secretary Haaland, as the Chair of the Committee's Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, I take my responsibility to

ensure transparency and accountability very seriously. The American people have a right to know how their country's top officials and industry leaders are making policies and decisions that will affect all of our lives.

During the last administration, getting answers, much less clear answers, from our government leaders, including, and maybe especially, those at the Department of the Interior, was no easy task. And of the Committee's more than 40 requests made by Chair Grijalva, Interior adequately responded to less than a quarter of them by the end of the administration, and the vast majority of requests got no response at all, or were filled with useless, irrelevant information, often publicly available, hundreds of pages of windings, and even a 12,000-page printout of an Excel chart that was completely unreadable. That was a new low, and an attack, really, on Congress' obligation to perform oversight.

Can you commit to being more responsive to Congress than your predecessors under the Trump administration?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you, Congresswoman. We will be as responsive as we possibly can.

I do want you to know that, currently, we are processing oversight requests from the last administration, requests from the Chairman that came and that were unfulfilled in the previous Congress. So, those are still ongoing.

And very quickly, I want you to know that seven full committee chairs in the House have written to our Department requesting documents pertinent to January 6. So, those are all requests that we have currently that we are working on. And, of course, we will continue to keep pursuing opportunities to fulfill every single request that we get.

Ms. PORTER. So, you are working to clear the backlog, which was significant, the January 6-related requests.

And then, from my impression, seeing what is going on, the document requests, are you committed to cooperating in good faith with both parties' requests for information, including requests from the Minority party?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much for the question. And I understand that when the Chairman will send a request, it is a request for the Full Committee, as far as I understand. And we really want to be responsive, as responsive as we possibly can, to this Committee. And we will work to, hopefully, achieve that.

Ms. PORTER. I appreciate you taking those in order, trying to get us information that we have been waiting years for, and proceeding in a good faith manner.

I wanted to ask you briefly, Secretary Haaland—you know I have three kids, and you too have been a single parent. I wanted to ask you a little bit about the Every Kid Outdoors program. Are you familiar with that?

Secretary HAALAND. Yes, Congresswoman.

Ms. PORTER. I noticed that this program doesn't have a specific line item appropriation. Do you know about how much money will be spent administering this program in the proposed 2020 budget?

Secretary HAALAND. I will ask Rachel to fill you in on that, but want you to know that one of my deep priorities is making sure that children have access to the outdoors.

Ms. PORTER. The Every Kid Outdoors program, for people who don't know, provides access to public lands for every fourth grader in this country. And the President has supported this. But I think there is a way in his budget that we can go further, and do more to make sure that this program is not just a website, is not just a gimmick, but that we actually are providing the resources for things like transportation and program planning, to make sure that kids who live far, far away from national parks, kids in urban areas, are able.

So, I would just like a commitment that you will continue to look into how you can support Every Kid Outdoors.

Secretary HAALAND. Yes, yes.

Ms. PORTER. All right, thank you.

My last and final question: You know that there are lots of diverse opinions about fossil fuels, and the future of fossil fuels. But one area where I hope we can all agree is the importance of protecting taxpayer money. Would you say that you have an obligation, as Secretary, to identify and address waste, fraud, and abuse?

Secretary HAALAND. Congresswoman, with respect to our public lands, it is the truth that our public lands belong to every single American. And in that regard, I feel committed to protecting those lands for every single American, even with regard to funding issues, money issues.

Ms. PORTER. And I know earlier this year you launched a review of onshore oil and gas leasing. Do you know how long onshore oil and gas leasing has been on the high risk list by the non-partisan Government Accountability Office?

Secretary HAALAND. Rachel, can you answer that? I am sorry.

Ms. TAYLOR. No, it is fine. I think the answer is too long, however long it is.

Ms. PORTER. The answer is—she is a very good student. That would be an A-plus answer.

The answer is 10 years. So, I really support you doing this review, and for 10 years we have lost tens of billions of dollars because we have undervalued oil and gas leases.

Do you believe that reviewing this non-partisan recommendation to get fair value for taxpayers is partisan?

Secretary HAALAND. No, I don't think it is partisan. I think that every single American has a stake in our public lands, and we should protect that right for every single American. So, no, it is not partisan at all.

Ms. PORTER. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady yields.

Mr. Stauber, sir, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STAUBER. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Ranking Member Westerman, for holding this.

Secretary Haaland, thank you for joining us today. I would like to especially thank you for appearing in person. It is well past the time we restore the norm of appearing in person to conduct business in this Committee.

The Interior Department's budget request includes an increase of just over \$26 million for the Mineral Resources Program. This program is crucial to mapping unknown deposits of critical minerals,

which is important because, as your request acknowledges, we are over 95 percent import-reliant for 20 of the 35 critical minerals.

However, in my district, the Duluth Complex features 95 percent of America's nickel, 88 percent of America's cobalt, and about one-third of America's copper, not to mention the rare earths, or the platinum group elements, and others. We know where these minerals are; we don't need to map them. In fact, the USGS has more than 55 entries for the Duluth Complex, alone.

And during the campaign, then-candidate Biden seemed to acknowledge this issue, as well.

[Slide]

Mr. STAUBER. In fact, as you can see in this Reuters headline from October 2020, then-candidate Biden pledged to use domestic union miners, including those in my district, to help source these minerals. Fast forward to May 2021, about 2 months after your confirmation.

[Slide]

Mr. STAUBER. You can see in this Reuters headline that now President Biden's administration plans to look abroad to foreign countries for minerals, and no longer use domestic, union members in northern Minnesota.

Secretary Haaland, what changed from October 2020 to May 2021, and why does the Administration no longer plan to use domestic miners to source these critical minerals that follow the best environmental standards, and the best labor standards in the world?

And we are talking about the Duluth Complex, the biggest copper nickel find in North America.

Secretary HAALAND. Congressman, thank you so much for the question. And what I can say is that President Biden does support energy independence in our country.

We agree that ensuring the availability of critical minerals to the future of our energy needs is very important to America's competitiveness and new technologies—

Mr. STAUBER. Madam Secretary, would you rather source these minerals in our country, where we have mapped them, we follow the best EPA, the best labor standards? Wouldn't we want to mine these minerals in the United States, rather than source it out to foreign nations?

Secretary HAALAND. I truly appreciate your question and your information, Congressman. And, of course, we are happy to continue to speak with you about this issue.

Mr. STAUBER. We talked about permitting earlier, Madam Secretary. We have one copper nickel mine in its 19th year. The other one is going on 10 years. Yet, just in northern Ontario—correction, southern Ontario—there is a gold mine that they put together in 4 years. Same watershed.

We can do better, so I support mapping our minerals. We need to know exactly what we are blessed with in this country, nationwide, and how can we secure our domestic supply chains. We need to extract these critical minerals from where they are. We need to limit our foreign reliance on child labor and foreign adversaries that don't have our best interests at heart. It does not make sense to transition to alternative sources of energy, depending on foreign

nations for these critical minerals that we use in our everyday life, that are a part of our everyday life now. And as we transition, it is important we mine the minerals here, in our country.

So, I would say, by catering to activists' anti-jobs, anti-mining crowd, with only 16 days remaining in office, the Obama-Biden administration pulled long-standing mineral leases for Twin Metals, the project in northern Minnesota, to the dismay of a bipartisan, bicameral coalition of Minnesota Members of Congress and the Iron Range. In May 2019, the Trump administration rightfully reinstated these leases, providing certainty to a region, and its union workers, and our Nation.

Once again, removing these leases would thrust the Iron Range, my constituents, in desperate economic need of jobs. Can you today commit to supporting union jobs, and revitalizing northern Minnesota by keeping these long-standing mineral leases in place, and not prejudging any outcomes before the environmental review is completed?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you for the question, Congressman. And I don't make a practice of prejudging anything, and we do feel that we have a review process in place that will make sure—

Mr. STAUBER. Although you did sign on to removing 234,000 acres, prejudging.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you, Congressman.

