

**THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST
FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE
INTERIOR FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

JUNE 11, 2025



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THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 2025

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m. in Room SD-366, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Mike Lee, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE LEE, U.S. SENATOR FROM UTAH

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning. The Committee will come to order. We will be hearing today from Secretary Doug Burgum, as we discuss the Fiscal Year 2026 budget for the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Welcome, Mr. Secretary, and to the Secretary's team. Thanks for being here today. When we last heard from you as a Committee, back in January, you were President Trump's nominee to lead the Department at that time. You have since been confirmed and have now taken the reins at the Department of the Interior, and this Committee, and ultimately the full Senate, has since considered and confirmed Kate MacGregor to be your Deputy Secretary. This Committee has already favorably reported several additional nominees for senior positions within your Department, who are now pending on the Senate floor. We encourage Senate leadership to bring those nominees to the floor quickly so that we can provide you with the personnel—the people you need to help you lead the Department in carrying out the important work that you do there on behalf of the American people, for which we are very grateful. I would just add that I am very honored to have supported you, and am thrilled with the work that you are doing so far.

Last year, the Department of the Interior had a budget of \$16 billion, but our nation simply cannot fund on the scale that we have for decades. We have spent money that we don't have, and so we must borrow it, often from our adversaries, and saddle our children and even our grandchildren with that debt, much of which has been accumulated before some of the people who have to pay it back were even born or were old enough to vote. It is a form of taxation without representation. We generally frown on that in this country. President Trump knows that, and it shows in the budget that he sent to Congress. By acknowledging limits on what can be

spent, a reality that every family, every business, every other organization in America deals with on a daily basis, the budget that the President sent to Congress is a long-overdue step in the right direction. Decades of unchecked federal spending have created structural deficits that now threaten our economic security and our ability to respond to real emergencies. President Trump's budget begins the challenging but essential work of turning that gargantuan ship around.

That work falls, in part, to your Department, Secretary Burgum, from land and water management, to energy and mineral development, to partnerships with states, territories, and local governments. The decisions made at Interior affect millions of Americans and shape the future of our public lands, of our economy, and of course, our national security. The Department has a hand in many things—in everything from infrastructure projects to mineral policies that either enable or block our ability to compete effectively with China. It is responsible for stewarding vast tracts of land while supporting rural communities that depend on access to those same lands for jobs, for housing, for growth, for energy, for water, and many, many other things. In the best case, the Department of the Interior can serve as a partner to the states and an enabler of prosperity. In the worst case, it can become a bureaucratic gatekeeper that shuts out the voices of local communities. This Administration is committed, of course, to the former. President Trump's budget sets clear expectations: get results, streamline operations, and stay focused on core responsibilities. That means resisting mission creep, reining in regulatory overreach, and prioritizing the needs of working Americans over Washington's special interests.

I want to commend the recent opinion by the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel, which affirms what many of us have long argued, that the President has legal authority to consider monument designations that are over-broad, duplicative, or disconnected from the statute's stated purpose. For nearly a century, the Federal Government has often operated under a flawed interpretation of the Antiquities Act, one that allowed presidents to unilaterally lock up millions of acres of land but denied future presidents the authority to undo or even revise those designations. But as OLC's recent opinion discusses at length, there is actually a long history, spanning decades, of presidents reducing the size of previously designated national monuments or even de-designating them all together. With this new legal clarity, we hope the Department of the Interior will work with us to ensure that public lands are managed in a way that reflects the needs of those who live closest to them.

Today's hearing is about the kind of government we want to have and what it may take to achieve that. It is about whether the Department is prepared to implement the President's agenda with the urgency and discipline that this particular moment in history requires. So we look forward to hearing from you how you intend to align the Department's operations with the President's budget and how you will ensure that the Department of the Interior may plan to deliver on President Trump's agenda.

So, again, Mr. Secretary, welcome, and I would now like to recognize my friend and colleague, the Ranking Member on the Committee, Senator Heinrich, for his opening statement.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARTIN HEINRICH,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW MEXICO**

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you, Chairman.

We are here today to talk about the budget proposal of a Department that is, quite frankly, not being resourced to meet its mission. Parks are cutting hours and services for visitors. Ranger tours are canceled. Toilets are overflowing and trash cans sit unemptied. Permits are languishing on empty desks. Energy projects are delayed or canceled. Contracts slowly wind their way through a byzantine bureaucracy that was invented overnight. The senior leadership positions at the Department are mostly vacant. Roughly 100 park superintendent positions are vacant. Five of the seven regional director positions for the National Park Service sit empty. At the Bureau of Land Management, about a third of senior leadership positions are vacant, including both Deputy Director positions and the Director position itself—and the front-line staff is in no better shape. After promising to hire 7,700 seasonal employees to serve Americans in their national parks this summer, the Park Service has managed, at least according to public reports, to hire only half of that. Memorial Day is gone. The Fourth of July is around the corner. And all of this has occurred before this budget request is put in place.

Mr. Secretary, when you were going through the confirmation process, I believed that you would be a responsible steward of our public lands. Conservative, of course, but responsible. And with your experience in the private sector and as a governor, I believed that you could rein in the sometimes-reckless tendencies of DOGE, at least within the Department of the Interior. We are never going to agree on everything, but I thought we could agree that our public lands are the greatest heritage of our nation. And we have a responsibility to hand them down to the next generation well-stewarded. This budget request will not resource your Department to responsibly steward our lands and waters. The proposal for the Interior Department operations next year includes a 30 percent cut across programs. It is no exaggeration to say that this would cripple the Department as we know it. The cut to the Park Service is paid for by getting rid of most park system units. The National Park System would have to lose more than 350 of its 433 units to swallow that kind of a proposed cut. And yet, the Department has still not told us which units those might be.

Any hope for a speedier permitting system from the BLM is gone with a 35 percent proposed cut to that agency. Anyone who needs a recreation permit, a right-of-way, a grazing lease, will be left waiting. That is not efficiency. The 35 percent cut to the Bureau of Reclamation puts critical water infrastructure at risk of failing to safely deliver water to farmers, fish, and people. The proposal completely eliminates the WaterSMART program that provides resources to local, often rural communities and water users to conserve water and to make efficiency improvements to their infrastructure, thereby reducing conflicts over this scarce resource.

The nearly 40 percent cut to the U.S. Geological Survey would kneecap the scientific research we need to understand how our natural world is changing in the face of a changing climate. And the major reduction to the Natural Hazards Program would leave communities more vulnerable to earthquakes, volcanoes, and landslides. This proposal also completely eliminates the Biological Resources Program at USGS, which could mean abandoning bird flu monitoring, closing the most advanced wildlife disease lab in the United States, and discontinuing research efforts for climate adaptation. The USGS's migratory bird research also directly informs the Fish and Wildlife Service's bag limits for migratory bird hunting seasons. Eliminating this research would hobble the management of migratory bird hunting seasons. One of the seven pillars of the North American Model of Wildlife conservation, the foundation of wildlife management in the United States, is scientific management. We cannot manage wildlife without wildlife science.

The budget proposal also overturns the bipartisan work of this Committee in 2020 to pass the Great American Outdoors Act, signed into law by this President. Instead of supporting reauthorization of this great accomplishment, this budget robs the Land and Water Conservation Fund in order to pay for deferred maintenance projects. And lastly, but most importantly, this budget request, if implemented, would cause irreparable harm to Indian Country. With 30-plus percent cuts to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Education, this budget represents a dereliction of every treaty obligation this country has to tribes and their members. This proposal even cuts the BIA's Public Safety Account, belying any claim that this Administration might try to make that it cares for the safety of people in Indian Country.

Mr. Secretary, you promised to prioritize the needs of Indian Country in your time leading this Department, but this budget simply doesn't give you the resources to be able to effectively accomplish that. I think we need to do better, which I say out of respect for you and our shared values. It is often said of presidents' budget requests that they are dead on arrival on Capitol Hill. For the sake of the shared landscapes that we hold and trust for our grandchildren, I hope that's the case for this budget.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Heinrich.

Mr. Secretary, we will now hear from you in your opening remarks before we proceed to questions.

The time is yours.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DOUGLAS J. BURGUM,
SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

Secretary BURGUM. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Ranking Member Heinrich. To the two of you and the distinguished members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning in support of President Trump's Fiscal Year 2026 budget request for the Department of the Interior and discuss what our team is doing to make America safer, stronger, more beautiful, and more prosperous.

The Department oversees onshore and offshore energy resources, honors federal trust responsibilities with our tribal neighbors, delivers water to the West, oversees wildlife refuges and national

parks. The resources we sustainably govern directly impact the lives of every American every day. Interior-managed resources hold a significant position on America's balance sheet. The public lands and minerals within Interior domain include more than 480 million acres of surface land, 750 million acres of subsurface and mineral estate, and more than 2.5 billion acres offshore. Our natural resources are natural assets and should be responsibly developed to grow our economy, help balance the budget, and generate revenue for American taxpayers. With common-sense approaches and modern systems, we can increase return for our citizens, strengthen our economy, and create great-paying and meaningful jobs, all while protecting our beautiful lands, our abundant wildlife, and our clean air and clean water.

President Trump's 2026 budget requests \$14.4 billion in current authority for the Department, providing significant savings to the American people. The 2026 budget for the Department features strategic investments to further President Trump's commitment to energy dominance, which is the foundation of American prosperity, national security, and world peace. We are increasing production of affordable, reliable energy on federal lands. We have already taken measures to increase production of oil in the Gulf of America by 100,000 barrels per day, which will help reduce the price at the pump for American families. And we proudly announced that the first historic lease sale in the newly renamed Gulf of America will occur this year.

We are also busy rectifying the mountain of restrictions designed to restrict resource development in America, and especially in Alaska. We removed layers of red tape that undermined coal production on federal lands. Clean American coal is a triple win for our country, because thermal coal provides reliable and affordable baseload electricity. Metallurgical coal provides the foundation for bringing back our steel industry, and the mining and refining of coal that contains critical and rare earth minerals is absolutely essential to secure our own domestic supply chains for our defense, transportation, and technology industries. Right now, America is in an artificial intelligence arms race with China. Keeping domestic coal-fired generation open will help us win that contest, while also driving down electricity costs for American families and increasing the reliability of our grid. The Department is also undertaking efforts to establish our position as the leading producer and processor of critical and rare earth minerals, which will create jobs and prosperity at home, strengthen strategic and important domestic supply chains for defense for the United States and for our allies, and reduce the global influence of adversarial states.

Preventing and combating wildfires is vitally important to protect people, communities, and the environment. Nearly 65,000 wildfires burned more than 8.9 million acres across the United States last year, endangering communities, critical infrastructure, and local economies. Federal wildfire mitigation and suppression responsibilities for wildland fire are currently split across five agencies in two different departments. The current budget is duplicative and an ineffective structure. Today, this budget reforms federal wildland fire management to create operational efficiencies by unifying federal wildland fire responsibilities into a new centralized

U.S. Wildland Fire Service within the Department of the Interior. This new service will streamline federal wildfire suppression response, risk mitigation efforts, and coordination with non-federal partners to combat the wildfire crisis.

The Department of the Interior upholds the Federal Government's unique trust responsibilities by fostering government-to-government relations between the Federal Government and federally recognized tribes, American Indians, and Alaska Natives. This budget supports programs at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Education, and the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration, sustaining the Federal Government's support for the core programs that benefit tribal communities.

Since becoming Interior Secretary, I have had the opportunity to travel the national parks, historic sites, wildlife refuges, and more, to learn and hear from the leadership on the ground. We are instituting changes to get more people actually working in our parks and refuges, and are looking forward to an outstanding summer. By opening more areas to hunting and outdoor recreation, we are helping to drive tourism, create jobs, and generate revenue for local communities, all while promoting responsible stewardship of our natural resources.

Interior is also focused on streamlining our core business operations, which will result in dramatically improved efficiencies and lower costs for American taxpayers. This budget is about putting America first and doing the best for the American taxpayer. As Interior moves forward, these initiatives set the foundation for a renewed focus on responsible resource management and economic growth. I look forward to working closely with you to advance the President's priorities.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Burgum follows:]

**Statement of
Secretary Doug Burgum
United States Department of the Interior
Before the
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
June 11, 2025**

Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of President Trump's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget request for the Department of the Interior and discuss what our team is doing to make America safer, stronger, more beautiful, and more prosperous.

The Department of the Interior oversees onshore and offshore energy resources, honors Federal Trust responsibilities with our tribal neighbors, delivers water to the West, and oversees wildlife refuges and national parks. The resources that we sustainably govern directly impact the lives of every American every day.

Interior-managed resources hold a significant position on America's Balance Sheet. The public lands and minerals within the Interior domain include more than 480 million acres of surface land, 750 million acres of subsurface and mineral estate, and more than 2.5 billion acres offshore. We believe that our natural resources are national assets that should be responsibly developed to grow our economy, help balance the Budget, and generate revenue for American taxpayers. With common sense approaches and modern systems, we can increase returns for our citizens, strengthen our economy, and create great-paying and meaningful jobs -- all while protecting our beautiful lands, our abundant wildlife, and our clean air and clean water.

The President's 2026 Budget requests \$14.4 billion in current authority for the Department of the Interior, providing significant savings to the American people.

Unleashing American Energy. The 2026 Budget for the Department features strategic investments to further President Trump's commitment to Energy Dominance, which is the foundation of American prosperity, national security, and world peace.

This Budget prioritizes America's energy independence with a strategy that focuses on the development of ample baseload power that is needed to solve the inherited electricity crisis which underpins the National Energy Emergency that was wisely declared by President Trump on his first day in office. The Department of the Interior has already taken meaningful measures to reverse the mountains of red tape intended to suppress US energy production. We are increasing production of affordable, reliable energy on Federal lands and reviving our nation's understanding of the national security need for mining for critical, rare earths, and other important minerals. The Budget also advances key national priorities including enhanced border security, an optimized workforce that leverages resources and maximizes taxpayer dollars, and the President's commitment to restore confidence in America's fiscal management by eliminating wasteful and unnecessary spending.

At the end of the previous administration, 625 million acres of offshore acreage -- certainly worth trillions of dollars -- was bafflingly restricted from development with the stroke of a pen. President Trump acted swiftly to remedy that insanity. We proudly announced that the first lease sale in the appropriately renamed Gulf of America will occur this year -- a move that generates immediate and long-term revenue for the Treasury. With a simple, commonsense offshore commingling policy change we're increasing production of oil in the Gulf of America by 100,000 barrels per day -- which will help reduce the price at the pump for American families. And as we begin to get back into the business of mapping the full extent of the resources within the Federal estate, we recently published a finding showing there is at least 23% more recoverable oil and gas in the Gulf of America than previously known! This number will continue to increase, as new innovations occur.

President Trump made himself very clear via executive order that he wanted to unleash Alaska's energy potential, so we have been busy reviewing and rectifying the mountain of restrictions -- including 68 Executive orders from the previous administration -- that were designed to restrict resource development in Alaska. Interior plans to reopen up to 82% (19 million+ acres) of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska for leasing and energy development opportunities. We are in the process of reinstating a program that makes the entire 1.56-million-acre Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) available for oil and gas leasing. And we have initiated action along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Corridor and Dalton Highway north of the Yukon River to convey these lands to State of Alaska. These are critical steps for developing the proposed Ambler Road, which would provide access to mineral-rich areas, and the crucial Alaska Liquefied Natural Gas Pipeline project.