The CHAIRMAN. Time is up. The gentleman yields.

Mr. STAUBER. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I recognize Representative Leger Fernández.

You are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEGER FERNÁNDEZ. Thank you so much, Chair Grijalva.

And Secretary Haaland, I am so grateful to have you here today. You know how proud the entire state of New Mexico is, and how thankful we are for your leadership, your guidance, and your wisdom. And, you know, also as a New Mexican, that we are in the ground zero of the climate crisis, and must act to prevent the never-ending drought in the beautiful place we call home.

My colleague from Louisiana pointed out earlier that bigger hurricanes and storms are hitting his district. And we know that climate change is making those storms stronger and more frequent.

States like our beloved New Mexico also rely on fossil fuel production for significant sources of revenue, which often go to schools and other important services. According to the Office of Natural Resources Revenue, actually, New Mexico received a little over \$700 million in royalties from energy production on Federal lands in Fiscal Year 2020.

But we also know that it is a boom and bust industry, and fighting the climate crisis will reduce fossil fuel development. And we already see in the market it is the market itself that is shifting to clean energy, because it is simply cheaper.

I am working on legislation to assist states in this transition, those that rely on fossil fuels. The legislation would decouple the boom and bust Federal royalty sharing from state budgets. In lieu of the Federal royalties, we would provide stable, annual Federal payments to states to replace lost revenues. And finally, we would make additional transition investments to enable communities to diversify their economy.

What do you think, Secretary, about proposals to support states like Louisiana or New Mexico who will lose Federal royalty revenue as we accelerate the just transition to a clean energy economy?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you for that question, Congresswoman, and I appreciate your thoughtfulness in thinking about how we go about transitioning. We are working hard to make sure that no worker is left behind, and that is a priority of President Biden, as well.

And I also understand how important those oil and gas jobs are in a state like ours of New Mexico. So, I appreciate your thoughtfulness on this issue.

We believe very strongly that a lot of the provisions in the budget that President Biden has moved forward will assist in making sure that, definitely, no worker is left behind.

And I would love for Rachel, if she would like to, to provide a few more details to you. We would welcome that.

Ms. TAYLOR. Yes, I think the major focus would be the reclamation jobs proposal, which is the \$16 billion to clean up orphaned wells and abandoned mines, and put folks to work doing that environmentally necessary work, which I know is something that is a personal priority of yours, as well.

I think that that has been one of the focal points. But as the Secretary said, the Department is happy to work with you and other Members to try to figure out solutions to this. Thank you.

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. Thank you very much. I do appreciate the support for the orphaned wells bill that I have sponsored. And I am so glad that we have Secretary Haaland at the helm, because she actually understands closely the impact on the state revenue, as well.

I also want to ask a question regarding the increase, the significant increase, which we really appreciate, for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Education in the President's budget request. You know, better than most, that the needs in Indian Country are a trust responsibility. They have been deferred for decades, and are, therefore, significant.

We held a hearing in the Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples last week that detailed the significant needs for construction of new schools, infrastructure, and facilities. Indeed, your Deputy Assistant Secretary Freihage noted that 86 schools are in poor status. And of those 86 schools, 73 do not currently have funding for major replacement or repair projects.

Could these school construction needs benefit from the President's Jobs Plan, which seeks to build much-needed infrastructure?

Secretary HAALAND. Absolutely, and thank you. We feel the President's American Jobs Plan can help tribal communities in so many ways, but certainly, yes, the need for schools.

And what I will say is that the request for the Bureau of Indian Education is \$1.3 billion, which is \$110.6 million over the 2021-enacted level. So, we are moving toward where we need to be.

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. My time is up, but I do appreciate the increased revenues for the BIE, BIA, and to address these needed facility improvements. Thank you.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady yields. Let me recognize Representative Tiffany for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you very much, and thank you for being here, Secretary Haaland.

The non-partisan Congressional Research Service provided a report recently that said, of all the lands in the country that are conserved, including federal, state, and private lands, it totals 39 percent of the land base. How much is enough?

Secretary HAALAND. I am so sorry, could you repeat that question, please?

Mr. TIFFANY. How much additional land being locked up by the Federal Government is appropriate?

Secretary HAALAND. Are you speaking of the America the Beautiful Initiative, Congressman?

Mr. TIFFANY. I am referring to public ownership of land.

Secretary HAALAND. Well, I am not quite sure I understand your question, but if you are speaking of the America the Beautiful Initiative, that is a collaborative effort, as I have mentioned before, and the land wouldn't actually be locked up.

Mr. TIFFANY. Have you seen the increase in the price of a 2x4? Are you familiar with what is going on there?

Secretary HAALAND. I know that a lot of things have gone up because of the pandemic. Yes, I was aware of the increase in many items.

Mr. TIFFANY. Yes, well, the cost of a 2x4 has gone up because of demand, but also it has gone up because of us shutting down lands, especially in the West. I know I recently heard of a story that a mill was shut down in western South Dakota as a result of not being able to harvest on Federal lands. It is really a great concern, and I would just highlight that for you.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gray wolf was just de-listed at the end of 2020 by Fish and Wildlife, and we had a successful wolf hunt in Wisconsin. Do you commit to maintaining that 2020 rule so we can continue to have management and protection of gray wolves, and that it be left to the states and tribes?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you for the question, and I appreciate the opportunity to be in contact about this.

Of course, our Department cares about wildlife, we care about their habitats. We want to make sure that we are working well together with states and local communities.

Mr. TIFFANY. Are you going to urge your agency to continue to allow states to manage their wolf population, rather than going back to the re-listing that has been going on?

Secretary HAALAND. With respect to anything that is listed under the Endangered Species Act, we rely on science. We are moved by the science, so I can put it that way, that that is the main driver behind—

Mr. TIFFANY. I really appreciate that you mention following the science on this, because there were 26 wildlife scientists back in, I think was 2013 or 2014, in the Great Lakes states, that said that when the gray wolf was re-listed by the Federal judge, they said it is a terrible mistake, because under the Endangered Species Act

it should be de-listed. They are recovered. So, I sure hope that you will follow the science, and continue to allow the states like my state, Wisconsin, to be able to continue to manage the gray wolf population.

Under Federal law it is required to coordinate—I believe it is under NEPA and FLPMA, and some of those major Acts—it is a requirement of the Federal Government to work with local communities, local governments, to coordinate and to have a consistency review with local land use plans. Will you make that a priority of the Department of the Interior, that your agency follows through with that coordination and consistency review with local units of government?

Secretary HAALAND. Congressman, as I have mentioned in many of the questions I have gotten today, we are very good about working with local communities, talking to stakeholders, making sure that we know and understand how communities feel about the issues that we are working on.

Mr. TIFFANY. I appreciate that. And you mentioned the word “consulting,” and consultation is oftentimes used as a term. This is completely different. This is coordination, and it is a specific term that is used in Federal law, in which you are giving local governments an equal seat at the table so that there is this consistency review with their land use plans and stuff.

I hope you will follow through, and urge your staff that you are leading, that they do that coordination and that consistency review.

Secretary HAALAND. I appreciate that distinction, Congressman. Thank you.

Mr. TIFFANY. Mr. Chairman, is my time up?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. TIFFANY. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, sir. Let me recognize Representative Tlaib.

You are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. TLAIB. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. I am incredibly proud to see a colleague that I came here in a historic class of firsts. We didn't run to become first of anything, we came to represent and fight for the community that raised us.

But Secretary Haaland, just seeing you up there, of course, you know how incredibly proud I am, people like us running for office, and also representing our country in all different levels. You are surrounded by photos of people that don't look like you, but you care deeply about every single person in our Nation. So, I just want to thank you so much for your courage to take on this role.

Secretary Haaland, you know I come from a community that is considered a frontline community. I want to talk to you about the Environmental Justice for All Act that I proudly co-sponsored, and has been led by our Chairman, Chairman Grijalva. Some of the provisions of that bill speak to the need to more fully consider what many of my residents call cumulative impacts of multiple sources of pollution in environmental justice communities like mine.

I represent one of the most polluted zip codes in Michigan, Secretary. It is where I thought the smell was normal. I thought that it was OK that I smelled like hydrogen sulfide when I went back inside my home, playing in the front yard with all my

siblings. This neighborhood continues to be surrounded by multiple sources of concentrated pollution that contribute to asthma, respiratory issues, even cancer.

In my years of working with environmental justice warriors, they consistently bring this up, the need for cumulative impact analysis and environmental decision making that is centered on public health. They are sick and tired of corporations and corporate greed, really, having just a free-for-all of license to pollute their communities. And at the end, it is our country and our communities that suffer the most.

Can you speak to why it is important for the Interior and other Federal agencies to consider public health impacts when permitting activities in areas that already suffer from multiple pollution sources? Why is that critically important?

Secretary HAALAND. Congresswoman, thank you so much for the question. And it is definitely an important one, and one that President Biden cares deeply about.

And I can tell you that, as a citizen of the Pueblo of Laguna, we were home to the largest open-pit uranium mine in the world for 30 years, three open-pit and nine underground mines. Not only did the blasting break apart homes, traditional homes that had stood for hundreds of years, but people are still dying from that uranium being blown around. It took decades to even get funding to start cleaning it up. So, I understand so well what you are talking about.

And I want you to know that I care deeply about the health of our children, and why we need to make sure that we are centering the activities that we do on the overall health and welfare and vitality, if you could say, of all of our communities.

And I would want to point out the Justice40 Initiative that aims to bring 40 percent of the overall benefits of Federal investments to underserved communities like yours. And you mentioned that, yes, you thought it was normal. It isn't normal. Every child should be able to breathe clean air and play outside in a safe environment.

So, I want you to know that we are committed to that, and I thank you for raising that here today.

Ms. TLAIB. No, thank you so much. And, of course, I know you get invited to so many different districts and communities, but the 13th District Strong community would welcome you as soon as we implement that 40 percent. You can come, and you can show them that they shouldn't be left behind as we think about clean air and clean water.

Lastly, Secretary Haaland, I am concerned about reports that I have read that detailed the past harassment that some BLM staffers have faced from local politicians and their communities, and a lack of support from some BLM managers for staffers who are enforcing regulations that ranchers object to. Have you been looking at that, and understanding—I mean, this is really harassment and intimidation of BLM staff.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you, Congresswoman. I am committed to the workforce at the Department of the Interior, some of the most dedicated public servants in the entire Federal system. I have career staff who have been at the Department for over 40 years, and their safety is of the utmost importance to me. So, I appreciate the comment.

We are actively ensuring that—we are following up on, and we do follow up on any issues that are reported to us, and it is an important part of our overall health of our workforce.

Ms. TLAI B. Thank you. And Secretary, please look to this Committee as partners.

But I also would welcome, Chairman Grijalva, if we can have a hearing, really, to expose what is happening to BLM staffers. It is disturbing. And I have seen it done on the state level and targeting these employees that are trying to protect us.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you.

Ms. TLAI B. Thank you. I yield.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady yields.

Representative Carl, you are recognized.

Mr. CARL. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Madam Secretary, from the great state of Alabama, I might add. Welcome back to your Committee.

Like most of my colleagues here, I am very upset about the Biden administration's moratorium on new oil and gas leases. It has been estimated that 24,000 hardworking folks in the great state of Alabama will lose their jobs over the next 4 years because of this shortsighted decision. They are real people we are talking about, and right now their livelihoods are endangered due to this pause.

I also want you to know how important the GOMESA funds are to my district. As a county commissioner, I fully understand the GOMESA program. The program supports \$26 million in conservative and recreation projects in the state—in south Alabama last year alone, including shoreline registration, bike trails, park enhancement, and marine science research vessels. Each year, local county commissioners, municipalities, and governments plan projects based on forecasts of these GOMESA funds. If the leases continue to be canceled, our coastal communities will be denied a vital source of funding for the years to come.

I find it very hypocritical of the Biden administration to preach to us about the environment, but ignore this important component of offshore drilling called GOMESA.

My good friend, Mr. Graves, brought this up before, but I want to get some clarification. You said the Department is reviewing the Louisiana court decision, and will comply with its ruling that this pause on the new leases is unlawful. Have you directed your staff to research the leases on the sale 257?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you, Congressman. I would appreciate an opportunity to answer your question, that particular question, on the record. What I can say, of course, is that the leasing pause is only on new leases. It does not affect the millions of acres of leased land, nor the over 8,000 permits that are active currently.

Mr. CARL. But do you anticipate the 257 program coming back in existence this year?

Secretary HAALAND. As I mentioned, I would like to answer that question for the record, if that is OK with you. I would appreciate that opportunity.

Mr. CARL. You are going to provide that to me in writing?

Secretary HAALAND. Yes.

Mr. CARL. OK. My other question for you is, we see the Department's comprehensive review on the oil and gas lease program—when will we see this comprehensive review on oil and gas lease?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much for the question. We have stated that it will come early summer, so some time soon.

Mr. CARL. July is here.

Secretary HAALAND. Yes, thank you.

Mr. CARL. When is early summer, to you?

Secretary HAALAND. Yes, sometime soon. Is this the first day of summer? It will be soon, Congressman, and thank you for the question.

Mr. CARL. So, as part of the Department's review, you have consulted with the state and local officials in Alabama?

Secretary HAALAND. I can't answer that question, specifically, but I would be happy to find out exactly who we have consulted with, and share that with you.

Mr. CARL. The old trick in politics is never ask a question you don't know the answer to.

The answer is zero. Your Department has had a conversation with no one in the state of Alabama, according to the Governor's office. So, I encourage you to take in consideration getting input from our elected officials that know what is going on, on the ground. Without our input, I don't see how you can make these rash decisions to shut industries down, without knowing what is going on, boots on the ground.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you.

Mr. CARL. With that said, is there a plan to reach out to these local governments?

I heard you talk earlier about some children that you dealt with. Did you not do that in Alabama before you shut the leases down?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you, Congressman. We will be happy to follow up with your office on this issue. And if there is someone in particular you would like us to speak with, we would be happy to do that. We are committed to hearing from everyone.

And we have had a number of consultations. We had a forum for the industry back in May. We have been in contact with hundreds of people, and we will be happy to be in touch with you, as well.

Mr. CARL. Well, I just find it very hard to comprehend that you would make such strong decisions on an industry, killing a complete industry, and not have some conversation with locals.

With that, thank you, ma'am.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me recognize Representative Case, sir. You are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CASE. Madam Secretary, aloha, good to see you.

First of all, there has been some overlay in the discussion over the size of the budget for the Department of the Interior. And I just want to say to you, and for the record, that I completely support the President's budget request.

It is inconceivable to me that a Department that is responsible to steward 20 percent of our Nation's lands, that manages the water supply for 17 Western states, that is responsible for almost 600 federally recognized tribes, that has responsibilities across the board over centuries, and now to include climate change, is funded at, literally, around 1 percent of our total discretionary budget.

So, I don't view the President's budget, at somewhere around 1.15 percent of the discretionary budget, 2.3 percent of the discretionary non-defense budget, as unreasonable. In fact, I believe that the DOI has been chronically underfunded for a long, long time, and we have a lot of catch-up to do. So, first of all, back to you on that one.