Americans rejoiced when President Trump formally ended the "War on Coal" that caused great damage to our economy and national security. Beautiful, clean American coal has survived decades of regulatory assault and will play a pivotal role in continuing to power America going forward. Last month, we ended the Obama-era Federal Coal Moratorium and removed layers of red tape that undermined beautiful, clean American coal production on Federal lands. We approved the expansion of the Spring Creek Coal Mine in Montana, which has 40 million tons of recoverable resource and directly supports hundreds of American jobs. Clean American coal is a "triple win" for our country because thermal coal provides reliable and affordable baseload electricity, metallurgical coal is foundational for bringing back our steel industry, and the mining and refining of coal that contains critical and rare earth minerals is essential to secure our own domestic supply chains for our defense, transportation, and tech industries which are currently heavily dependent on foreign sources. Moreover, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) recently provided us with an estimate that our coal reserves are worth somewhere around \$8 trillion -- which should be counted as a big-time asset on America's Balance Sheet!

Right now, America is in an Artificial Intelligence Arms Race with China. Beijing controls the processing of 85% of critical minerals and is dramatically increasing their coal production and other forms of baseload power. The Communist Party leadership knows that the A.I. Arms Race will be won by the country with the best technology and most electricity. We hold a slight lead in our AI software, but we are now forced to play catch up on baseload power generation due to the Climate Extremist policies of the prior administration that raised prices, lowered reliability, and contributed to our national debt and deficit. Keeping domestic coal-fired power generation open

will help us win this contest, help ensure 24 x 7 x 365 reliability, while also driving down electricity costs for American families even as the demand rises as data centers are built.

The Department is also undertaking efforts to establish our position as the leading producer and processor of critical and rare earth minerals, which will create jobs and prosperity at home, strengthen domestic supply chains for the United States and its allies, and reduce the global influence of adversarial states. We will prioritize America's critical mineral dominance by updating the U.S. Geological Survey's list of critical minerals and continuing the ongoing geological mapping of the country. The Budget will also support programs that support USGS's ability to provide high-level energy and mineral characterizations that will afford greater understanding of the country's expansive resources. On these fronts, we're already making great progress with actions such as approving rare earth mineral exploration at the Colosseum Mine. And as part of our commitment to the "Map, Baby, Map!" surveying ethos, we published a factsheet on deep sea mineral opportunities.

The Budget also saves taxpayers \$80 million by eliminating the Department's "intermittent" energy programs that focus on unaffordable, unreliable energy to the detriment of American consumers, businesses, and communities. This includes eliminating funding that supports offshore wind projects that harm coastal communities, wildlife, and military readiness.

Improve Wildland Firefighting. Preventing and combating wildfires is vitally important to protect people, communities, and the environment. Nearly 65,000 wildfires burned more than 8.9 million acres across the United States last year, endangering communities, critical infrastructure, and local economies. The trend of increasingly extreme and frequent wildfires has continued, with catastrophic fires in Southern California and the Southeast in recent months.

Federal wildfire risk mitigation and suppression responsibilities for wildland fire are currently split across five agencies in two different departments. This current duplicative and ineffective structure defies commonsense. The Budget reforms Federal wildland fire management to create operational efficiencies by consolidating and unifying Federal wildland fire responsibilities into a new centralized U.S. Wildland Fire Service at the Department of the Interior. The new unified service will employ all Federal wildland firefighters, procure and sustain Federal wildland fire resources and manage Federal wildland fire response policies. This new service will streamline Federal wildfire suppression response, risk mitigation efforts, and coordination with non-Federal partners to combat the wildfire crisis.

Supporting Tribal Nations. The Department of the Interior upholds the Federal government's unique trust responsibilities by fostering the government-to-government relations between the Federal government and federally recognized Tribes, American Indians, and Alaska Natives. The Budget supports programs at the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education, sustaining the Federal Government's support for the core programs that benefit tribal communities. At the same time, it streamlines programs for tribal communities, to reduce inefficiencies and eliminate funding for programs and activities found to be ineffective. For example, the Budget eliminates the Indian Guaranteed Loan program for tribal business development because it is duplicative of several other programs across the Federal Government that offer loans to small businesses and which tribal businesses are eligible for and receive.

Expanding Outdoor Access. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt gave remarks at the laying of the cornerstone of the Gateway to Yellowstone where he described our National Parks as “great natural playgrounds” that exist for the “benefit and enjoyment” of the American people. Since becoming Interior Secretary, I’ve traveled to National Parks, historic sites, and wildlife refuges to learn and hear from leadership on the ground. We’re instituting changes to get more people actually working in the parks and are looking forward to what Yellowstone Superintendent Cam Sholly forecasted to be an “outstanding summer.” We’ve also attended events for the National Park Foundation, Trust for the National Mall, and met with National Trust for Public Lands leadership to help fortify the public-private partnerships that provide funding to enhance experiences for the hundreds-of-millions of annual visitors.

President Trump knows very well that America’s connection with our beautiful public lands is strengthened through expanded access. In a major step to expand recreational access to America’s public lands, Interior recently announced 42 new proposed hunting opportunities across more than 87,000 acres within the National Wildlife Refuge System and National Fish Hatchery System. This proposal would greatly expand the number of stations and acres opened or expanded compared to the previous administration, underscoring the Trump Administration’s strong national commitment to outdoor recreation and conservation. By opening more areas to hunting and outdoor recreation, we’re helping drive tourism, create jobs, and generate revenue for local communities, all while promoting responsible stewardship of our natural resources.

Responsible Land Management. When it comes to land management, we are cutting wasteful spending by prioritizing the Administration’s goals of federalism.

America needs more affordable housing, and the Federal government can help make that happen by making Federal land available to build affordable housing stock. We created a Joint Task Force on Federal Land for Housing with Secretary Turner and HUD to increase housing supply and decrease costs for millions of Americans.

Under this agreement, HUD will pinpoint areas where housing needs are most pressing and guide the process by working with State and local leaders who know their communities best. Interior will identify locations that can support homes while carefully considering environmental impacts and land-use restrictions. Working together, our agencies will take inventory of underused Federal properties, transfer or lease them to States or localities to address housing needs, and support the infrastructure required to make development viable – all while ensuring affordability remains at the core of the mission.

Reforming the Department. Interior is focused on streamlining our core business operations, which will result in improved efficiencies and lower costs for American taxpayers. The Department has already taken steps to unify many of the Department’s business functions within the Office of the Secretary. This unification includes human resources, information resources and technology management, training and development, civil rights and equal employment opportunity, procurement, Federal financial assistance (grants and cooperative agreements), communications, personnel security, finance, and other similar functions. Further unifying our organization will create significant efficiencies across the Department by optimizing processes,

eliminating redundant efforts, and helping streamline technology adoption. Interior will advance innovation, collaboration and solutions that address the pressing challenges of our time.

In closing, this Budget is about putting America first and doing the best for the American taxpayer. As Interior moves forward, these initiatives set the foundation for a renewed focus on responsible resource management, and economic growth. By advancing policies that honor America's heritage while fostering innovation, the Department remains committed to serving the national interests of the American people.

Theodore Roosevelt once said that "far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." The work we do at Interior makes America more prosperous, beautiful, safe, and strong. Therefore, it is certainly work worth doing!

I look forward to working closely with you to advance the President's priorities.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks so much, Mr. Secretary.

We are now going to turn to alternating five-minute rounds. I will ask the first series, then go to Senator Heinrich, and then we will alternate back and forth in order of seniority, subject to the early bird rule on the Committee, between Democratic and Republican Senators. And we will proceed that way.

Mr. Secretary, the housing crisis is one that is felt in many parts of the country, but it is especially severe in some of our western states, like my home State of Utah, where the Federal Government controls the vast majority of land—about two-thirds of it, nearly 70 percent. Now, as you know, one of my top priorities has been to make a small percentage of underused federal land available to address housing affordability. The truth is that federal land is a massive underutilized asset, and local communities in the West are often those that pay the highest price for federal inaction in this area. Now, I was encouraged to hear President Trump talk at length about the need to use unused federal land to address the housing crisis, and I was very excited to see the joint HUD-Interior task force that you helped to establish. Thank you for doing that to take the lead in this area.

A bill that I have introduced, called the HOUSES Act, is something that follows through on the President's commitment—promises made, promises kept. Could you expand a little bit more on how just a fraction of one percent of underutilized federal land could help address the western housing crisis?

Secretary BURGUM. Yes, I would be happy to, Chairman.

As I said at the opening, just within Interior there are about 480 million acres of surface. You take the U.S. Forest Service, you can add another couple hundred million on that. If you took that number, 680 million acres of surface, and you said one percent of that, that would be 6.8 million acres. But we don't need to even think about that, I mean, let's just think about an example—Harry Reid, when he was the Senate Majority Leader, passed bipartisan legislation called the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, that instructed and created a framework on how to dispose of lands in Southern Nevada, particularly in fast-growing Clark County, around Las Vegas. The Secretary of HUD and I were in Las Vegas there. There was a land transaction that we conducted through that process. Only 41 acres were sold—41 acres. We're not talking hundreds of thousands or millions—41 acres produced \$16.75 million back to the Federal Government from that small land sale. Another parcel that we were on was being sold through that to build affordable housing. It was about an 80-acre parcel. This isn't recreation land. This isn't national park land. This isn't resource land. This is right next to a four-lane, you know, not a highway, but it was, you know, a busy four-lane street with center turn lanes with billboards on the side of it, billboards sitting on top of the federal land. And that is going to provide much needed housing for the fast-growing Henderson.

In your own state, we have been able, since February, since I have been in office, we have conducted two land swaps. These were things that were long considered, but not executed, which again, swapped land between the Federal Government and the state, filling in the checkerboard. In one case, we got land from Utah that

helped us fill in a checkerboard of federal wilderness, but we also freed up land for the State of Utah to be able to use more productively. So, as you stated so articulately, we have a lot of value trapped in land, particularly bordering our fast-growing metro areas. We did a study of all these federal lands, and there are 250,000 acres that are within just a few miles of cities of 5,000 or more. And again, in the states like Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and particularly where we have a high, high percentage of federal land, we have a great opportunity to help lower the cost of housing by being smart, on a case-by-case basis, in moving forward with projects that help communities and help our states.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

It's no secret that the Department of the Interior has a maintenance backlog. It's a significant one. Backlog that some have estimated at more than \$33 billion, yet past administrations have prioritized land acquisition over responsible stewardship of the land the Federal Government already owns. Would you agree that before we acquire more land, the Department should first do everything it can to take care of the land that it already owns?

Secretary BURGUM. Yes, absolutely, sir. And we have a massive deferred maintenance backlog, not just in our national parks, of course, we have it there, but across BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, every place I have been I have seen deferred maintenance, whether that's building roads, access. Back to the Southern Nevada Lands Act, which could be a model—some of the revenue that came from those land sales goes into and back into recreation. I had an opportunity to visit on BLM land a new visitor center that is being built near Henderson. The funding for that new visitor center is coming from a portion of those land sales. The Bureau of Reclamation applied for and got a grant. There is a new visitor center being built at Hoover Dam, which is not only hugely important for electrical generation and for irrigation, but there is a new visitor center there also paid for by these land sales. So one of the ways to solve for some of the deferred maintenance is to be strategic in how we dispose of federal lands and then recirculate those dollars into improving the recreational opportunities and the educational opportunities for our citizens.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. Thank you very much. My time is expired. Senator Heinrich.

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you. Welcome, Secretary.

I want to continue on this same vein, and when will we know which lands are being considered for land sales? And also, I want to ask you if you have—well, let's just start with that so that we can have a public process here so that the public can understand, really, what's at stake and so we can get beyond the current dynamic of what people are imagining, but actually understanding what lands you are talking about in this process.

Secretary BURGUM. Yes, thank you, Ranking Member. Right now, we are on the proposal stage. And so, we have taken a look, as I have just described it, at a macro level. We have tried to take a look and say—we have taken a look of how many acres do we have that might be something that could be of high value for an alternative use, say, like housing, that has low value for recreation, mineral resources, et cetera. And those, typically, are things that

are directly adjacent to, you know, an existing and fast-growing population center. So that was our first target.

And of course, those are occurring, most likely, in the states that I have described as the three states that have the highest percentage of federal land—or the four. Idaho, Alaska, Utah, and Nevada have the highest percentage of federal land and also have got fast-growing communities that are bumping up against low-value federal land.

Senator HEINRICH. I think to make sure that we are dealing with lands that are as you describe, one of the most important things will be to have a transparent and public process. Will you hold public meetings before offering those potential lands up for sale?

Secretary BURGUM. Yes, absolutely. And I want to reassure members here and the public that, you know, there won't be an acre of any of our 63 national parks that are considered up for sale. I mean, this is not about our most sacred and beautiful places. This is often about, like I said, you know, barren land next to highways with existing billboards that have no recreational value, but you know, would represent—do represent—a constraint. In some cases, cities are leapfrogging their infrastructure beyond the federal land, creating additional infrastructure cost for those cities. And of course, when we can do infill, that helps create a great revenue opportunity for us to help, whether it's deferred maintenance, new recreational opportunities, or reducing the deficit, but it also helps those cities operate more efficiently.

Senator HEINRICH. You talked about the Southern Nevada legislation, but there is actually a federal program that is available to every single state for the BLM to utilize, and that is the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act. The funds that get generated from public lands that get sold under that legislation go to recreation, they go to access, they go to conservation. We are currently developing some housing in New Mexico using that framework. Is that a framework you have looked at for this process?

Secretary BURGUM. I certainly want to look at all the models that we have today that are already working and learn from them as we go forward to make sure that we are using the best practices that we have identified.

Senator HEINRICH. Obviously, the advantage of FLTFA over—the Southern Nevada was designed for a specific county. And so, it's kind of a one-off. I would urge you to look at FLTFA, in part because it's something that is available to you now. It's proven. We have used it in New Mexico several times, and it's available west-wide.

When you were before the Senate Appropriations Committee, we talked about this plan to potentially downsize the National Park System by transferring some sites out of federal management to the states, and I sent you a follow-up letter on that. I very much appreciate that you replied to my letter, but what your reply did not include is just what sites might these be. Where are you in that process? Because, you know, we are several months now from the next budget year, and if this is going to be a serious proposal, the American people deserve to understand what is potentially on the list.

Secretary BURGUM. Yes, and I want to go back to your opening remarks that suggested that we would need to be disposing of hundreds and hundreds of these smaller park units to make up some kind of budget deficit. I just would say, having had an opportunity to dig into the park service budget, I don't think that is the case. I think we have a tremendous amount of overhead that we are operating across the Federal Government in general, and across Interior in general. And I think that, as I learned as Governor of North Dakota, when we were able to reduce spending by 27 percent, there was a lot of anxiety when we had to do that, but we were able to do that and not—we actually increased the money that went to our parks. We created a new state park in North Dakota, even after reducing budgets, because we took cost out of what I call the overhead that was occurring in the capital.

Senator HEINRICH. That is precisely why we need a plan, right?

Secretary BURGUM. Yes.

Senator HEINRICH. So that we're not arguing over hypotheticals.

Secretary BURGUM. Yes.