Second, I do want to address two areas that, although they don't enter into the national discourse quite as much, are critical areas within your Department's jurisdiction. And I speak of Native Hawaiians and of the Compacts of Free Association.

First of all, thank you so much, too, for your own recognition of Native Hawaiians as the Indigenous peoples of our country who originate in Hawaii. As you know, the Native Hawaiians have a special political relationship, and have for over a century now. You kindly joined us on an event relating to Native Hawaiians, and your personal attention and recognition of Native Hawaiians is deeply appreciated.

We have work to do with your Department on Native Hawaiians. We need to assess whether the Office of Native Hawaiian Relations within the Department is functioning correctly for the next century. And you have kindly engaged us on that. We look forward to completing that work with you, along with a number of other initiatives that affect Native Hawaiians that are within your departments.

Let me speak directly to the Compacts of Free Association. These are the agreements that our country has with three other independent sovereign countries in the Pacific: the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau. These are compacts under which we both enjoy mutual privileges and obligations. They are key, from our country's historical perspective, and are, certainly, our future. And these compacts are up for renegotiation right now.

And the fact is that the negotiations have, apparently, bogged down. There is little movement on them. The responsibility within the Administration for negotiating these compacts lies with Interior and State. There is little evidence that there is any progress being made on those negotiations.

I am joining a number of my colleagues in a letter to the President that will be copied to you very soon, asking that those negotiations be placed on a much faster track. The last time we went through these negotiations, they, unfortunately, lagged for years, creating critical uncertainty in the Pacific.

So, I would simply ask you for any comments you have. I don't expect a formal response from you right now. But I would simply like to commend the issue of the compacts to you personally, and to your Department, as an area that I hope is not forgotten. And, certainly, we are going to try to highlight it.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much, Congressman. And no, definitely not forgotten. In fact, I met with a number of governors over the past couple of weeks, and we have very competent and caring people in that office. And I want to assure you that it is a priority for us, and I will take your comments to heart, and see how we can move this forward.

Mr. CASE. Thank you so much.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields.
Representative Rosendale, you are recognized.

Mr. ROSENDALE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much for joining us, Secretary Haaland, good to see you.

This Administration proposes fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget. By your comments, I take it this means that the Administration is fully supportive of these conservation programs. Is that correct?

Secretary HAALAND. Yes, Congressman.

Mr. ROSENDALE. While you commented about the existing leases, we know that they have diminishing returns. Any well has diminishing returns. If that is the case, can you explain how we will replace the revenue loss caused by the Biden administration's moratorium on all new oil and gas leases, which jeopardizes the main revenue source of these programs, and the longevity of our conservation funding?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much for the question, Congressman. And, as I have stated, there are still over 8,000 leases—or, I am sorry, 8,000 permits—that sit unused. There are millions of acres of land and leases that currently can be operational. So, the pause on the new leases, it is only that, new leases, and not any existing leases.

There has been ongoing work in the industry since the pause—

Mr. ROSENDALE. So, excuse me, I appreciate that. And, no pun intended, but what you are doing is shutting off the pipeline for the future. And anything that we forestall right now that keeps us from doing the research and the development of those resources ends up impacting us later on down the line, which has put us in a position, in years past, where we have been so dependent upon foreign energy, which is not good for our economy nor our national security.

In your confirmation hearing you promised that—and I quote—“The ESA should be driven by the science, and it is appropriate for species to be de-listed when they have recovered.” A March species status assessment published by the Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that the greater Yellowstone ecosystem and the Northern Continental Divide ecosystem populations of the grizzly bear both have high resiliency and have met the criteria for de-listing. They have both reached and surpassed their target populations.

You continue to claim that your Administration will again, in quotes, “follow the science.” Will you follow the science and move to de-list the grizzly bear populations in both of these ecosystems?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much for the question. And, yes, the ongoing recovery is a remarkable success for the ESA, and we are happy about that. Our implementation, of course, as you mentioned, too, will be guided by science and the law.

Mr. ROSENDALE. So, will you then move to de-list these populations, if they have hit their target populations?

Secretary HAALAND. I appreciate the question. And it is noted there are considerable challenges that remain, overall, with fully recovering—

Mr. ROSENDALE. They have met the target populations, Madam Secretary, and both have high resiliency. Will you move to de-list these populations?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you—

Mr. ROSENDALE. Just yes or no, really.

Secretary HAALAND. I would like to be back in touch with your office on that.

Mr. ROSENDALE. I would appreciate just a simple answer on that, if you have to go back and confer with your office to give us a yes or no.

Missing and murdered Indigenous women is a very important issue in Montana, as you are very well aware—we have seven reservations there. What are you doing to improve the collaboration between the tribes and the Federal authorities to improve the investigation and prosecution of these heinous crimes, which claim so many of our Native women?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much. And our Missing and Murdered unit that I announced earlier this year is meant to provide leadership, and use the full weight of the Department to solve these crimes.

One of the main priorities of the unit is for the unsolved crimes. But certainly, the budget has been increased, as well. And we are confident that we will be able to move forward on that and I appreciate your concern—

Mr. ROSENDALE. I understand that, what I am trying to get at is that collaboration, because we have the sovereign tribes, and we have the Federal Government. And I know that we want to solve this, but there is going to have to be some kind of collaboration. So, I would really like to get some detail on what we are going to do to try to bring these parties together to work on these issues.

Secretary HAALAND. The Department has a very strong and experienced Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, who knows tribes very well. He is a former Tribal President, himself, and is working very hard to make sure that he is collaborating with Tribal Nations on this issue.

Mr. ROSENDALE. Thank you for joining us.

And I would yield back, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. Let me recognize a new member to the Committee and, to some extent, Congress, Representative Stansbury, who is representing New Mexico's 1st District, and that she retained, the district that Madam Secretary represented.

Ms. Stansbury.

Ms. STANSBURY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the Ranking Member, and to all of my colleagues. It is an honor to be able to serve with you here in this Committee.

And to Secretary Haaland, it is humbling to be here. And I am getting emotional, as I was sitting here listening to you speak. It is so humbling, and such an honor to be able to see you serving our Nation. New Mexico is so proud. Our country is so proud. You are exactly where you need to be, and you are already bringing the change that our Nation needs to see. So, thank you for your service and everything that you are doing.

When I look at the President's budget, Mr. Chairman, and the requests for the Department of the Interior, I feel hope. The American people know that the science is clear, and that we must urgently address climate change. I am grateful to see that our budget reflects that, and that if we are going to preserve our planet for future generations, that we address both the causes of climate change and the impacts to our communities, and that we center and lift up our communities in the process.

Together, I know that we can build a world that is more just, and more equitable, and more climate resilient. And this budget actually invests in our communities and protections for our lands, waters, and wildlife, and in their future, which is exactly what we need to do to ensure our future resilience.

As you know, Madam Secretary, our state and our country are facing an unprecedented drought across the West that is heavily impacting New Mexico, that has shattered records already this season, and that is threatening the future of our communities, and increased wildfire and drought risks moving forward.

Millions of Americans already live without access to clean and safe drinking water. And this crisis disproportionately impacts communities in New Mexico, particularly in our tribal communities. We have to take action now to address the water needs of our communities and climate change, and ensure that we are addressing these impacts across our country.

I am grateful to see the Department's budget allocates significant funding also for public lands, for wildlife mitigation, builds and fortifies our water infrastructure, and supports our communities.

I am also, Madam Secretary, deeply proud to see the ways in which this budget reflects our commitment to restorative justice and tribal sovereignty.

Secretary Haaland, I have seen your work over the last several months, and lifting up the work of missing and murdered Indigenous women, and this week in launching the Federal Indian Boarding School Truth Initiative. These historic steps will begin to address and reconcile our country's brutal history, and the need for healing and justice in our country. Thank you for your bravery in bringing these initiatives forward.