Senator HEINRICH. So that we are arguing over real numbers. Given the fact that this is a budget year that we have to deal with now, as the Congress, I want to understand what those real impacts are, what the sites are that are being considered. Is there a list or a plan that you can get us, you know, in a week? In a month?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, certainly not in a week because one of the challenges we are having, even if we have a proposal like this, one of the things I have found is, I would say, really almost staggering from an operational standpoint, is that the systems that we have make it almost impossible to get information. You know, I hear regularly about, you know, we have 330 million people visiting parks. Those aren't 330 million different people, those are visitor days, but then we often don't even have the data to find out, are those people that live in the local community? Are they international visitors? How often? I mean, if you are going to dispose of something like the Knife River Indian Village in North Dakota, that I think only, you know, may have less than a thousand visitors in an entire season, and yet, we have a park superintendent and other people there and federal dollars, and that would fit, in my own state, nicely into our state historic society framework, which could then take advantage of local resources to manage it.

You know, our target would be to look at the places that have very low visitation, but even if you would ask a question like, hey, please give me the visitation by each of these over 400 sites, that, you know, there are numbers that are not—there are not good data on that. So it's going to be difficult to make great decisions quickly. We just have to try to create the data framework, because I would want to have any decisions we make be data driven, and that is going to make it more difficult to identify how we can do things that make sense from a budget standpoint.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator BARRASSO.

Senator BARRASSO. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Good to see you again, Mr. Secretary. Thanks for the great job you are doing. A couple of quick questions.

I think during your initial hearing for this position, we talked about leasing and permitting for energy development, and I thought it was a disaster under the previous administration. Can you just talk a little bit about what actions the Department has taken over the past number of months to correct course and what it plans to do in the next fiscal year?

Secretary BURGUM. Thank you, Senator.

Well, first of all, part of what we are doing is trying to reverse some of the activity which didn't follow the law last time around because, you know, part of what precedes permitting sometimes is leasing, and the Federal Government, under the Biden administration, was, as proven by court—you know, states took the Federal Government, the Biden administration, to court. The Biden administration lost. They were supposed to be holding lease sales. They weren't. When they don't hold a lease sale, that is lost revenue to the American public. So again, trying to get back on track on both onshore and offshore lease sales, both in the Lower 48 and the Gulf of America, and in Alaska, has been a big effort. On the permitting standpoint, we are getting closer to putting up a transparency dashboard, which will be able to show by department, by state, by permit type, where permits are in the process, how many days they have been in the queue. I think that shining this light on this will help the public and others understand, you know, just how much red tape we have created, but it will also create an opportunity for us to accelerate.

We also quietly announced that we felt that we could get an environmental assessment (EA) done in less than 14 days and that we could get an environmental impact statement (EIS) in less than 28 days. On the pilots that we have done already, both of those have been accomplished.

Senator BARRASSO. Great.

Secretary BURGUM. People have said, how is that even possible that you can reduce something by such a factor, but it turns out that if you are doing an EA and somebody works on it for a few hours and they pass it on to somebody else and it sits on their desk for a month and then they pick it up, they work on it and they pass it on. By the time you get it, a year has gone by. You know, we have an opportunity where we could put more minutes on mission, more time on task in two weeks than what they might have put in a year in the quality of product we can put up. At the end of that we will inform the decisions that the private sector and public local political subdivisions need to make. So I know that we can actually deliver a work product faster.

Senator BARRASSO. Great.

Secretary BURGUM. But this is about improved business processes. And of course, in your state, we are now—in a few weeks, we are going to be permitting new mining operations for the first time in decades in this country, and we have approved it for the first time in Montana, some mining operations. So again, we are back—this nation has to get back in the mining game. We have got to get back in the energy development game, and we are pleased to be part of that.

Senator BARRASSO. In addition, talk about my state, you know, after the Biden administration lost the election, they came out with

some punishing things. Out of office, they lose the House, lose the Senate, lose the White House, and their Bureau of Land Management finalized what was the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan, which is the final plan. It is punishing to the State of Wyoming, devastating the people and the economy of Southwest Wyoming, locking up millions of acres of land that local communities and the entire state rely upon. Can you just talk about what the Department is doing now?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, the Rock Springs RMP, as well as the Buffalo one, I mean, these are a couple of things that were incredibly egregious that weren't really management plans. I mean, they were creating new concepts out of whole cloth that were really meant to restrict all forms of land use, as opposed to following the multi-use mandate that we are given. So those are under review, and we hope to get back to following the law and making sure that the citizens of Wyoming and those private landowners that live in those areas have the same opportunities to thrive that others do without the heavy hand of government.

Senator BARRASSO. And we knew, as in your home state and mine, we are very fortunate to have great relationships across the state with private, state, federal partners. In Lander, Wyoming, there is a U.S. Fish and Wildlife office that serves both tribal nations—the Northern Arapaho, the Eastern Shoshone—on the Wind River Reservation, along with our neighboring counties. The office does valuable work for Wyoming, such as big game monitoring, studies of wildlife disease, grizzly bear management, habitat restoration. There has been some confusion on the status of the office as to whether the staff are currently present or not. Can you give us an update on the current status of the Fish and Wildlife office there?

Secretary BURGUM. The Lander, Wyoming office is an important office, and we are going to make sure that it is staffed and able to execute their important duties and do that from the Lander office as opposed to working remotely from someplace else.

Senator BARRASSO. Great.

In terms of sage grouse, we are the home of a large population of Greater Sage Grouse and habitat. For over 15 years, Wyoming has been in the forefront of adopting and paying for new management approaches to protect this species. The Biden administration proposed to designate over 600,000 acres as so-called areas of critical environmental concern, which is basically a way of locking up the land. Is the Department planning on reopening the Greater Sage Grouse Management Plan, do you know?

Secretary BURGUM. Yes, the greater sage grouse is neither on the threatened or endangered species list, and this critical habitat, you described again, is another whole-cloth creation, effectively creating a wilderness area out of nothing. And so, we are taking a hard look at that because we want to get back to following the actual law.

Senator BARRASSO. Great.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Wyden.

Senator WYDEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good to see you, Mr. Secretary, and I know when you came to see me, you didn't know a whole lot about the details of the clean

energy tax law that I wrote, and particularly its manufacturing encouragement and the critical minerals. And so, I want to talk to you about where we are now. I believe the administration today, on this technology-neutral law, is making an unforced error because the administration, with the House bill, is basically taking clean energy sources off the table. Now, just in the last couple of days, energy company owners that have gas plants, they have gas holdings, are saying they need more energy now and that renewables have got to be part of that equation. So my question to you is, why not work with us here in the Senate so that we can fix these provisions in the House bill on renewables that basically are putting clean energy through bureaucratic water torture. Let's clean that up, and as a result, we could do more to work together for your concept of energy dominance, market growth, and more than anything, do it without mandates. That's what the law says today. Why not go that route and clean up the House bill now?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, Senator, I would love to connect with you following this hearing and learn more about the gas plant operators that you are saying need more.

Senator WYDEN. Ketchum, the head of NextERA Energy, the President's hometown utility, said "I need electrons now. Get them to me from any possible source." But renewables have got to be part of it. So why can't we make that part of your agenda?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, I would say the House bill reflects, I think, a priority, which is that we need to have reliable and affordable, and some of what we tend to call renewables would fall into the category of being intermittent and expensive. And so, I think that has been the—

Senator WYDEN. But this is about creating choices. And my time is short. There are no mandates here. I understand you are interested in issues relating to batteries, that can deal with intermittent questions, but let's get down to fixing this flawed House bill that—executives are now all over Capitol Hill saying that we really like technology-neutral. We like the concept. We want to make it work. Right now, it includes provisions that—so, make the provisions with respect to international aspects unworkable. They call this "Hill kill the American business structure." We need to correct those kinds of provisions. I would like you to be part of that, and we will follow up with you.

Let me talk to you next about the parks. We are having terrible problems with respect to Crater Lake. The superintendent of this treasure left because he didn't have the staff to protect it. Now, you all are saying that these reports say that visitors can have the same kind of experience this year that they have had in the past. That's not what we are hearing in Oregon. What we are hearing in Oregon, you know, they have problems even with volunteers running the show. So my question on this issue is, can you make a commitment to work with me to ensure that all the national park sites in Oregon have the staff and resources they need?

Secretary BURGUM. Yes, absolutely. And I would say at this time that we do have thousands of positions that we filled for summer, hiring in the parks, and in addition to summer help in the parks, also wildland firefighters. And so, if anybody is listening, we are

still hiring at the parks for summer positions. So I would be happy to continue to work with you on staffing up.

Senator WYDEN. The last one is on wildfire. I can tell you we are expecting more heat in Oregon than we thought we were going to have, particularly in eastern Oregon. Federal staffing is well behind where it should be because of the hiring freeze. Can you assure Oregonians today that despite these issues, we are going to have the firefighting staff that we need?

Secretary BURGUM. Yes, because there is no hiring freeze on wildland firefighters, and we are staffed between Interior and U.S. Forest Service about identically where we were last year, at about 17,000 firefighters. If there is a discrepancy in Oregon, we will be happy to look at that.

Senator WYDEN. I have a few seconds left. I want to go back to my first request. My door is open to work with you on this question of a technology-neutral policy. It makes sense. The markets like it. Companies like it. It would allow us, particularly in the case of somebody having gas holdings, to do something now about this great need when we are concerned about AI to make sure we have enough energy. You are interested in that, but we have got to fix the problems in the House bill because companies are telling me they are drowning in the bureaucracy and trying to figure out how it would work. We can do better than this, and we would like to work with you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary BURGUM. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Daines.

Senator DAINES. Secretary Burgum, good to see you here today. I am grateful for your leadership. You have made a lot of significant accomplishments here over the first five or six months of your tenure. Thank you.

One issue that we are focused on in Montana, among many, is grizzly bears. As you are well aware, the Fish and Wildlife Service advanced a proposal on grizzly bears in January that we have spoken on. I want to again emphasize that this Biden-era proposal punishes Montana's successful grizzly bear recovery efforts. We should celebrate the fact that the bear populations are way over the recovery targets, delist the bear, and transfer the responsibility of the management of that great species back to the State of Montana. Your agency reviews the status of bears. Would you commit to looking at those recovery targets that were set by FWS for the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem, which, by the way, have been well exceeded?

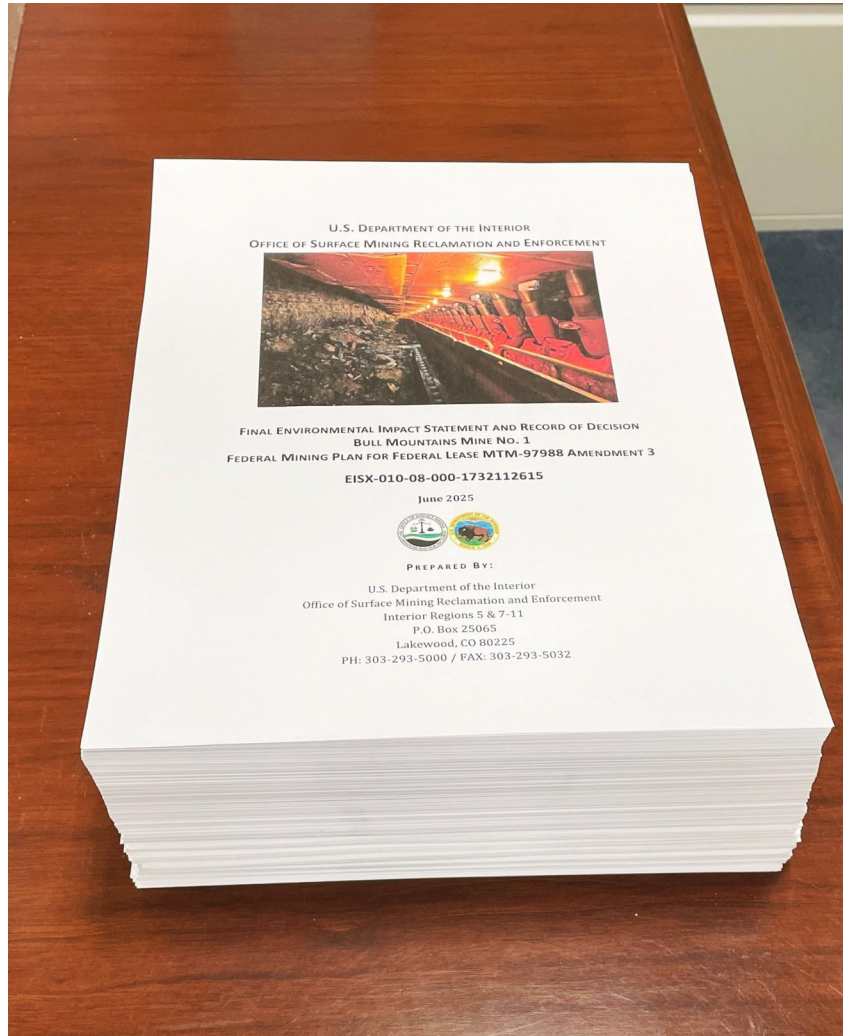
Secretary BURGUM. Yes, absolutely, I will commit to that. And you are absolutely correct, well exceeded by more than double, I think.

Senator DAINES. It is. You are exactly right. You know, for Greater Yellowstone, 500 bears was the recovery target. We are at 1,100 bears right now. So it's time to celebrate recovery and delist the bears.

I want to move to the Bull Mountains mine and coal operations. Montana is home to three major coal mines that have been in limbo for years because of inaction by the Biden administration. But under your leadership—I was talking about it on the radio

here this morning, in fact, what you did—you have got Montana back on track. Earlier this year, you approved the Spring Creek Mine in eastern Montana, and just last week, you approved the Bull Mountains Coal Mine in Roundup. I can tell you, there are a lot of Montana families who depend on those jobs who are—it's a big sigh of relief at the moment. So I want to thank you for prioritizing that made-in-Montana energy. It's not going unnoticed. And, by the way, some have said this was not well thought out and that this was a knee-jerk reaction. This is the 700-page EIS for the Bull Mountains Mine.

[Photograph of the Environmental Impact Statement displayed follows:]



Senator DAINES. It is the result of extensive public comment, extensive public input, years of review, and that is contained in this EIS. I know the community in Montana is grateful for the hard work your team put into this. The last piece of the puzzle is the Rosebud Coal Mine, which feeds the Colstrip Power Plant. I hope to see that permit in the very near future.

Secretary BURGUM, my question is this: could you speak to the work you are doing to support more made-in-America energy and the work you have done in Montana?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, be happy to, and again, it's exciting to see what is going on in Montana. It's an example of what could happen in this country, because when we have reliable, clean, affordable baseload going into our grid, that creates opportunities for everyone. Lower energy prices drive every aspect of the economy. Having affordable, reliable electricity right now is key to artificial intelligence. It is key to manufacturing, and in a state like Montana, that is supportive of having ample amounts of baseload, it is going to be attracting advanced manufacturing, attracting AI data centers, attracting jobs, helping your universities and your schools.

And it's an interesting thing right now, where we have people that are pursuing energy poverty in some other states. It's great we have 50 states, because states can have some of their own approaches. We are—in Interior and the Trump Administration—we are trying to help all 50 states. Some are welcoming that help. Others less so. But I think Montana is a shining example of what a state can do. I mean, you're going to have electricity prices that might be 50 percent lower than other parts of the country.

And you know, if you're someone who is thinking about a \$10 billion capital investment in an AI data center, you're going to go to a place like Montana and say, I am going to go to a place where they actually believe in having affordable, reliable electricity.

Senator DAINES. You know, what's amazing, Secretary BURGUM, is Montana has the most recoverable coal of any state in the United States. It's one of the sometimes untold facts. The welcome sign is out, Secretary BURGUM. Thank you for your leadership.

Secretary BURGUM. And in that coal, in addition to thermal coal for electricity, there are also critical minerals.

Senator DAINES. There are.

Secretary BURGUM. And those critical minerals are absolutely important for us to have secure supply chains. This is one of the important challenges we are facing as a country, and Montana can be part of the solution.

Senator DAINES. Secretary, I want to close with the America the Beautiful Act. My good friend Angus King and I have worked long to protect and strengthen our national parks. Last month, we introduced the America the Beautiful Act to reauthorize the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund. Remember, when President Trump signed the Great American Outdoors Act, many said it was the greatest conservation win in 50 years, signed by President Trump. The only problem we have is that it expires after five years. Well, it has been five years, believe it or not. It's time to renew this to deal with the crumbling infrastructure and the deferred maintenance problems we have in our national parks. With

America's 250th birthday around the corner, I can't think of a better gift to give America than to sign that bill. We are working hard on that, Senator King and I. This is a legacy item for President Trump.

Mr. Secretary, will you work with Senator King and me to get this to the President's desk as soon as possible?

Secretary BURGUM. Absolutely.

Senator DAINES. All right, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

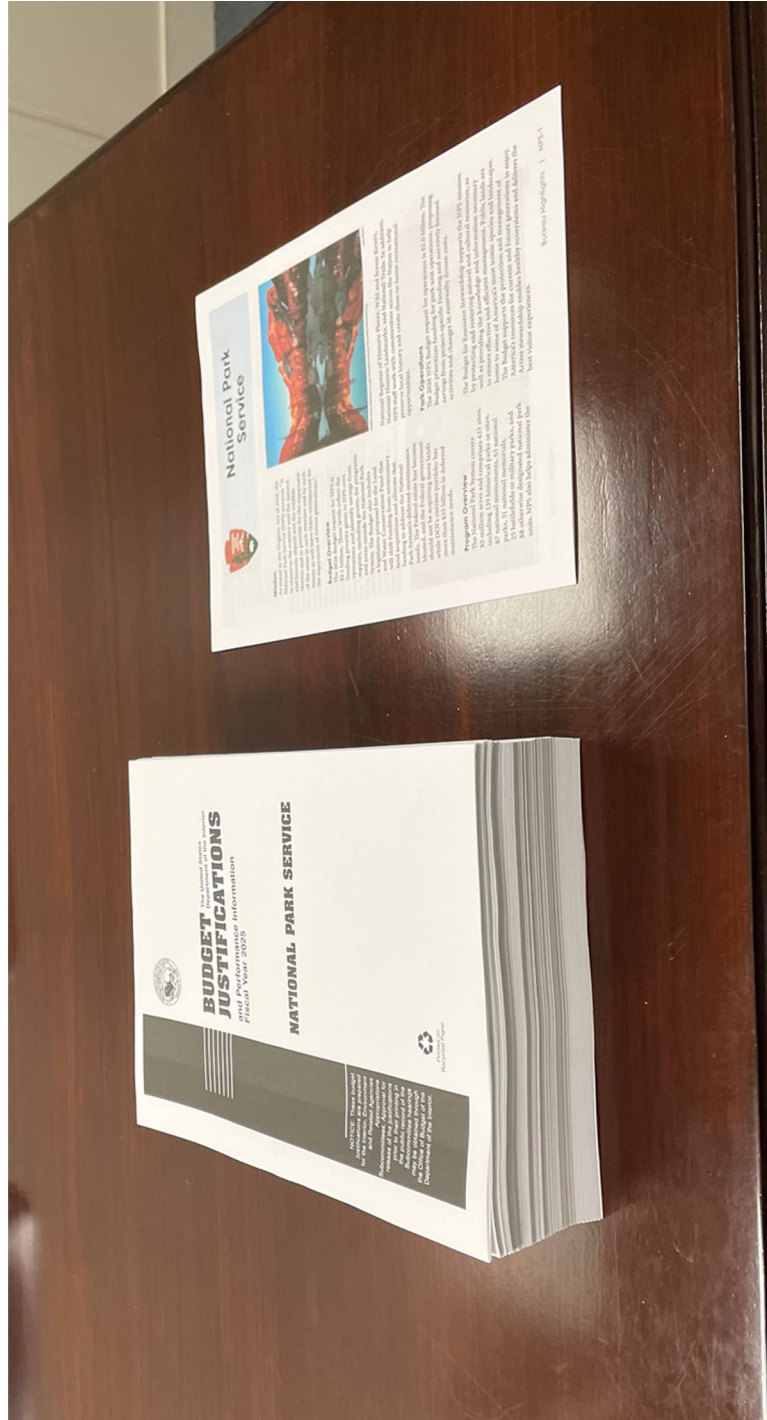
Governor, which I consider a higher title than Secretary or Senator, just so you know. I am disappointed——

Secretary BURGUM. As a former Governor.

Senator KING. That's right. Oh, yes, that's true.

I am disappointed, Mr. Secretary, with the budget, particularly for the National Park Service. First, is what materials we have been given. This is the budget justification for the National Park Service for the 2025 budget that's submitted to Congress so that we have something we can work from and work with. That's 2025. This is what we have been given this year for 2026.

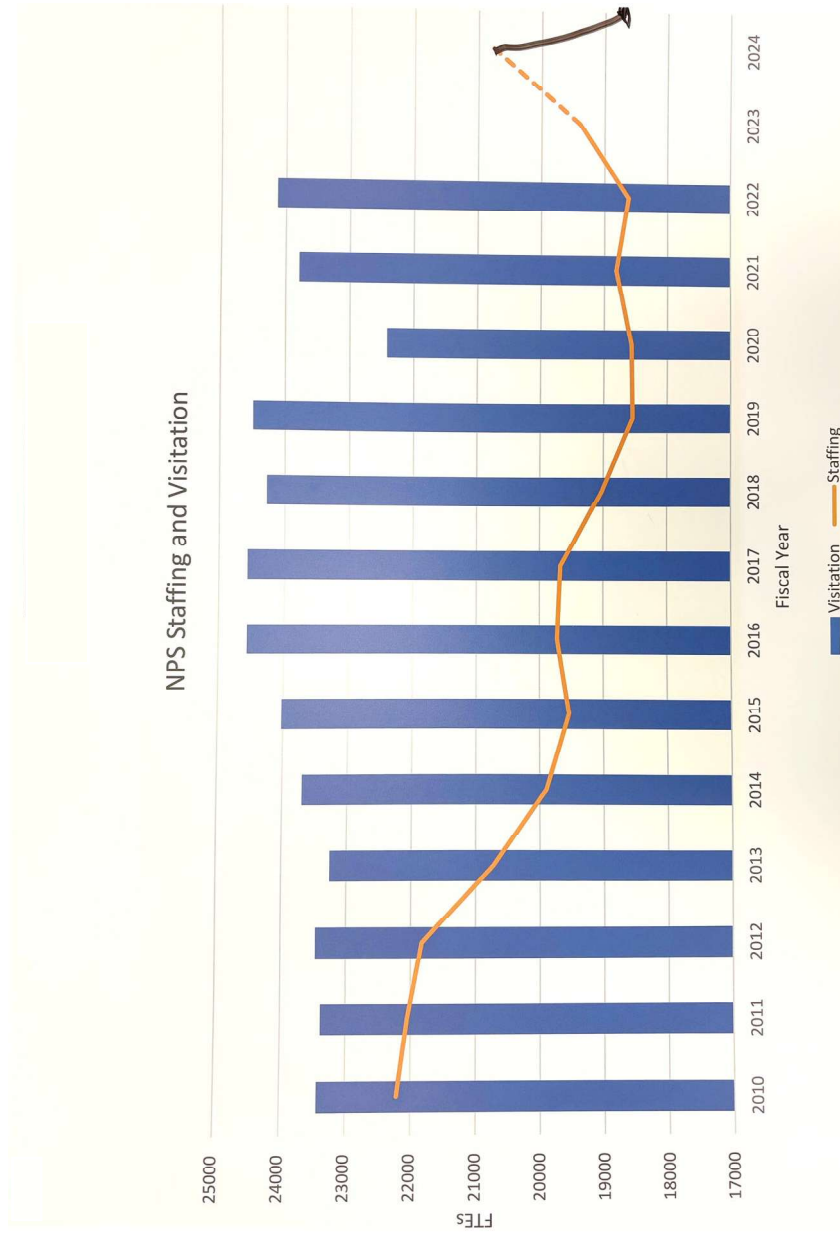
[Side-by-side comparison of the FY25 and FY26 National Park Service Budget Justifications follows:]



Senator KING. That's just—that's an insult to the Congress. That's not adequate to give us the data that we need in order to make the oversight decisions, because we don't know the details of what's being done. There is some boiler plate in here about how we are going to make things more efficient. It's hard for me to understand how gutting America's best idea isn't America's worst idea.

A 37 percent cut in the National Park Service budget, which was already underfunded, I don't believe is responsible. The word stewardship has come up in this hearing several times. That ain't stewardship. Here is some data.

[Displayed chart follows:]



Senator KING. This is visitation at our National Parks going back to 2010. The blue bars are visitation. The orange is staff at the National Park Service. So you can see there was already growing disparity back in 2010. This is where staffing was. This is where visitation was. Here is where we are as of this budget. We are here. That's where we are as of this budget. We are already woefully understaffed, and you are talking about cutting the budget by another third.

Now, my real question is why? The \$1.2 billion you are cutting from the National Park Service is devastating to the National Park Service. It doesn't amount to anything in terms of our federal budget. I did a calculation. If our federal budget was the height of this room, what you are cutting from the National Park Service is the combined height of two credit cards. In other words, to save virtually no money from the federal budget, we are devastating one of America's treasures. That's what I don't understand. And you, yourself, a few minutes ago said we don't have the data. You don't have the visitation data. This is ready, fire, aim. How about waiting a year, developing the data, finding out what it is, because you can't convince me that a detailed analysis of the National Park Service took place in the last couple of months to justify this pitiful submission to this Committee.

So I am anxious to hear. We all know the term bang for the buck. This is damage for the buck. This is huge damage to the Park Service for a very minimal return in terms of reduction to the deficit, reduction of our federal budget. Why in the world, given your commitment to the National Parks, the new park, the Teddy Roosevelt Park in your state, why did you let them do this?

Secretary BURGUM. Senator, I want to just—first, I appreciate the chart that you are holding up behind there. I believe that that number, if I can see it correctly, probably is the full-time staffing, as opposed to the summer and seasonal. I think that we actually have, you know, it's a mix. I think that line, I am trying to see there.

Senator KING. Well, you allowed more seasonals for this year, but I understand only half of them have been hired and we are in the summer right now.

Secretary BURGUM. More than half have been hired, but I think, again, this is a mix. Again, I just got back from a trip to Alaska. I was at Kenai Fjords. This is, you know, a beautiful and amazing park. It's, you know, the road gets plowed in May. It snows over in November. You know, this is a classic case where we need a lot of staffing. Cruise ships are stopping in Seward. They get, you know, hundreds of thousands of visitors over a three- or four-month period, and in the wintertime, the visitor centers aren't even open. So we have to figure out a way to be able to do flex staffing. It's not just as simple as the raw number. And the one number that I was able to—

Senator KING. Well, the raw number—there may be details in here, but it's pretty unmistakable, the trend on this chart and—

Secretary BURGUM. But the other thing—

Senator KING. But again, I don't understand. You are saving a very small amount of money. You are gutting the—I looked it up last night—the National Park Service is the most popular federal

agency—the most popular federal agency. Why in the world would you target this agency, particularly when you, yourself, in your testimony today, said, I don't have the data?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, we are working—

Senator KING. That's ready, fire, aim. Get the data. Understand the details of the budget. Give us something like this, and then we can decide what the plan should be. To echo the Vice Chair, what is the plan for doing this in a thoughtful way, not an arbitrary way of, you know, all probationary employees and that kind of thing?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, in that thick book that you have there, I am certain that there is one thing that is missing, which is how many of those people actually work in a park, because we spent eight weeks this spring rebuilding all the H.R. data to find out, of all the people you have in your chart, how many work in a park, because the real issue that citizens want is, do I have an interpretative person? Do I have a ranger? Do I have, you know, are the bathrooms clean? And so, part of that is making sure that we have fewer people working, you know, in places like Washington, DC, and more people working in the parks. I believe that we can reduce what we spend in overhead in the park and have more people actually working in the parks. And in a place like Yellowstone this summer, there are more people right now on the ground in Yellowstone than there were three years ago.

Senator KING. And I would like to see that plan before you submit a budget that cuts the budget by 37 percent, that's all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary BURGUM. I just want to say one thing, Mr. Chairman. It's one thing that we are in the saddest point in America if we say that cutting a billion dollars is meaningless, or it's as thin as a piece of paper. We are all Americans. We were all part of a budget. Last year, this country spent \$2,000 billion—\$2,000 billion—more than we brought in. That's what a \$2 trillion deficit is. And to think that we can't find savings in every agency, particularly when we have got, you know, decades-old IT systems and way too many people in overhead. I mean, we just have to all agree that we can be more efficient and still deliver great services at places like our national parks. We can do both of those things. It's not an either/or. These are false trade-offs. We can have better experiences at the parks, better staffing at the parks, and we can have fewer people working for the National Park System. My best guess is that barely half of the people of that number actually work in a park. The rest are in some other jobs.

Senator KING. Part of the responsibility of the National Park Service is stewardship and resource management, not necessarily being park rangers. That is part of the responsibility of the Organic Act of the National Parks. And I point out that \$600 billion of that deficit that you mentioned could be covered by better enforcement at the IRS of a lot of people not paying their taxes—\$600 billion. That is the estimate that the deficit could be reduced.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Hoeven, you are up next.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Secretary/Governor Burgum, thanks for being here. Thanks for your commitment to do

both. And I agree, provide better service, and still find savings. And I think you can do it, and I think you will do it. I think you will show that that's exactly what you are going to do. I have seen you do it before. Thanks for being here today.

In addition to all your tasks as Secretary of the Interior, you are also the leader, or the Chairman of the National Energy Dominance Council. So I want to talk to you about that work and how that is progressing as well. So if you would, I mean, as you know, I am all in on energy dominance for this country. Our state is a huge part of it, and we want to continue to be a huge part of it, and that involves both private land, but also public land, right? So it fits with your day job as Secretary of Interior. So talk to me. What steps is the Department and are you taking to unleash more oil, gas, and coal production on federal lands, onshore and off, to help meet the growing demand in our reliance, not only for ourselves, for energy with AI and everything else that is going on, but also, to partner with our allies to get them off energy from countries like Russia and other adversaries?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, thank you, Senator Hoeven and thank you for being such a champion for energy policy. You understand as well as anyone that the right energy policy drives American prosperity and it drives peace abroad. So thank you for your support.