Madam Secretary, I am also just so grateful for your service, and look forward to working with you in the transformative work that we have to do for our country and our communities.

And, Mr. Chairman, I would like to just ask Madam Secretary if you could share more with us about your work on missing and murdered Indigenous women, and the work that you are hoping to do, as well as the boarding school initiatives that you have launched this week.

Secretary HAALAND. Congresswoman, thank you so much for the question. And I appreciate your kind words very much. And, of course, I am a proud New Mexican sitting here today.

I want to sort of emphasize President Biden's commitment to diversity, and how important it is that we have diverse voices, those perspectives from folks who generally haven't had a say in a lot of the policy, or the ideas, or the work that comes out of the Federal Government. So, for that, I am proud to have those opportunities.

Missing and murdered Indigenous women has been on my mind for a very long time. And I am happy that it has achieved some prominence in sort of mainstream issues. People don't know to care about something unless they know about it. So, raising the issue time and again helps the public to really coalesce, and realize that it is an important issue that all of us should care about. And I appreciate your help on that, as well.

The boarding school initiative—after I heard the news of the grave in Canada, it made me think about a day that I was sitting with my grandmother, and just talking about her experience when the priests gathered up children from around the village and put them on a train to go to Santa Fe. And I know that that is an experience that a lot of communities have, so I am happy to move those issues forward, and appreciate your support on all of those.

Ms. STANSBURY. Thank you, Madam Secretary, I yield.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady yields. Representative Moore, you are recognized.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you, Chairman and Ranking Member.

Secretary Haaland, it is great to see you again.

It would have been completely appropriate for you to have deferred my colleague Mr. Gallego's question to me, whether or not you showed up to hear out people in Utah. I saw your schedule. I was with you for 3 full days. You had a packed schedule, and were willing to take input. And it was very much appreciated. Our request for you to visit Utah and that part of the region was sincere, and you showed up, and on behalf of the entire Utah delegation, and Utah, we appreciated your willingness to come and hear out the stakeholders. Bears Ears is a very difficult situation to be able to solve. And your willingness to come was really important.

We have made an equally sincere request to President Biden, as you may know, to meet with us before he makes the decision. Do you have any insight as to whether that meeting will happen, or to the extent that it would be worthwhile, productive, any insight there?

Secretary HAALAND. Congressman, thank you so much for the question. And I was very honored to have an opportunity to join you and everyone in Utah. It was a really, really wonderful time.

As I mentioned, this is a Presidential action. The Antiquities Act is solely within the President's decision making. And, of course, we are happy to make sure that he knows your request reflected in this hearing today, and I am happy to let the White House know that you have requested that again.

Mr. MOORE. Yes, thank you. I remember thinking during our meeting that there was so much productive work that we did over those few days. I worried, as we came back to Washington, do we all retreat to our corners? And we are all subject to that, and I totally get that. And it is a sincere request, and I would appreciate a chance to continue this dialogue before any final decisions are made.

With respect to the Antiquities Act, there are two big factors. And I haven't been as involved in this as many other Members of Utah stakeholders. You got to meet with our governor. It has been

a long, very tumultuous year, and going back and forth, in a ping pong effect.

Two things stick out to me with the Antiquities Act: one being, this is your desire to protect the antiquities in the smallest amount of land. That is what the Supreme Court has come out with the ruling of, saying we cannot make these huge land designations, but we have to use the Antiquities Act as something that will focus on preserving that, and we are committed to that, as well. But the second piece is what I would actually like to discuss briefly: the management decisions that go along with the Antiquities Act. Can you provide any other insight, maybe your willingness to release your monument report, to give the public some assurance that the management, however this is done, will be a first and foremost priority to that?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much for the question. And Congressman, during the days that I spent in Utah, I really took those comments to heart, the ranchers who came in and spoke with us, and professed their love for the land. I understand that because I have a family of ranchers, as well. I understand how they feel about the land, and I absolutely appreciate that.

So, I just want you to know that all those comments did absolutely figure in. And as I have mentioned many times here, our public lands belong to every American, so we want to make sure that this beautiful cultural and historical place that can offer so much to future generations stands.

It is also important to make sure that those folks in your state who are on the ground can also reap the benefits of being in those lands that they have for generations, as well. So, all that input was extremely important to me, and I just want you to know that I took that to heart, and it is, in some ways, reflected in the work that we do.

Mr. MOORE. And, finally, with respect of those management decisions, after having that experience, would you deem that to be best handled in an executive fiat or a legislative solution?

Secretary HAALAND. Well, as I mentioned, as a former Member of Congress, I understand the value in legislation. Right? That is what you do, and I wholeheartedly would support your decision to move ahead with any legislation, if that is what you choose to do.

Mr. MOORE. I have many more questions, but I will yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields.

Let me recognize Representative McEachin for any questions he may have.

Before that, let me indicate that the Secretary was gracious enough to extend this to when the votes are going to be called, which is about 1:15 or so. So, if we can, for the people that are left—and there are still quite a few—we can be as concise—and allow every Member to have an opportunity, I would appreciate it. But it is your 5 minutes.

So, Mr. McEachin.

Mr. MCEACHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And again, as always, I thank you for the opportunity to participate in these hearings on this very important matter.

Secretary Haaland, it is great to see you again. And I will try to cut straight to the chase. Earlier, one of the Members raised the

issue of cumulative effects in the Environmental Justice Act—I mean the EJ For All Act that I have been proud to ride side-saddle with the Chairman on. This may end up being more of a comment than a question, but the notion of benefits came up in the Justice40 Initiative.

And I need you to understand, Madam Secretary, that in my viewpoint, at least—the Chair and I worked for a couple of years, trying to figure out how best to serve these underserved communities. And the feedback that we got back is that we know we, the underserved communities, we are all different. We share some commonalities in that we have been disenfranchised, that we have been marginalized, that we are front-liners, but we have different problems that call for different solutions that prevents Washington from being able to do one-size-fits-all. And that is what, to me, ought to be so exciting about the Justice40 Initiative.

But the question is what do we mean by benefits?

And I will be talking to Cecilia Martinez later on, hopefully this week, about that definition, because I know it is still being worked out. But benefits have to be done at the direction of the stakeholders. Washington can't come in and say, "We are going to fix this water line. You are going to benefit from it. Be happy." That is what we have historically done.

I don't have any doubt about the President's commitment to being a true EJ advocate. He has lifted that notion up so well, and in such a forceful fashion, that I don't have any doubt where his heart is. But a lot of the challenges will be in the details. And to the extent that we need to resist the temptation to tell these communities what is in their best interests, rather, we need to support them with resources, expertise, or whatever else they need, so that they can implement their own solutions.

So, I just wanted to put that out there, because I know that you are going to require that discussion about what "benefits" means. If you care to comment on it, fine. If not, I will just move on.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you for that, Congressman. I appreciate your stance and, of course, all of that is very important to us.

Mr. MCEACHIN. Well, Madam Secretary, a few weeks ago Cory Booker and I introduced the Environmental Justice Legacy Pollution Cleanup Act, legislation which would invest \$20 billion to clean up legacy pollution that disproportionately affects environmental justice communities. Of that, my bill provides about \$10 billion to the Abandoned Mine Land Fund to help fund the cleanup and reclamation of thousands of abandoned mine land sites across the country that threaten the health and safety of local communities.

Do you have a moment to speak to the benefits of that sort of legislation to clean up lands impacted by coal mining?

And how would this benefit the EJ communities, and what can be done with that level of funding?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you for the question, Congressman. And, of course, the idea of cleaning up abandoned mines is one that we know could benefit the health and safety of folks in those communities, but it also creates jobs. We feel very confident that no community should be left behind in any transition that we are

moving to in this country. And we are committed to creating those jobs, so that those communities can continue to thrive.

So, yes, the environmental and safety issue is absolutely important. The creation of jobs is absolutely important.

Mr. MCEACHIN. Thank you so much for that answer.

In the President's Fiscal Year 2022 budget, the Interior Department is—oops, I am down to 30 seconds. You know what? I am going to give those back to my Chairman.

Mr. Chair, I yield.

The CHAIRMAN. That is much appreciated. Representative Herrell, you are recognized.

Ms. HERRELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am glad to see you here, Secretary. Thank you for everything you are doing. I will just be quick about this, because there are so many questions to ask.

Just kind of following up on Congressman Lamborn and Graves earlier, with the recent preliminary injunction to the pause on the sale of new oil and gas leases on Federal lands, can you give the Committee a definitive date when the lease sales in New Mexico or other gas and oil producing states will once again be held?

And I know this is probably coming from every person that has energy in their state.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much, Congresswoman. And I know this issue is important to you, as well.

We would be happy to. As I mentioned, the review is done early summer, it is early summer, so I think it is coming out very soon. We are complying with the court's decision. They are reviewing it now. I know there is a lot going on in this space, and you want some definitive answers, and we will be happy when we can give you those.

Ms. HERRELL. OK. And I know you said you had a \$17.6 billion budget, and you may have said this, I might have missed it: How much money do you have allocated in the budget for mitigating the orphan wells? And you may have said it, like I said, I might have missed that one—

Secretary HAALAND. I may have also, and I think Rachel can speak to that.

Ms. TAYLOR. Certainly. We have a proposal for a new energy community revitalization program that includes both abandoned mines and orphaned wells. And that is resources for both the Federal side and for states and tribes to apply for grants, and that is \$169 million that is new this year, and that would complement the larger \$16 billion proposal in the Jobs Plan.

Ms. HERRELL. Excellent. OK, thank you.

And then, just kind of going back for the energy—I know that in addition to the leasing moratorium, the Department has issued the Secretarial Order that required BLM field offices to get clearance from political appointees in DC in order to approve critical permits like authorizations to drill and right-of-ways, and that the BLM website appears, though, to have missing authorization.

So, my question, and kind of going off what Congresswoman Porter said earlier, in terms of transparency, will you commit to releasing monthly APD reports so we can evaluate progress, going forward?

Secretary HAALAND. I appreciate that question, and I would really just like to give you that on the record, if I may.

Ms. HERRELL. Sure.

Secretary HAALAND. I will check with the staff in that office, and just make sure before I answer you.

Ms. HERRELL. OK. Thank you, Madam Secretary. Hopefully, they will get that updated, so that we can actually watch that real-time, and follow what the progress is.

And I understand that we have more public lands in the Western states—I mean, 50 percent of them or greater. What I want to know is, do you believe every American, whether they live in or near the public lands as we know them in the West, benefit from beneficial use such as Ag, oil, gas, recreation from our public lands?

Secretary HAALAND. Well, I think that every American should benefit from our public lands, and that includes communities, whether they are kids in the inner city, or rural. I mean, we believe that everyone should have access, that they should be able to enjoy the outdoors.

Ms. HERRELL. Right. I believe that everybody in America benefits from fossil fuels, from timber, from agriculture, from eating, I mean, everything we produce on public land. So, I think you are right, but we have to also ensure that we are protecting the industries associated with public lands.

I just want to finish up with I am a little bit jealous that my colleague from Utah had a visit with you in Utah for several days. I would like for you to come to see me too, so we can meet and look at our public lands, our operations in the district, and have a really meaningful conversation about that, as well. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

I yield back.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you, Congresswoman.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady yields.

Representative San Nicolas, you are recognized.

Mr. SAN NICOLAS. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

And Madam Secretary, good day to you. When President Biden historically mentioned states, tribes, and territories in his inaugural address, I thought that that was a real high point for the efforts of all of our territories, in particular, to seek greater support from the Administration. And I was only more pleasantly surprised to find his nominee to be you, Madam Secretary, someone who fully understands the struggles of Indigenous communities, of marginalized communities. And with that, there is just so much hope and aspiration represented in you serving in this capacity, and further represented in the sentiments expressed by the President in his inaugural address, and further reinforced in his nomination of you as our Secretary of the Interior. We are so happy to have you, Madam Secretary.

I wanted to specifically discuss in the President's budget—and echo the sentiments of my colleague, Mr. Case—the concerns of the territories with respect to the Compacts of Free Association. These compacts, of course, are meeting to have their negotiations reinitiated and concluded in earnest.

But more specifically, Madam Secretary, there is a concern with respect to the host communities impacted by these compact

negotiations. Specific to my territory, and no doubt similar to other host communities like Hawaii, and even the state of Arkansas, the Compacts of Free Association allow for our treaty allies to be able to migrate to our country with the intent of seeking out education, health care, and job opportunities, and we welcome those as partners in the treaty that the United States engages in with these particular countries who are strong allies of this Nation, and strategic allies, given their specific geographic location and their long history with the United States, and with their neighboring regions, such as Guam.

But, Madam Secretary, when I evaluate the President's budget, I am very heartened to see, of course, a dramatic increase in the resources provided for our Indigenous brothers and sisters in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. But specifically to our territories, the increase in the President's budget request does not adequately reflect the impact of the compact treaties on the host communities.

When I broke it down on a per-dollar basis in the 116th Congress, Madam Secretary, it came up to about \$800 in support provided to the territory of Guam for us hosting our treaty allies and those who decide to migrate to Guam and call home. Unfortunately, of course, the cost to educate far exceeds an \$800 balance. The cost to be able to provide healthcare services far exceeds the \$800 balance, to include the recent extension of this Congress for COFA migrants to be able to avail of Medicaid as a benefit.

So, I wanted to inquire if there is a plan in the Department of the Interior to recognize the true costs of our responsibilities of hosting our compact guests, and if we can look forward to those true costs, realizing in the actual financial support that is afforded in the budgetary requests that is maybe proposed in this round, or perhaps proposed in a future round.

Secretary HAALAND. Congressman, thank you so much for the question, and we understand the issue, and we appreciate you coming to us with this issue today.

I wonder if Rachel can perhaps add some detail, the kind of detail that you are looking for. Thank you.

Ms. TAYLOR. Sure. Thank you so much for the question. I know this has been a priority for a number of states and territories over the years.

The budget, as you know, there are two sources of funding. There is some mandatory funding, but there is also discretionary money in the budget request. We were happy to support a level funding for compact impact. I think it is \$4 million in the President's discretionary request. And, of course, we will be happy to work with you, going forward, on this.

Mr. SAN NICOLAS. Thank you very much. I just wanted to make it very plain that if the Administration puts forward a budgetary request that reflects the true cost, we will absolutely, as host communities, be fully supportive of that.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman and Madam Secretary.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields. Representative Boebert, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BOEBERT. Thank you, Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman, for holding this important hearing, and thank you, Secretary Haaland, for attending today. I appreciate your

presence here, and I appreciate your opening statement, that you said that you would like to work together. I do believe and agree with you that we can accomplish great things when we work together. And I love that you highlighted the good-paying jobs that come from what we can do together.

Secretary Haaland, as you know, Colorado and many states in the West are experiencing a very severe drought. You sort of danced around it earlier, but why does this Administration not have any investments in water storage in your budget?

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you very much for the question, Congresswoman. As I mentioned, water storage is one of the many tools that our team believes can help so many of the states that are experiencing the drought through the drought. And I appreciate your support of that, and we will absolutely take a look at it.

Mrs. BOEBERT. Thank you, Madam Secretary. And, yes, I agree that it is a tool for drought mitigation.