The approach has been, again, a lot of this is coming from President Trump's executive orders, unleashing Alaska's extraordinary potential, the energy emergency that he signed on day one, appropriately, because of the risk that we are facing with our electrical grid in this country and also the risk that we are facing with critical minerals. These are key things that our nation is up against for insecure supply chain. So across the board, we have been working to try to accelerate projects. We do that first by following the law. As you know, the Biden administration failed to hold lease sales, onshore, offshore. They closed down areas, even like the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, which was, you know, designed in 1923 to be a petroleum reserve. Going through the steps to re-open the public lands that were designated for energy resource, we are going through those steps.

As you have heard from some of your fellow Senators here, whether it's coal mines in Wyoming or Montana, or Alabama, metallurgical coal, we are back in the business. We have to get back in the mining business. We have killed mining—not we—but the prior administration has basically killed mining in this country. And if we're not mining, we're not in the critical minerals business. If we're not in the critical minerals business, we can't build a fighter jet, we can't build a car, we can't build a cell phone—all of those things that we need to be. So it's across the board, oil, gas, you know, rolling back the Biden export ban. We are seeing record amounts of capital investment coming to this country around AI because they know that this is a country now that is committed to building the power to power the future economy.

Senator HOEVEN. Well, I am not surprised, but you went right to my next question before I even asked it, and that is critical minerals. You will be glad to know in your home state we are just christening a plant that is going to convert—or that is going to

process nickel for advanced battery manufacturing in the United States, so we don't have to get it from China. And of course, that is the legacy of some of the great work that you did as Governor. But you went right to my next question, which was on critical minerals, which is a key part of it, too.

Also, I would add that under the very strong leadership of Chairman Lee, we are going to provide some more tools for you both in terms of lower taxes and less regulation that is going to help continue this all-in effort for energy dominance.

The other thing, and again, as people get to know you, they are going to know that you have a love for the national parks. I mean, I know it. I have known you for over 30 years. You love the national parks. But you are also a rancher, so talk to me about what we can do for our ranchers who are on public lands as well, grasslands and other aspects, and of course, that farming, ranching, that goes to forestry, that goes to so many things. People don't realize what a huge diverse industry Ag is. What can you do in that realm?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, one of the things we can do is make sure that we are speeding up permitting. And again, as we work toward, I mean, because, again, you have a grazing permit on BLM land or U.S. Forest Service land that can hold up people, and if they have uncertainty about their permits, that affects these ranch families. So we are redoing the whole permitting process, putting up a permitting transparency dashboard, holding the BLM offices at the state and local level accountable for how fast they get permits, helping them with the IT systems to address backlog.

We just have to be in the business of serving our customers. When a rancher is getting a grazing permit from us, they are the customer. They pay us, the Federal Government, for that right. When someone is getting a timber permit from us, they are paying us. We want to be in the business of serving those customers because when they pay us, they are paying us, meaning that is revenue to the Federal Government. That helps reduce the deficit. That helps, you know, us have resources to be able to, you know, tackle deferred maintenance. So we just have to, again, get back into the business of the people that are utilizing public lands, appropriately following the law, that we serve them like the customers that they are.

Senator HOEVEN. Right. And they live out there. They are good stewards of the land. That's their home. And the other thing that is really important is access, as I know you know.

Thank you for your good work.

Secretary BURGUM. Yeah, and we have opened up—we have taken steps to open up hundreds of thousands of more acres to hunting and fishing. There is red tape there, so we are increasing access as we go through this.

Senator HOEVEN. Glad you brought that up. We both love hunting and fishing, so thank you.

Secretary BURGUM. Yeah.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Padilla.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and just to note, I don't have questions this morning about critical minerals, but I am

glad to hear Senator Hoeven and the Secretary engage in that conversation.

Mr. Secretary, the invitation remains open to come visit Lithium Valley in Southern California and see the tremendous potential there for lithium and other critical materials as well. It feels like it has been years since you were here for your confirmation hearing and your vote and our previous conversation. So I hope you are enjoying the job and it's everything you were looking forward to and then some, but look, we are knee-deep on a number of issues and concerns, so I will get right into it.

As I am sure you are aware, the Department of Justice, just yesterday, published an opinion that asserts that presidents have the authority to abolish national monuments. I know the Chairman made a reference to that in his remarks earlier today. I believe this is an extremely dangerous opinion that flies in the face of 90 years of precedent. And you and I discussed this when you were coming through for confirmation, because we worked very hard in recent years on establishing and expanding monuments in California in a very thoughtful and balanced way. So this is personal for me. Given the recent opinion, I do need to ask you, for the record, what are your intentions towards recently designated national monuments in California, which, as I have shared with you, enjoy strong bipartisan support, not just at the federal level, but from local and tribal leaders as well?

Secretary BURGUM. Thank you, Senator, and I do want to tell you, I would love to accept your invitation to come out and visit, and of course, California does have some of the top critical mineral resources in the country and can play a really important role in our national security. So I look forward to talking to you about that.

On the monuments, we have a responsibility and direction to take a look at the recently created ones. I think this is something that we all know, if you just, again, we do have the data on that. And most of these monuments have been created in the last weeks and months of presidential terms, and always under the idea that everyone was consulted. I have had people in my office—not for the ones in California—but I have had people in my office saying hey, we weren't consulted. So, again, as we listen to the feedback from tribes and citizens and others around the country, we have a responsibility to get on the ground and do some ground truth. And I think the question is not whether their monument serves a purpose, I think the real question is the size that generally comes up, because there are people in communities, when we create restrictions on land use that does restrict some of their economic opportunity, and we want to listen to those as well. But again, we are looking for a balanced approach and I am happy to continue that dialogue with you.

Senator PADILLA. Well, I appreciate that, but just, again, for the record, recognizing that states in the West tend to be larger than states in the East. So the appropriateness and size of monuments and other areas of designation tend to be larger because of the acreage that we are talking about. You mentioned engagement and consultation in the creation of monuments. That absolutely happened, as you know, in California. So I appreciate you recognizing the distinction. If it's going to be revisited or undone, we expect

that same level of engagement on the back end before any action is taken or before any decisions are made.

I know my time is limited. Let me move to another topic. As you and I have talked in the past—water, water, water—so important to California and to everybody, but especially California. The Bureau of Reclamation, according to reports, has lost 1,400 public servants, approximately 25 percent of the agency's entire workforce. In the Bureau of Reclamation's regional office in Sacramento, there used to be 50 staff handling financial issues alone, and now, there are only 12. This is the staff that works to approve contracts, grants, agreements, et cetera. Yet, the Bureau of Reclamation's California office has cut its staff responsible for these aspects of water infrastructure by nearly 80 percent. Will you commit to look at the number of finance staff at Reclamation's California regional office to ensure that there is sufficient capacity there to meet the administrative needs of our critical water infrastructure and investments?

Secretary BURGUM. Yes, happy to, for sure, take a look at that. I am a little surprised at the 80 percent because the only reductions so far would have been through people taking one of their early retirement options, unless in that data, and my team can follow up because we did take some people that are in finance, HR, and IT and roll them up to the Secretary's office because we felt there was an opportunity for unification at a broader level—you know, state, you know, versus say, regional. So I would want to make sure that some of those people—I am just wondering if they are still there and they are just being accounted in another area.

Senator PADILLA. Well, accounted, but also where is their work—the roles, and responsibilities, and have they changed to still be California-specific or more broad for the Department.

I know my time is up. Let me just put a pin in, both on the Reclamation side, how critical it is, not just within California infrastructure, but also as we have discussed multiple times, the role Reclamation plays for all the Colorado River states, both in the Lower Basin and the Upper Basin. So we are going to be calling each other more frequently yet again after this hearing.

And lastly, we will submit for the record questions about the cuts to the U.S. Geological Survey. They play a critical role in developing ShakeAlert, the nation's only public earthquake early alert system that more than 50 million Americans depend on. Technology has come a long way. It can be very helpful to preserve, to save lives, and minimize damage in the event of inevitable earthquakes. And so, I want to revisit some of the budget cuts to that program as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Hyde-Smith, you are up next.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you Mr. Secretary for the great job that you are doing. And I so appreciate you revitalizing our nation's offshore energy potential. The short-sightedness of the last administration to block the lease sales in the lease areas could have been so much more detrimental, but thank you for bringing us back. And I truly think that the Department is headed in the right direction, and that revitalization is so

important to states like Mississippi, who are on the Gulf of America, and the offshore oil and gas leasing in the Gulf of America is vital to ensure the entire nation's energy dominance, as we well know. And allowing states like Mississippi to continue to receive the GOMESA funds for coastal conservation and the restoration work, and for making funds available through programs like the American Battlefield Protection Program. The Battlefield Program plays so many important roles across the United States and helps to preserve the historically significant battlefields and parks like the Vicksburg Military Park, which is our number one tourist attraction in Mississippi, and it's good to see that the President's budget has included the funds for that program.

My question is, will you speak to the Department's commitment to ensuring our historic battlefields continue to have access to these funds, because it is very critical to us?

Secretary BURGUM. Yes, thank you, Senator.

Yes, we have a commitment to that, and also, again, I mean, this is one of the—on a broader policy standpoint, when we develop our nation's resources, we have the revenue to go back to protect other things that people care deeply about. And one of the things, which I don't think is widely understood, is that the number one contributor to coastal restoration around the Gulf is revenue coming from the oil and gas industry as part of the revenue sharing from the royalties that the government receives from those that are developing. And so, again, whether it's, you know, battlefields or coastal restoration, it's a win-win for our Gulf states and it's a win-win for America when we have got the revenue to be able to, you know, both lower the cost of energy for all Americans, improve energy security, have more prosperity, but also have revenue that's not tax revenue, it's royalty revenue from an asset that we are participating in that helps pay for these things like, you know, the tourist attraction that is number one in your state, or whether it's coastal restoration, which matters to everyone.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you for that commitment, and we are all enjoying that.

I am pleased that the budget request also highlights the need for marine minerals and expanding critical mineral information and access in the Gulf of America. The University of Mississippi—Ole Miss—has provided support to these efforts over the years and is a willing partner in continuing to provide the technical and scientific support. What is the Department and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's vision for critical mineral exploration and development in the Gulf of America, and will the Department continue to rely on partnerships with research universities to achieve all of this?

Secretary BURGUM. I think that the partnerships are key, and this is, again—one of the ways that we can stretch a federal dollar is working in conjunction with, you know, great universities, private sector, private companies. There are private companies doing advanced research around the potential for ocean-bed critical minerals. So I think this is an exciting area, and I think we, again, as we, you know, are in the current global environment that we are in, where we are in a battle, where it has been well understood for some time that China is controlling 85 percent of the refining of

the rare earth minerals that we are dependent on, this has to be a national priority of the highest order that we have got to get into the critical minerals game because we, like I said, we can't build a fighter jet, a drone, a car, or a cell phone without them. And yet, somehow, we have found ourselves dependent on an adversary for that. So whether it's onshore or offshore, that's a game that this administration is committed to making sure that America's secured future is secure, and these offshore opportunities present a great opportunity to help secure that future.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you very much. I love the direction you are going and want to be very helpful, as much as we possibly can.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary BURGUM. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Hickenlooper.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Mr. Secretary—Governor—thank you for being here.

Your budget proposes transferring public lands out of federal management, and in a couple of places it refers to a bloated federal estate, but in many cases, these lands are supportive of our outdoor recreation—\$17 million in recreation in Colorado, \$1.2 trillion nationwide—and there is discussion in your remarks about increasing outdoor access, but the BLM recreation budget, which is where most of that access gets created, is down 60 percent, and that's not just compared to last year, that's compared to pre-COVID. I am very sensitive to that notion that, you know, during COVID—so I have done all my numbers back to 2019. And that 60 percent cut, I mean, as a former business owner—we both are—when you make those kinds of dramatic cuts, it's often hard to get just the fat. You end up getting a lot of what's really necessary as well.

So, I guess I would ask, shouldn't we be looking at ways that make better investment, but still maintain, to a significant extent, those investments in outdoor recreation and in our access to public lands?

Secretary BURGUM. Yes, Senator, thank you—or I should say, Mayor/Governor/Senator—we agree with your comments, and this is certainly—we want to make sure that we are being strategic in terms of where we are applying the dollars. Love the fact that you have gone back and done that analysis to 2019. You may be ahead of some of the work we are trying to do with the systems because we are trying to put together a look so we can see where we were, because when people talk about dramatic cuts, sometimes the cut would take us back to 2021 spending. And I am like, wow, we got, you know, the world wasn't falling apart in 2021, maybe we could live with that for a while as we try to balance the budget, but I appreciate that.

Recreation is such an important—the outdoor recreation industry is massive. I mean, it's like three percent of the employment in this country is now in outdoor recreation. And that group does so much. I mean, they are doing so much. They do—this is a group, broadly, that is leading in conservation—you know, hunters, fishermen, anglers, campers, climbers. Those are the people that are contributing their own personal dollars back. So this is a community that's most

important to us going forward. So I appreciate your zeroing in on that piece, and we will continue to take a hard look at that.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Yeah, and I think even the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service caught my attention—going back to 2019, it is cut 30 percent. And I know from experience as a governor that they run pretty lean, always anyway. And that's a kind of a foundational for a lot of outdoor recreation, making sure of the habitat for wild animals, for fish, that we maintain and always are trying to think about ways we efficiently and cost-effectively can improve that.

Secretary BURGUM. And they run 65 fish hatcheries, which then help support all the entire fishing industry as well.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Absolutely. And it's a place where, in many ways, it helped pay its own way, because there are all sources of revenue as well. You know all that.

Wildfires—confronting this wildfire crisis really does push us toward making our forests more resilient, but obviously, staffing losses and BLM's land resources funding being cut by a third, again, back to 2019. I am worried about our capacity to respond to the wildfire risk and especially how do we make sure we have resilience. And it's complicated, and I am not trying to gloss over the complications. How do you expect the BLM is going to be able to deliver on the wildfire and forest management goals when you are making these kinds of cuts to the workforce, and to critical parts of the planning?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, as we head into this wildfire season, we just had a briefing yesterday, but Secretary Brooke Rollins and I have been working together. We have held joint reviews on fire-fighting. We have talked about ways to gain additional efficiencies at the operational headquarters overhead level so that we can put more boots on the ground, literally. This summer, we are at about 17,000 staffing across the two agencies for wildfire fighters, so we are about equal with where we were last year. But we do have—there is no hiring freeze on that. We still have positions open if people are interested in jumping in and having an amazing summer experience. We can get them trained up for wildfire fighting.

But we are also looking at some other models. There is a great model that is going on in Alaska between the state and Federal Government, and we also, this budget proposal does include that we would consolidate wildland firefighting, because there are four firefighting units in Interior, one in Fish and Wildlife. Sometimes we are well coordinated. Other times we have got like five generals pursuing different strategies and tactics, and we have a checkerboard of federal land. So we are taking a hard look at some opportunities there and Senator Sheehy and others are advancing legislation to take a look at this as well. So we would be happy to continue that dialogue, particularly with states that are deeply involved in having their own state resources.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Right, like Colorado. I appreciate that. We will stay in touch and do that.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cassidy, you are up next.

Senator CASSIDY. Hey, Mr. Secretary, great to have you here, sir.