You also said, yes, that you support the reauthorization of the WIIN Act, when questioned by Representative McClintock. And to confirm, if you support the reauthorization of the WIIN Act and water storage as a tool, then you also would support the reauthorization of the expiring Subtitle J of the WIIN Act related to water storage. I just didn't see the reauthorization of expiring Subtitle J of the WIIN Act, which has successfully funded water storage, in your budget.

So, is that correct, you support that?

Secretary HAALAND. Congresswoman, thank you so much for the question. And what I should have said is that extending the WIIN Act, of course, it is a decision of Congress. Congress is—you know, you make that decision, and we are aware of the different proposals in Congress—

Mrs. BOEBERT. Reclaiming my time—thank you, Madam Secretary—the Trump administration funded water storage, water recycling, and desalination projects throughout the West, and I encourage the DOI to really get their priorities straight, instead of pandering to radicals that want to tear down dams and prevent water storage projects. So, I am happy to hear that you are in favor of water storage. It is something we have battled in Colorado for quite some time.

Madam Secretary, moving along, the previous administration, including career officials currently within your agency, relocated the Bureau of Land Management headquarters from Washington, DC, to my district in Grand Junction, Colorado, following a competitive process. The relocation has strong support from Colorado's Democrat Governor, our two Democrat Senators, the entire Colorado delegation, and stakeholders on both sides of the aisle. I very much appreciate Mr. Neguse's statements and acknowledgment today of the contributions Colorado has received from the BLM and the headquarters during his time today.

The move West has reduced the number of long cross-country flights—about 7 hours, I would know—and it has improved training, has delegated more responsibility to employees in the field, improved customer service and coordination with local communities, ensured better decisions earlier in the decision-making process, reduced commute times for the employees, provided good-

paying jobs, local jobs, as you said you support, and it will save the taxpayers money.

Your budget notes the Biden administration is actively reviewing the 2019 reorganization of the BLM. Do you plan on visiting the Grand Junction BLM headquarters? I have sent you a letter on March 15 requesting you visit Grand Junction, Colorado to see the headquarters yourself.

Secretary HAALAND. Congresswoman, I have actually, yes, had invitations from your two Senators, as well as Congressman Neguse. I appreciate the invitation, and, of course, we are looking at my schedule.

Mrs. BOEBERT. Will you commit here today to keeping the BLM headquarters in Grand Junction, yes or no?

Secretary HAALAND. We are actually doing a review on that currently.

Mrs. BOEBERT. The previous administration estimated considerable savings from the Bureau from the move west, starting in Fiscal Year 2024. They also found the Bureau's relocation cost \$17.9 million. Given these costs and any move back east would exceed those costs of \$17.9 million, that there is no longer a BLM office in DC to move back to, that DC real estate is much more expensive, and there is a lease on the building in Grand Junction, and the Bureau has hired and moved numerous employees related to 200-plus now western positions, how would you justify a move back to DC to taxpayers?

Secretary HAALAND. As I mentioned, Congresswoman, this process is in review currently,

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady yields.

Let me, before our time is up, just recognize myself. I know there are four other Members, and hopefully we will have the time. I will be very quick.

Today, we talked about public assets, and I want to associate myself with the comments Ms. Stansbury made regarding climate change, and how central to the whole discussion that we are having about this jurisdiction that the Committee has with regard to Interior.

I think the points that you made, Madam Secretary, regarding Indigenous people and tribes, and the re-definition of what that relationship has been in the past with Interior is very important. I think tribes and Indigenous folk are ahead of us, in terms of how they see sovereignty, how they see self-determination, and how they see the trust responsibility. And I think it is imperative that we catch up.

We talked about the pause, and it might not be part of the review, in terms of oil and gas and extraction policy. But you mentioned that a couple of times in response to other questions, and it had to do with the fact that unused leases, leases that have been there for years upon years upon years, acreage that they are encumbering, and many of those leases being in areas in which there is no environmental detriment surrounding the areas—because I disagree with some people that everything should be wide open. I don't think you should be drilling and extracting on the rim of the Grand Canyon, period. I don't think you should be drilling and extracting in Yellowstone.

But my point being that I think that information would be important for the Committee to have, so you can make a comparison as to how long those leases have laid fallow, and not been used, and maybe it is time for this Committee to consider a policy and legislation having to deal with you either use it during a period of time, or you lose it. And this going on in perpetuity, and basically speculating and holding areas, I think is wrong.

We talked about the BLM, and I appreciate the review that is going on. Some of us opposed that move, and I was one of them. But the fact that the review is going on, I am more than comfortable waiting for the results of that. Once it gets steady, it is more difficult to undo, and I realize that. But that was a decision made, I think, not for cost saving, or administrative purposes, as it was for different reasons that we are probably never really going to understand.

The other thing is the previous administration, it was mentioned. Constantly—and Ms. Porter mentioned it—we asked for information and didn't get it. And I am pleasantly surprised at the insistence of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and particularly in the Minority, wanting this information now from Interior. And your commitment to disclosure and public information for all, that is a marked day-night change from what the Majority had to endure over the last 2 years, in terms of access to Interior. So, I appreciate that, and keeping that commitment is important.

The last issue is the Colorado River. We talked about the drought. That important ecosystem, the critical water source for 40 million people, including the 67, 68 tribes within that region, and it is a critical resource. The contingency plan was put together, and I am pleased that the Department is assuring tribes of their role in that discussion. That is the feedback from tribes that I have received.

But I want to say that I think that post 2026, when we would revisit this, I think the urgency is now to convene, and that those states that need to convene in that basin should be doing it now, and looking at their own internal policies, their own water use regulations that they have within their states, because that affects whatever we try to do, in terms of the asset that you have jurisdiction over, which is the Colorado River.

Those are just requests, but I think that it can't be the same any more. Other changes have to occur in order to deal with this drought. And at least my experience from the state of Arizona, they don't seem to be ready for it. And I think the government can, your Interior can, help spur that discussion, which is not happening at this point.

With that, I recognize Mr. Obernolte for your time.

Mr. OBERNOLTE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And Secretary Haaland, congratulations on the new position.

I represent one of the largest congressional districts in the country, and over 90 percent of the land of my district is public lands of one form or another, many of which are managed underneath your Department. So, I am very happy to see you taking aggressive action in your new role.

I would like to ask a couple of questions about the budget that you have presented, in particular, as it relates to the Great

American Outdoors Act funding. As I am sure you are aware, it is \$1.9 billion a year—I am sorry, billion dollars a year—that Congress has appropriated for the purposes of improving and developing infrastructure on those public lands.

I was a little disappointed in looking at the budget that you are presenting today to realize that very little of that funding is being spent recreationally to improve access to our public lands. In fact, by my count, only about seven projects are being proposed for funding that are recreational projects, which is only about 11 percent of the total funding.

So, can you explain the Department's philosophy, when it comes to appropriating that money, and why more of that money has not been prioritized for recreational uses?

Secretary HAALAND. I appreciate the question. And I will give it a try, and then perhaps Rachel may be able to fill in a little bit.

I know that the deferred maintenance—there is a very big backlog of deferred maintenance, and that is where a lot of work is being done, or we know that needs to be done using GAOA funding, and we are grateful for it. I supported it when I was a Member of Congress, as well. So, the deferred maintenance backlog is large, and that is something that we are working to remedy.

Ms. TAYLOR. Thanks so much for the question. I would say, in terms of the access for the projects, recreation is one of the factors that goes in. As the Secretary mentioned, deferred maintenance and sort of buying down some of these large projects that are on the books, that are creating challenges for park visitors and safety issues, is a huge priority.

You know, for access, we do have a number of roads projects, in terms of allowing people to come into public lands. I would note that one of the highest-priority projects is the Yellowstone River Bridge project, which is going to help support one of the main arteries to the park that brings visitors there.

Each bureau does things a little bit differently, but I think we are certainly open to working with Congress in making sure that we are implementing the law as intended, as we allocate funds going forward, and know that Congress has a role also in helping select the projects.

Thank you for the question.

Mr. OBERNOLTE. Thank you. I appreciate that. And while we are talking about deferred maintenance, that is what I would like to ask a second question about, because among the facilities that I represent are the Mojave National Preserve and the Joshua Tree National Park. And as I am sure you are aware, both of those facilities have enormous deferred maintenance problems. And I can tell you from firsthand experience, having seen them, how desperate that need is. In the Mojave National Preserve it is nearly \$120 billion. Joshua Tree, which is, as you know, one of the most visited national parks in our entire system, the deferred maintenance need is over \$60 million.

I am hoping that I can get your commitment to help us address those deferred maintenance issues, because neither of those facilities was awarded any project funding in the first two rounds of the Great American Outdoors Act. So, I am hoping we can fix that.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you, Congressman. That is very well noted. I appreciate knowing about that. Thank you.

Mr. OBERNOLTE. All right, will you work with us to try to—

Secretary HAALAND. I will be happy to work with you, and we will see what we can do.

Mr. OBERNOLTE. I appreciate it. We want to be a resource to you. I want to congratulate you on your new role, and encourage you to come back and visit us often here at the Natural Resources Committee.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much. And I have had an opportunity to visit Joshua Tree, and it is indeed a beautiful area, and I am happy that you have a strong passion for it. Thank you.

Mr. OBERNOLTE. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me recognize the gentlelady from Minnesota, Ms. McCollum.

Representative, you are recognized.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Secretary Haaland, it is so wonderful to see you in person. And I have a couple of questions, but I cannot go any farther without just holding this up.

This is a bottle of water. Water is a natural resource. Without water, our lives don't exist. And sometimes water is in competition with oil and gas. And in Minnesota right now, it is in competition with some natural resources. I appreciate the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service doing what it needs to do to make sure we protect water for future generations. So, thank you for your work on that.

Superior National Forest, in and of itself, is 20 percent of the clean water that our Federal Government is responsible for protecting.

Honoring our trust and treaty obligations is so very important. And I know that you will do everything in your power to make sure that the Federal Government does a better job of leading up to protecting the trust and treaty responsibilities in Indian Country. And I commend you for what you are setting up with the Federal Indian School Board Review. What has just happened to the First Nations in Canada, with the discovery of 200 skeletons at one of their boarding schools was just heartbreaking, very heartbreaking. And they have done a reconciliation. They have done a review. They have gone to the public. They have heard the testimony from their tribal communities. We still haven't done that here. So, thank you for your work on that.

I want to focus for a moment on the proposed increase for Indian Affairs. I am so excited about the 29 percent. I know it will just be a couple of drops in the bucket for you, but it is huge. So, congratulations to you and to the President for doing that.

Years ago, I was happy to work on the Tiwahe Initiative. It is a holistic approach that empowers Tribal Nations to improve the health and well-being of families in Indian Country and their communities. One of the tribes that was one of the six pilot projects was Red Lake Nation in Minnesota. They use their funding to empower, reunite families, to work on substance abuse and recidivism.

They worked to reduce suicide, which, at the time when that initiative was going through, was an all-time high for Native

American youth, and Red Lake, and the other pilot communities, they produced to report to Congress, recommending that Tiwahe be established as a permanent program. That means that it is going to need authorization, and I hope I have the honor to work on that.

They have also committed a new approach to evaluate impacts. Could you tell me what steps the Department is taking, in collaboration with these pilot tribes, to learn about how they used the initiative to build effective, coordinated, culturally valid models to service delivery to support the well-being of Native American families?

And do you know when we might, here in Congress, see the BIA's own evaluation of the program?

Secretary HAALAND. Congresswoman, thank you so much for the question, and just thank you for your commitment to Indian tribes for as long as you have. It is very much appreciated.

And I hope you have an opportunity to visit with Bryan Newland, our Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. I think that he has a heart for all of these things.

One of the most important things, aside from tribal consultation, is, of course, taking into consideration those 574 federally recognized tribes in our country. They are all different. None of them are the same. They all have various issues that concern their tribes. And we really want to make sure that we are getting to the heart of what it is that those individual tribes need.

I can assure you that those particular geographic areas and other tribal community customs and traditions all figure into how we are moving forward with programs, with all the programs within the BIA.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you. We look forward to doing that. We look forward, on the Appropriations Committee of Interior, working with you to advance our trust and treaty responsibilities.

With that, please, I know it is in your heart, protect our water. Secretary HAALAND. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me recognize Representative Bentz.

You are recognized.

Mr. BENTZ. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Madam Secretary, for your patience with all of us today.

And thank you for taking the time to talk with us a month or so, 2 months ago, regarding the challenge we face down in the Klamath. And I understand that issue has already been raised earlier this afternoon, and I am appreciative of that.

In April, the Administration announced the creation of an inter-agency working group to address the worsening drought conditions in the West, and supported farmers, tribes, and communities impacted by water shortages. I can assure you, I know you know this, but right now, things are incredibly grim in that basin. And with silence from the Administration comes increased frustration, which we absolutely want to avoid, given the incredible challenges they face. And by "they," I mean all of the groups in the basin. I know you are aware of this, but I would like to know if that working group has been formed, and if it has met, and if not, when can we anticipate that that group will visit that basin?

Secretary HAALAND. Congressman, thank you so much for the question and thank you again also for your accessibility to my staff, your input. And all of that has been extremely beneficial, and we appreciate that very much.

I know how important this issue is to you. We want to make sure that we will be in touch with you, as this working group moves forward. And as soon as we are able to meet, we will absolutely make sure that we reach out to you.

Mr. BENTZ. Thank you, Madam Secretary. I would just say that the challenge there is that there is a lake full of water, and it has been allocated to in-stream purposes. So, as those who would have normally had that water drive by that lake, you can imagine what their feelings are. And there is 350,000 acre-feet of water there, but they can't touch it.

So, the Administration stepping in after it had made the decision to make those allocations to in-stream purposes, which I understand the ESA is a law, but you folks need to be down there, and I know the Bureau has tried to be visible, but a higher level involvement is really necessary. And I am just emphasizing this because it is really important.

I am going to shift away from that for just a minute, but not because I don't think it is important, but because I just want to use a few moments to ask how the efforts to find some additional money for all of those affected in the basin are going. I just want to say the losses in the basin are calculated to be around \$400 million, and we—Doug LaMalfa and I—are asking for a bill of a fraction of that. And we have also asked that the tribes and other folks join us in that bill.

Perhaps you can share with us what the Administration is doing when it comes to additional funding for that basin.

Secretary HAALAND. Thank you so much for the question. And you may know this, but Reclamation committed \$15 million in immediate aid through the Klamath Project Drought Response Agency. And then there is another \$3 million in technical assistance to tribes for ecosystem activities.

I know the community is asking for more help, and we are looking to do more, and leverage additional resources, as well as the USDA. And I appreciate your deep concern, and thank you for letting us know that you would like folks to come and visit. I appreciate that.

Mr. BENTZ. Thank you, Madam Secretary. And thanks for your patience today.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Madam Secretary, Mr. Bentz was the last Member to ask questions. Other Members—in deference and appreciation for your courtesy, Madam Secretary, and for extending your time here, and everybody that was present here having an opportunity to have a conversation with you, it is very much appreciated.

And I, for one, am very optimistic, and not just in a hopeful way. I am very optimistic of the capacity that you bring to Interior, and the number of initiatives and firsts that we are going to see coming from Interior. That is your record, as you have progressed, both politically and in civic life, and I don't see it changing any bit. And that is why my optimism continues to be very high, and will continue to be that way. I appreciate your time.

Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:28 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