Leasing off the outer continental shelf of Louisiana, as you might guess, it's on my mind. And the Biden administration couldn't have screwed it up more if they had actually just said let's screw it up, which actually, I think they tried to. How successful do you think you will be to get regularly scheduled lease sales, understanding that that not only contributes to American energy dominance, but creates a lot of well-paying jobs for people in my state and across the country, you know, well-paying jobs? So I toss it to you.

Secretary BURGUM. This is a priority for us, to get back on a predictable, regular, follow-the-law schedule of lease sales, and for the Gulf of America, we are targeting to try to have a lease sale ready to go by December of this year.

Senator CASSIDY. That's great.

Now, one thing I have heard from my industry leaders is that it used to be so clockwork that they could plan a fishing trip with their son, fly into New Orleans, go to the lease sale, and then go out there. Now, that's important, as you know, not just because they want to go fishing in our beautiful waters with their son, but because time is money. And if there is regulatory delay, it's just chewing up their capital, making it less likely that they can do this. So what is the possibility that we will get back to where a regular, like, you know, first week in May or something, where you can kind of count on it?

Secretary BURGUM. Absolutely, predictability is a goal of ours because, again, it helps on all the capital planning processes, the internal planning processes of these companies, and they have other places to spend their money. I mean, if they know that a lease sale is coming and they know what date it is happening, they can do the research, they can do the evaluation, and they can try to figure out where they may want to bid. If they don't even know when the lease sale may happen, they go look at other fields and other opportunities and sometimes those dollars are going to other countries. We are chasing capital away from the United States. And if people care about the environment, you should want to have every drop of every barrel produced here, every electron produced here, because we produce it cleaner, safer, and smarter than anywhere else in the world. We are the country that is actually reducing, you know, solving pollution, solving environmental issues, solving CO₂ issues. That's all happening in America. That's not happening in the rest of the world.

So we want to have those dollars for energy development come to this country. That's energy security for us. It's prosperity at home. It's peace abroad. And predictability of lease sales in the Gulf and on land is absolutely central to that.

Senator CASSIDY. Music to my ears. It makes total sense.

Tell me, you talked a little in your testimony about mining the ocean for critical minerals and other things. Now, the law of the sea attempts to address that ability to do so. As you know, the U.S. has had several areas marked for itself. At least one or two of those areas, we have since lost because we have not ratified that treaty. What are your thoughts on that, and how do we progress on that?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, I think that one of the things that is exciting about America is that innovation has always been the key to American greatness. The amount of innovation around mining in

general—I think there is this, you know, outdated 30-, 40-, 50-year-old idea of what mining is, but mining, oil and gas development, I mean, again, I had an opportunity to get to an offshore platform off of your state—I mean, these are technology-rich, unbelievably sophisticated operations. You know, any American would be wowed or thrilled to see what we are accomplishing. And I think that the future for really clean, efficient—say, like vacuuming, but think of vacuuming the sea floor with little impact, but what it could mean to us, particularly when we're in a spot right now where we have ceded—us, ourselves and the rest of the free world has ceded the control of critical mineral refining to China. They control 85 percent of the refining on critical minerals, and for some rare earth minerals, they control 100 percent.

Senator CASSIDY. So let me ask you that. Knowing that this could be part of the solution to that very issue, is there a plan kind of being initiated that we are actually going to begin to do just that, develop the technology or use our remote-operated vehicles to go deep and to pull up whatever?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, I think you will see in the weeks and months ahead, and now with the threat of China flexing their muscles relative to control of the supply chain, that this is going to become a national priority for our country that we have to make sure that we never put ourselves in a position of being reliant on an adversary for things that are fundamental to our entire economy.

Senator CASSIDY. Well, again, I like that. I always like to say, wherever there is energy in the world being produced or something like that happening, there is somebody from South Louisiana showing them how to do it. And so, this will be full employment for the people from my state. So thank you very much for your service.

Secretary BURGUM. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cortez Masto.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the Ranking Member.

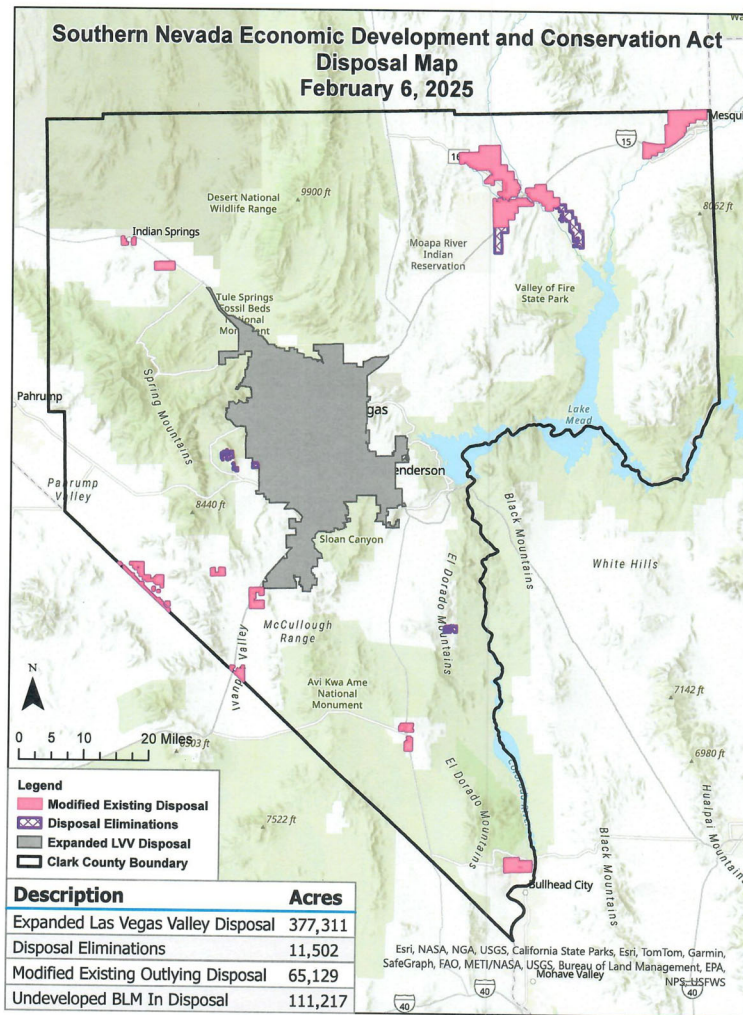
Secretary, welcome. Thank you for being here.

I want to jump back to the public lands conversation that you had with the Ranking Member. In Nevada, as you well know—and thank you for being there, by the way. I appreciate your working with our state, along with HUD. But in Nevada, we support public land sales, particularly in Southern Nevada, within the parameters that are set by SNPLMA. And I thank you again, you identified SNPLMA as a model, and I think it is a model because the model was created and requires robust stakeholder engagement that really addresses all of the varied land management issues we need to work together on, from affordable housing, to economic development, to addressing our infrastructure needs, our water needs—it's a stakeholder group, and it is important we have that. And the money actually comes back to BLM, to the benefit of the federal lands in the State of Nevada.

But here is my challenge: you talk about the benefits and that it should be a model, but in action, you're not actually doing that. And through reconciliation, instead of supporting the model that you talk about and tout, and the Chairman also talks about this as well, and invokes Harry Reid all the time, but the reconciliation package isn't really true to the SNPLMA model. In fact, on the

House side, I am assuming working with the administration, the reconciliation package included federal land sales, but those federal land sales, and particularly in Southern Nevada, weren't near areas where we could actually do affordable housing. Here is a map of Clark County. It's 8,000 square miles.

[The map referred to follows:]



Senator CORTEZ MASTO. This is the area where Las Vegas is, and this is where the boundary is that we want to expand to address affordable housing and other issues, but in the reconciliation package on the House side, the pink areas are the federal land you guys identified, in the middle of the desert. There is no infrastructure. I don't know any builder that is going to build housing in the middle of the desert. It makes no sense.

And now I am hearing there is a proposal by the Chairman of this Committee, again, to put this back into reconciliation because that was taken out of reconciliation. It wasn't well thought out and it wasn't working with the local communities to figure how we actually build affordable housing and use the federal lands to benefit everybody living in those states. But now I am hearing that there is a proposal going to be put back into reconciliation to allow the Federal Government to sell up to two million acres of federal land. Is that correct?

Secretary BURGUM. I understand that there is some consideration of that, but I don't believe that has been formally introduced yet.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Okay. And so, if you are going to look at selling up to two million acres of federal land, and most of that land is across the West, what states will be involved in that process?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, I would say that if the law passes, you know, what we would do is, in the executive branch, is follow the law, but generically, I think when anybody has looked at land sales, they would look at the states that have been most overburdened by the Federal Government percentage, and among the top of that, Nevada, Alaska, Idaho, and Utah are among the states that have the highest percentage of federal land. They also—

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. And certain states, like Montana, might be exempted.

Secretary BURGUM. Not familiar with that or understand why that would be or not be that.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. And then, so who are you working with in my state, if you believe that SNPLMA is a model and that stakeholders should be engaged because it makes sense? We don't want something like this, where you're selling land that doesn't—it's not going to benefit you because it's not a high dollar-value. It's not going to help us because it's not going to build affordable housing. So who are you working with in my state, as stakeholders, as you are looking to sell some of the federal land in Nevada? Who are you talking to?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, we're not—I have got a hundred things on my plate, and right now, the only activity that we are involved in on a day-to-day basis in Nevada is following the existing law, which is the Southern Nevada Lands Act.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. But you just said you are going to be selling up to two million acres across the West—

Secretary BURGUM. I didn't say that.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Oh, you're not going to be selling up to two million acres of land, looking at two million acres of federal land in the reconciliation package? I thought you said you were.

Secretary BURGUM. No, I think you said that, and I said that proposal may be coming, but—

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Oh, okay, so it's a proposal. So as it may be coming, and if it becomes law, who would you be talking to in my state as you look to sell federal land in the State of Nevada?

Secretary BURGUM. This is a hypothetical about something that hasn't been introduced and hasn't been passed.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. It's coming. I mean, it's going to be dropping here any minute now. We are going to see a reconciliation package, I am told. There is going to be a sale of federal land in it. You can't deny that, or are you telling me that maybe the sale of federal land will not be in the reconciliation package?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, wouldn't this be something the Senate would be debating?

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. I would hope so. And that is why I am asking you, because we have not seen anything. The Chairman has it. He has the information. It's behind closed doors. I am assuming they are talking with the administration because you are going to be taking the lead on all of it. So you are before me now and that is why I am asking you the question.

So if you don't know, then I am really concerned. And we should all be concerned across the West. So that is my concern here, and I think from my perspective, and many of us in the western states, I would hope, as you are looking at selling federal land that impacts our states, you are going to be working with us to address that. And you talked about SNPLMA being a model, but the money comes back into BLM for the purpose of these western states, not into the Treasury to reduce the deficit. So you are also going to be looking to changing the formula, isn't that correct?

Secretary BURGUM. Well, I think you are acting like I am proposing legislation, and I—

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Well, I am concerned that you are the lead agency and they're not talking to you about how the federal lands are going to be sold. So maybe I am assuming something that is not happening. You have no involvement in the reconciliation package when it comes to the sale of federal land?

Secretary BURGUM. I think what I would say, which I have said here many times, is that the same principles, which I can repeat over and over again, which is, it would only make sense for us to sell federal lands if we were—

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. I get the principle, but are you actively engaged in the negotiations in the reconciliation package?

Secretary BURGUM. I am not actively engaged in negotiations—

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. You're not actively engaged at all in the conversation around the sale of federal lands in the reconciliation package, the proposal? You are not involved in that?

Secretary BURGUM. We have had—there are conceptual talks about how that would lay out, but there have not been negotiations.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Okay.

I am running out of time. I am going to submit the rest of my questions for the record.

Let me just say this—this is not antagonistic. This is about how we work together. In the State of Nevada, over 80 percent of the

land is owned by the Federal Government. We have always wanted a good relationship, and I work toward that 100 percent. And I look forward to that continuing. But you can't come here and say that you support a model program that was started by Senator Reid in SNPLMA and then upend it and completely do something different. And that's all I am looking for, is accountability with this Administration and working with us and doing what they say they are going to do to the benefit of everybody in the State of Nevada.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I will add here that the language will be out shortly. These things take time. We have been going through the Republican-side Byrd process. We are going to be releasing bill text soon. Anything on public land sales in this will involve a public process that would be part of any sale.

Senator JUSTICE.

Senator JUSTICE. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, thank you all.

How you doing there, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary BURGUM. Doing great, Governor.

Senator JUSTICE. I will lead off by just saying just this—you know, we talk about so many different things, it is unbelievable, whether they be grizzly bears or, you know, government land sales, offshore, hunting and fishing, parks, energy. Can you imagine that all of that is going through this man? Now, let me just say just this—I am from West Virginia. I know an awful lot about energy. And I will get to that in just one second, and forgive me, these allergies are going crazy right now, but I can tell you this, and I can tell you this with complete confidence, here you have got a man that has been an unbelievable Governor. He has unbelievable experience. He is a business guy. He is a rancher. He is absolutely an outdoorsman beyond belief. He is the absolute perfect choice for this job. And it's an avalanche of stuff of what he has to do. That's all there is to it. He has got to wear so many different hats, it's unbelievable. Absolutely, without any doubt, he is the pick of the litter of all the secretaries, in my book, hands down. I have said it over and over and over.

One of our colleagues, just a little while ago, said that from the renewable standpoint—and I have been one to embrace all. I want us to all have a level playing field but embrace all. I did that in West Virginia over and over and over because we are going to awaken to a situation in this country in just a little while where we have an energy meltdown. We all know that, an absolute energy meltdown, and we are not moving at the speed that we will have to move at. But one of my colleagues says, you know, from a renewable standpoint, we are in a situation now to where we are having a Democratic water torture. Well, what do you think has happened under the Biden administration to the gas industry, the coal industry, you know, what has happened? You talk about water torture, it was off the chart.

Now, we have got to do something about it and we have got to all come together and we have got to have a kumbaya moment where we all come together and we move forward in a really, really good way. We can do that. We can genuinely do that. We have somebody here that cares for our parks, our lands, our nature, ev-

everything in the world, and we could never have selected anybody any better. So I will tell you just this—there is one thing, one thing in the budget here, and it jumps out at us all over the place, and it's Wildland Fire Service. Please explain a little bit more because it is the only thing that we have not found a way—and the last thing I will say in just one second, but please, please explain.

Secretary BURGUM. Well, thank you, Governor/Senator, for those kind words.

Wildland fire—we have got some incredible people on the ground. We have incredible, dedicated professionals. We have got aviation resources combined between the four wildland firefighting groups in Interior and the one inside of U.S. Forest Service, over 400 aircraft that either we own directly or contract. We have all these resources. The thing that is missing sometimes is that we aren't deploying them in a way as fast as we could. I had this experience last fall as Governor. We had a wildland fire, prairie fire, pushed by 60-mile-an-hour winds, burned 124,000 acres. That's larger than—like, five times larger than the LA fires. Two people died—a rancher trying to save some horses, and another guy trying to dig a fire break on his tractor, and it just, you know, when it's coming from a mile away at 60 miles-an-hour, it's there in a minute, it's not there in ten minutes. And they just underestimated the power of that.

But here's the deal: as Governor, where the fire started, it's early on Saturday morning. We know we have a problem. I got the National Guard out. We got helicopters, Black Hawks, flying with buckets, you know, trying to save property. I called the feds on Saturday morning and said we have got something here, let's get after it when it's still small. We can get this thing out. We need aerial support. I mean, we need fixed-wing aerial support to go along with our National Guard 'copters. That was Saturday morning. The planes arrived on Tuesday, after two people had died and 124 acres had burned and there were planes sitting in Bozeman, Montana on the ground that were never deployed because there wasn't the decision-making hierarchy to say let's send them over there. We only needed them for half a day. These skimmers come in, they pick up six tons of water in 11 seconds. They were flying laps off Lake Sakakawea, and they had this fire out in a canyon in the Badlands in four hours. So we have to get the right equipment at the right place at the right time. We have to respond. We have to have guaranteed—I don't want to say guaranteed response time—but if you are in a community and you call 911 because your house is on fire, you know, maybe it's in your kitchen and then, you know, by the time they get there, your house is burned and so is the neighbor's, as opposed to putting it out when there is no damage.

So part of our expense for wildfire fighting is response time. The longer we wait to respond, the more money we spend on the back end. So Brooke Rollins and I, working together, are saying we need to have a unified approach in this budget. There are the transfers—the wildland firefighters from U.S. Forest Service. They will still be branded U.S. Forest Service firefighters, but we get them under a unified command, reporting up to a structure inside of Interior. So we take the four, because we have firefighters in BLM, BIA, National Parks, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife. All four of those

have wildland fire groups, plus Forest Service. So we take the whole 750 million acres of federal land and say you guys are reporting up to a unified command as opposed to five generals. We do have some examples. The Interagency Wildfire Center in Boise, Idaho gets us closer to that. We have some examples in Alaska we can build on between the State of Alaska and the BLM and Forest Service up there.

So there is some great work that we can do to build on, and we can give these people the technology resources, because we put them in danger. We're not giving them—we gave technology to our soldiers on the front lines in Afghanistan 25 years ago—better tech than we are giving wildfire fighters that are walking into these heat storms. And today, with satellite imaging and heat recognition, there are all these things we can do to protect land, protect property, protect the lives of our firefighters, and they deserve that. And we think we can get there, so that's in this proposal, is getting us unified across those five groups.

Senator JUSTICE. I hope that everybody just listened to that answer. What you saw right there is a CEO, a business guy, a governor, absolutely a super-experienced and super-smart guy. Really and truly, that is who we have given the keys to, to lead us, and absolutely, the Secretary of the Interior today. I know you will do an incredible job. And I thank you so much from the bottom of my heart. And God bless us for having Doug Burgum right now. Thank you so much, sir.

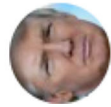
Secretary BURGUM. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cantwell.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Burgum, good to see you. I think that there is a big theme here about public lands. And I join my colleagues, the Ranking Member and the Senator from Nevada, who asked you about the selling of public lands, but we have already had this debate here. We had a very big debate here. So, my state, obviously, we like public lands. It's a juggernaut of an economy. So when you think of our state, you think of ports and parks and you think of \$22 billion and over 200,000 jobs. So it's big money to us. We led a fight with many of our colleagues on this Committee to get permanent funding for LWCF, to get it reauthorized and permanent funding. In fact, this, if you will hold that up, is an actual quote from the President of the United States during the big battle. He said, "I am calling on Congress to send me a bill that permanently funds LWCF and restores our parks. I will sign it into law. It will be historic and it will be for our public lands."

[Poster of the quote referred to follows:]



Donald J. Trump 
@realDonaldTrump



I am calling on Congress to send me a Bill that fully and permanently funds the LWCF and restores our National Parks. When I sign it into law, it will be HISTORIC for our beautiful public lands. ALL thanks to [@SenCoryGardner](#) and [@SteveDaines](#), two GREAT Conservative Leaders!

4:10 PM · Mar 3, 2020

Senator CANTWELL. Okay. So that—I was there. I was at the bill signing. I know what it says. It basically says you have to do acquisition. It is setting in law the amount of money that should be spent on acquisition. So when we are talking here this morning, we are all amazed that you seem to be putting forth a budget that is basically saying, I don't want to acquire, I want to actually sell public lands. What we figured out, as a coalition of people—hunters, fishermen, outdoor recreationists, travel and tourism people—we figured out that it's a juggernaut of an economy and we want to grow it. And we were able to get President Trump to sign a bill.

So now, your budget, and I asked you about this at your confirmation hearing, I asked you specifically whether, if confirmed, and you said, "I will implement the law as enacted by Congress." Well, the law enacted by Congress basically says that you have to spend 40 percent of these LWCF funds and make acquisition. It doesn't say sell public lands. It says acquire lands. So I don't know how you are proposing a budget that basically is going in the opposite direction of what was, let me refresh my memory, 60 sponsors in the Senate, 254 in the House. This was not a little decision. This was putting to bed this notion that, oh, it's either I am going to fix some roads in our forests or I am going to do land acquisition. Now, I get it, even the Chairman, he and I have had many conversations, as did his former colleague from Utah, Mr. Bishop. We have had many conversations about LWCF in the past. I get some of their issues that they have brought up about LWCF, but Congress voted and President Trump signed the law. Now we are asking you to implement it.

And so, I want to understand how you are proposing anything other than following the Dingell Act.

Secretary BURGUM. Well, certainly, we will continue and will follow the law and I think what we are having here is, we shouldn't be confused that two things can happen at the same time, which is—so it's about which lands and which acquisitions, because 40 percent of the LWCF is a pretty small number relative to the scale. I mean, it's meaningful—hundreds of millions of dollars—but the opportunity for us to accelerate purchases, say, of infill and fill out the squares where we might be acquiring land for the Federal Government that is a private inholding inside of a national park—

Senator CANTWELL. But we do it all the time. One of the biggest things we used LWCF for is because the Federal Government kept having to spend money because a road washed out—

Secretary BURGUM. Yes.

Senator CANTWELL [continuing]. In accessing Mount Rainier. So we basically acquired more land, built the road on a different thing so we weren't paying \$250,000 every few years. So we are all for that.

Secretary BURGUM. Yeah, and we can—

Senator CANTWELL. But we are for following the Dingell Act, following the law of the Great American Outdoors Act, and making sure that we are actually doing acquisition. Why? Because we have figured out—I think somebody said during that time that it was the third biggest industry behind finance and health care—so we figured out that it is a big economic engine for our nation. So we want to see it.

Now, I get that you have people here who didn't succeed in that battle and who may not believe that, but this was bipartisan, bicameral, and we need that support.

I want to just——

Secretary BURGUM. I am just saying it's not—both of these things can happen at the same time. You can take LWCF funds——

Senator CANTWELL. Your budget doesn't say that, and I think it's heading to a catastrophe. So that's why I am bringing it up.

On the fire point, we have a big fire in Cle Elum right now. They aren't getting the direction. I hear what you just described as Governor and the issues, but we are—this is where we are heading.

[Displayed posters follow:]

The Seattle Times

WINNER OF 11 PULITZER PRIZES

INDEPENDENT AND LOCALLY OWNED FOR MORE THAN 128 YEARS

Wildfire burns buildings, threatens homes near Cle Elum



June 9, 2025

Senator CANTWELL. This is where we are now. This is where we are going to be. What is this, September? All of this is in red. So we have a fire in Cle Elum now and we need direction. We need to know. My constituents want to know, what are people going to do to help coordinate with Interior and the Forest Service. We need to know now. So if you could help us with that, I would appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Aloha, Mr. Secretary.

We are dealing with an administration that is dismantling government services that provide services to our people by cutting employees, by cutting programs, by cutting whole agencies out of our departments. And you had the spectacle of DOGE cutting thousands—thousands of federal employees, and I don't think any of our secretaries, I don't think you were consulted as to who should be cut from the Interior Department. So our secretaries—you and others—are left to come and respond to our questions of why this happened, why these people were cut, and you sit here saying, well, you don't have that information, you don't have that breakdown. Maybe for Forest Service people, these were not the people who were actually working in our national parks, but you don't really know that, do you?

So I am really glad that Senator King, right here, he talked about the concerns that he had about the cuts to our National Park Service people because these are the people who actually interact with the American people. And if the parks' bathrooms are not cleaned or if there are not the services that are provided at our national parks, it's kind of obvious. And so, you are not able to provide us with the kind of breakdown that we asked for. And I don't know why you have to come here without the kind of information that we ask. And this is not just you, but you know, I serve on the Veterans Committee. The VA Secretary says he doesn't know, he doesn't have the information as to all of the veteran employees who were cut, and maybe another 80,000 will be cut. He comes and testifies without that information. He says that he will provide that information. And when asked to commit, to come back to the VA Committee to respond to the questions that we will have, he doesn't make that commitment.

So there you have it. You know, while you may not know who has been cut, those of us who are actually on the ground know some of the employees who are no longer there. For example, in Hawaii, reductions in NPS, FWS, USGS, and more have eliminated necessary positions that are critical for these agencies to carry out their missions. And we have parks with extremely high vacancy rates. We have lost a superintendent, a chief of law enforcement, a chief of interpretation, the list goes on. These are the people on the ground who are providing services. And so, when they are gone, it's pretty obvious to us.

So that I can understand what efficiencies you claim that these cuts are providing, we need data. I would really appreciate it if you would provide a list of all the DOI positions in Hawaii that have been vacated since January 20th, including those that have been

fired and those who accepted early termination, including locations, positions, descriptions, and justifications for their elimination. Will you provide that information to us?

Secretary BURGUM. Yes, we will be happy to, Senator.

Senator HIRONO. And will you commit to coming back and responding to our questions as to how all of this happened, once you provide us with the information and explanation?

Secretary BURGUM. Yeah, happy to, but I should clarify that if there is anybody, so far, some of them would have taken early retirement because that is where the vast—

Senator HIRONO. Oh, that's another thing, you know, yeah, the fork in the road early retirements. I don't even know if that's considered legal.

One more question: federal programs that research or address climate change, like the USGS Climate Adaptation Science Centers, have been indefinitely paused, whatever that means. Indefinitely paused—that sounds like they are not coming back. Is it your intention that any programs that have to do with climate change or climate-related programs within the Department will no longer be supported?

Secretary BURGUM. Given the explosion of spending that occurred during the last administration, we are taking a look, operationally, ourselves. It wasn't a DOGE thing. It was something that I was fully supportive of to take a look at all contracts and grants. There were over 36,000 contracts and grants that were issued from the Department of the Interior—

Senator HIRONO. So are you going to be targeting all those that have to do with climate change and the impact of climate change? Is that the directive from this administration? Because we know that this administration does not think that climate change is real, and our understanding is that departments have been directed to eliminate references to climate change. Is that what is going on in your Department?

Secretary BURGUM. What's going on in our Department, if I would be allowed to finish, is that we are looking at the 36,000 contracts and grants that are totaling billions and billions of dollars of spending. In some cases, we have found that those grants were going to organizations that got 99 percent of their revenue from that grant. To me, that is no longer an NGO, that is just an extension of our own government—

Senator HIRONO. Last question then. Of the thousands of contracts that you are reviewing, can you provide us with which of those deal with climate change?

Secretary BURGUM. We can certainly take a look, but I think so many organizations included references to that as part of a way to access funding, it's hard to know who was actually working on it or who was just using that as a way to drag in more grant money.

Senator HIRONO. Well, considering that you are doing a review, I would think that your review would be able to identify those contracts that have to do with climate change.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, welcome. You still have that Alaska glow. I can tell you have been up in the state doing your due diligence. Nobody takes a vacation up there. We work you hard. And I really appreciate the time that you and Secretary Wright and Administrator Zeldin gave to Alaska-specific issues. The fact that you were from the North Slope all the way down to the Kenai area, on the ground, listening to people and really, really leaning in on the President's executive order. I deeply, deeply appreciate it, and I know that you are all putting together your action plans. Know that I and the other members of the delegation stand ready to assist you with all of these efforts.

But just as important as it is that we are leaning in with you, I know that we all need your folks, your teams, whether it's those that are going to go through the process here and be back here in Washington or those men and women that are on the ground. And so, I have raised with you before some of the concerns that I have about some of the reductions in forces. You have kind of walked me through what you are looking at, how you want to get folks out of headquarters, out in the parks. I am supportive of this. I do ask for your help and your commitment. As the Chair of the Interior Appropriations Committee, and I am dashing in between these committees right now, it would be very helpful if you could provide us with a full list of the BLM, the U.S. Forest Service, and National Park Service staff positions and their locations that we have lost since the new administration. We are just trying to understand, again, where the staffing within the various agencies falls out. So this is an ongoing process, I get that, but as close as communication and connection that we can have on that, it's greatly, greatly appreciated.

I am going to ask you a question here. I have the Chief of the Forest Service in the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee room right now. We are questioning him, and my last question to him was with regards to the Wildland Fire Service consolidation. This is moving 11,000 wildland firefighters, \$2.85 billion, into the new DOI Wildland Fire Service, eliminating the U.S. Forest Service wildland fire program altogether.

What I shared with the Chief is, I don't know whether this is right, wrong, or indifferent. I do think the effort to be smart with efficiencies and consolidations just makes sense. But I also know we have seen threats from wildfires all over this country. My Ranking Member on the Committee, Senator Merkley, what his state has seen in Oregon is just, I mean, it's scary stuff. You know all about it. I am just hoping that there has been good discussion and fair assessment about how this restructuring might affect the coordination between Alaska's interagency fire management efforts, particularly with our Alaska fire service, our state, and our tribal partners. We are going into our fire season, unfortunately for us—or fortunately for us, I guess—it has been the wettest summer that we can possibly imagine. So hopefully, we are going to escape the fires this year, but can you just share with the Committee a little bit of where you think we go on this fire services consolidation effort? And you may have repeated this, but I appreciate it.

Secretary BURGUM. Let me just say on this topic, first of all, what we are doing for this summer and this fire season right now

is just, at the top, very top, Secretary Rollins and I are just staying in close coordination. We have held, I think for the first time ever, we have held joint fire briefings. I have been over to the U.S. Forest Service with her to get the briefings there. She will be invited to hear briefings from the four firefighting groups that operate within Interior. And the proposal of the unification—I will call it unification—I wouldn't say move, because people aren't being asked to move where they work or where they report to, or their duty stations, it's just getting the five generals at the top to actually have, sort of, not just a joint chiefs of staff, but to have a unified strategy, particularly around things when we are optimizing across aircraft—

Senator MURKOWSKI. Right.

Secretary BURGUM [continuing]. Because this is one of the places where we know from personal experience, we are under-optimizing the decisions around when to deploy and, you know, if we can put out a fire early, it saves us a lot of cost on the back end being able to do that.

So first of all, it's not for this fire season.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Right.

Secretary BURGUM. We would have time to plan for next year to do that, but overall, we want to take a look at models. The positive models I have cited already today here, such as the National Inter-agency Fire Center in Boise, is what I would call a good start, and gets us a long way there, and then also the model that I was able to get deeper on in Alaska between where BLM takes the leadership across a number of agencies and then the coordination, including the co-location at a military base with the Alaska Fire Service, which is a fantastic fire service, and how they have divvied up the approach where they are covering each other's land in some cases, but then optimizing the use of forces. So I think the Alaska model and the Idaho model are two things we would look at as we would go forward.

But also, it's unifying pay. That's something I didn't mention earlier, but we have different pay and benefits for these different firefighting groups. And they should all be the same. I mean, the fire doesn't know, the fire itself doesn't know whether it's on BLM land, U.S. Forest Service, BIA, and the people that are fighting those fires are facing the same dangers. So getting unified pay, benefits, bonuses, retirement benefits, those things is another thing that Brooke Rollins and I are working on as part of this unification.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Well—

Secretary BURGUM. And the last thing I would say is technology. We have varying applications of technology. Some are way ahead and some are way behind. That puts us at risk, but when we are thinking about how do we budget and how do we make sure that the people that are fighting those fires on the ground have access to life-saving technology, how do we use satellite technology for early detection across these massive areas that we have, including Alaska, there are just some things we can, when we are applying these new technological resources, if we, you know, get one satellite system going, we don't need five. We need one for what would be the new Wildland Fire Service.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Well, I look forward to talking with you more directly as you are moving forward with what this really looks like and how it's going to be implemented. I appreciate the recognition of some of the unique partnering that we have made work, but yeah, we don't need to reinvent the wheel here. We just need to fight the fire.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Murkowski.

Okay, we have now completed round one. We had aimed to wrap up this hearing by noon because of other commitments we have. We aren't going to be able to do a full second round, but Senators King and Heinrich would like to say something briefly before I wrap up.

Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Mr. Secretary, you and I differ on the National Park Service. You may have picked that up in our conversation, but I just want to compliment you on the fire service unification effort. That makes total sense, and I think it's a very sensible proposal. I think it will help in managing fires and managing the resources more efficiently. So we disagree on some things, but this is one where we agree. Nice work.

Thank you.

Secretary BURGUM. Thank you, Governor.

Senator HEINRICH. Secretary, in the exchange between you and Senator Cantwell, I wanted to point out that I think you are absolutely correct. You can use existing federal law, like FLTFA or like this other Nevada law, to dispose of isolated tracts next to urban areas for housing and simultaneously use the Land and Water Conservation Fund for public access for hunting and fishing, for filling in those inholdings in the midst of national parks or other federal public lands.

I think what is missing and probably generating some of the angst around the LWCF piece of that is that we haven't received the priority list from the administration. Normally around now, we get a list of those projects that make sense—the projects that create access, the projects that improve hunting and fishing conditions, and the conservation projects. So I would just encourage you to get that list to us so that we can have fidelity to both of these legal constructs at the same time.

Secretary BURGUM. Great. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Secretary Burgum, thanks so much for being here. Thanks for your willingness to serve our country. You bring to the table a lot of expertise, experience, and hard work, and our country is better off as a result. So thank you for being here.

This concludes today's hearing. I want to thank everyone for participating. Any Senator who would like to submit additional questions for the record, those will be due by 6:00 p.m. this evening.

Thanks again, Secretary Burgum, for answering our questions.

Yes, Secretary.

Secretary BURGUM. Mr. Chairman, I just want to again say I concur 100 percent with your opening remarks. I do want to thank you for acknowledging that we have six different leaders, all of who could help advance the concerns of this Committee, who, some of

them, as far away as April, went through and got approved in this Committee but have not yet had a floor vote. The sooner we can get those six executives actually working, the faster I can be responding to requests from people of this group, so I appreciate everyone's attention to that. I know, very busy with the Big Beautiful Bill, and lots of other things, but you know, making sure that we have the leaders to execute on your requests would be greatly appreciated.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, that is an excellent point. I couldn't concur more, and yes, while we have other legislative matters going on, as has been said in other contexts in this hearing, we can walk and chew gum at the same time, and we have got to get that done. I am doing everything I can to expedite that logjam.

The Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:04 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX MATERIAL SUBMITTED

Questions for the Record
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Hearing: *President's budget request for the*
Department of the Interior for Fiscal Year 2026
June 11, 2025

Questions from Ranking Member Martin Heinrich

Question 1: The Administration's budget proposes moving the entirety of the federal wildland firefighting force to a new agency under your Department. Your success with this proposal would literally have life-or-death consequences for our rural communities, so I have some questions about how this would work.

- Has your Department discussed whether these firefighters would be available to support prescribed burns and other forest thinning work on Forest Service land? How would that work?
- Would DOI firefighters work out of fire stations and live in housing units located on Forest Service lands? Would your Department take over the maintenance costs for those buildings?
- Have you estimated what upfront costs would be necessary to complete this move? Are those costs accounted for in your budget anywhere?

Response: The FY 2026 Budget proposes a strategic unification of the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (USDA FS) and the Department of the Interior's wildland fire management programs by establishing a new U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) in DOI. As part of the proposed USWFS, firefighters would continue to be available to support prescribed burns and forest thinning work on USDA FS lands, just as they are today. These resources can be ordered and assigned to fuels projects or prescribed fires through existing interagency coordination and dispatch systems, ensuring continued support for hazardous fuels reduction across jurisdictional boundaries.

Under the proposed unification, some firefighters will continue to work out of fire stations and live in housing units on USDA FS lands. As part of implementation of the USWFS, the Department will work with USDA FS to develop an up-to-date and comprehensive inventory of all facilities that support wildland fire operations, including a joint plan for inventorying all fire stations and housing, and documenting current maintenance needs. This coordination will help ensure continuity of operations, clarify responsibilities, and support safe, well-maintained facilities for the firefighting workforce.

The 2026 Budget does not include a specific request to effectuate the unification. The request provides the resources needed for initial implementation. Further, as noted, beyond the \$3.7 billion requested for Wildland Fire Service Operations, the Administration will transfer additional operational capacity and budgetary resources supporting wildland fire management from USDA FS to DOI in the future.

Question 2: Your budget proposes a 94% cut to the Historic Preservation Fund, which would mean a devastating cut for Tribal Historic Preservation Offices.

Questions for the Record
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Hearing: *President's budget request for the*
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In New Mexico, we have 18 Tribal Historic Preservation Offices. In North Dakota, there are four. And they are all working to preserve their respective historic properties and cultural traditions.

- Can you guarantee that Tribal historic and cultural preservation programs won't be impacted by this significant cut?

Response: The Department is committed to following the law and working within the framework of the National Historic Preservation Act to support preservation efforts in a collaborative and cost-effective manner while pursuing focused investments that prioritize primary Federal responsibilities.

Question 3: Thousands of DOI employees took the deferred resignation offers and many more would be terminated in a reduction-in-force. The President's budget also proposes consolidating resources for wildland firefighting in the name of government efficiency.

- How many employees that resigned held red cards to serve as a reserve firefighting force?
- I would also like to know the total number of potential firefighters, both those in primary roles and those with red cards, available across DOI and the Forest Service this year. Can you coordinate with the Forest Service and get that figure to me?

Response: Throughout 2025, the Department sustained a strong and stable wildland fire management workforce, employing a total of 5,708 personnel, including firefighters and support personnel critical to incident response and other wildland fire management duties and support roles. This figure is closely aligned with 2024 staffing levels, when the Department employed 5,780 personnel. The majority of the Department's wildland fire personnel served in operational firefighting roles within designated occupational series and held incident qualification cards, commonly referred to as "red cards." This operational core remained steady throughout the year.

Approximately 115 employees from the Department's wildland fire management program participated in the Deferred Resignation/Retirement Program (DRP). Of those, 59 held red cards in 2024. The Department extended an opportunity to DRP participants who held active red cards to return on a voluntary basis for the 2025 fire year to assist with wildfire support and incident response if needed.

The Department of the Interior defers to the USDA Forest Service to provide workforce information for their agency.

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Question 4: Secretary Burgum, you released a Secretarial Order stating that all park units should remain open and accessible to the American public by ensuring the National Park Service is properly staffed.

- Have you been successful in meeting your goal of hiring at least 7,000 seasonal staff?

Response: The National Park Service onboarded the majority of its seasonal employees for the summer operating season and is now actively onboarding the remaining seasonal employees required for the winter season. Based on current hiring activity and historical winter season hiring trends, the NPS projects it will reach approximately 7,000 total seasonal hires by the end of the FY 2025 winter hiring period, which concludes around March 2026. While these figures remain preliminary, the NPS is on track to meet our seasonal hiring goals.

Question 5: On May 9th, the Bureau of Land Management issued an official notice of tribal consultation on whether to partially revoke the mineral withdrawal around Chaco Culture National Historical Park.

However, Interior failed to provide the appropriate 30-day notice for this consultation – as outlined in departmental manuals for tribal consultation.

- Given this oversight, how do you plan to ensure proper tribal consultation and appropriate information sharing with all the affected tribes in the greater Chaco region, and will you honor the comments you receive?
- Will you personally meet with the affected tribes before taking any action on the Chaco withdrawal?

Response: Public Land Order No. 7923 is currently the subject of litigation. The Department remains committed to honoring our nation-to-nation relationship with Tribal Nations, strengthening Tribal sovereignty and self-governance, and upholding our trust and treaty responsibilities, including with interested Tribes and Pueblos. The BLM held an initial meeting with interested Tribes and Pueblos on May 28, 2025, to provide an opportunity to begin a dialogue, share information, and receive questions and concerns. The BLM has continued ongoing consultation during the summer months.

Question 6: Biologists in the Fish and Wildlife Service's Ecological Services Unit and the USGS Ecosystems Mission Area help determine when a species needs to be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The same biologists help determine when a species is recovered enough to be removed from the endangered species list.

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Your department fired hundreds of those biologists and this budget request reduces funding for both programs.

- Without this staff, how will the Fish and Wildlife Service and the USGS have the resources necessary to delist or downlist species when appropriate?

Response: President Trump is focused on cutting waste and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently and effectively. As I stated at my hearing, a number of Department employees voluntarily left the agency, either to take an early retirement or pursue other opportunities. The Department is focused on implementing its core mission and is well positioned to do so.

Question 7: There are 3 USGS Regional Climate Centers that are in the rebid process, including the South Central at University of Oklahoma, which was established in 2012 and counts the University of New Mexico among its consortium partners.

I understand that the Department has not approved these three Climate Adaptation Science Center rebid proposals, despite being told a decision would be made in March.

- What is the status of the re-bid proposals for the three Regional Centers?
- Will the Department approve the re-bid proposals for the three Regional Centers?

Response: Funding for the existing agreements with the Pacific Islands, South Central, and Northeast CASCs is available through FY 2026.

Question 8: The Fish and Wildlife Service conducts annual surveys on migratory birds and waterfowl populations.

These surveys, and the hunting regulations that are based on the information they provide, are a core and historic function of the Fish and Wildlife Service and are enshrined in law.

- Secretary Burgum, are you a duck hunter? Do you have any bird bands on your duck call lanyard?
- How will the Fish and Wildlife Service continue these annual surveys given the proposed cuts to its budget and the widespread reductions in force that have resulted in hundreds of wildlife biologists being fired?
- Can you assure waterfowl hunters that these annual monitoring programs will continue?

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Response: Both my parents were avid duck hunters and from an early age I was raised hunting ducks in North Dakota. Some of my earliest memories include watching sunrises from a duck blind when I was only five years old and the first 16-gauge shotgun my mother gifted to me for bird hunting. As a lifelong outdoorsman, I continue to support hunting and fishing opportunities on federal lands, which is both economically and culturally important.

The annual migratory bird surveys are conducted by state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies who coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These strong partnerships with states, tribes, private landowners and other stakeholders are integral to achieving conservation success. In addition, FWS is currently executing the surveys with current resources in a coordinated and strategic manner and will continue to carry out our core mission responsibilities.

The FWS has established an Adaptive Harvest Management Task Force made up of members of the state wildlife management agencies and members of the FWS to evaluate current methods and techniques to sample waterfowl populations and set hunting seasons. The Task Force will look for new innovative ways to use technology to enhance migratory waterfowl management.

Question 9: Your budget proposes zeroing out Tribal postsecondary education entirely. This would include the budget for the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, the only institution of higher education dedicated to American Indian Arts and Culture, as well as Diné College and Navajo Tech.

Other agencies in this Administration including the Departments of Agriculture and Education have continued their support for Tribally controlled universities in their respective budgets.

- Are you really proposing to defund Tribal colleges?
- Education is a core component of the government's trust responsibility. How will you honor this responsibility with no federal funding?

Response: The Administration is focused on cutting duplication and waste and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently and effectively. The FY 2026 Budget respects tribal sovereignty while supporting quality education that honors tribal cultural identity and prepares students for success both within their communities and in the broader society. The Budget includes funding for Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, in addition to K-12 schools.

Question 10:
 The Department of Interior projected last year that it would treat 1.8 million acres for hazardous fuels in Fiscal Year 2025.

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- Please provide the number of acres so far treated this fiscal year for hazardous fuels, divided by treatment type (ie. prescribed fire, mechanical treatment, etc.), month, and state.

Response: The Department completed 2,249,851 acres of hazardous fuels reduction in Fiscal Year 2025, exceeding its goal of treating 1.8 million acres in the fiscal year. Work is broken into the categories below, and further requested data is available in the attached document (Attachment 1, DOI Wildland Fire Fuels Data -September 30, 2025).

DOI Fuels Acres by Category, Fiscal Year 2025, 9/30/2025				
	Prescribed Fire	Mechanical	Other	Total
DOI Total	752,093	506,200	991,558	2,249,851

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Questions from Senator James E. Risch

Question 1: A group of grazers in western Idaho known as the Owyhee 68 have been locked in a legal battle over their grazing permits for over a decade. The Biden administration previously issued a secretarial order that undid years of work, violated the due process of these grazers, and enforced unacceptable restrictions. I want to thank you for acting on this issue almost immediately following your confirmation, by signing a rescission notice for the previous order and directing the Bureau of Land Management to prioritize a process to renew these grazing permits.

- How does the administration plan to move forward to secure new grazing permits for the Owyhee 68?
- More broadly, what is your agency doing to support and increase grazing availability in states like Idaho?

Response: In 2013, BLM Idaho completed a large, court-ordered permit renewal effort in which the allotments in the “Owyhee 68” were evaluated and decisions to issue new grazing permits were signed, all of which were appealed. Between 2013 and 2024, appeals for 28 allotments remained unresolved. On January 15, 2025, the Department’s Acting Deputy Secretary approved pending settlement agreements for 16 allotments, dismissed the remaining appeals for 12 allotments, and ordered the BLM to reissue the 2013 grazing permits.

The Department understands that many permittees are dissatisfied with the process and outcome undertaken by the previous administration. On February 20, 2025, the Department reversed the January 2025 decision to dismiss the appeals on the 12 allotments and ordered the BLM to “undertake and prioritize a process to renew the associated 12 permits under appropriate terms and conditions” to resolve the ongoing litigation. The BLM reissued grazing permits to the affected permittees and initiated settlement discussions with those permittees.

The BLM is engaging in negotiations and field visits with each permittee to find common-ground solutions for the affected 12 allotments with the goal of reaching global settlement; however, if settlement cannot be reached, the BLM is prepared to reinitiate the environmental review and permitting process. Timelines for resolution will vary for each permittee, depending on negotiations and the circumstances of each grazing operation. New grazing permits with appropriate terms and conditions are anticipated prior to the start of the next grazing year through either settlement or a reinitiated permitting process.

The BLM is working on multiple efforts to help ensure that public lands remain available and sustainable for livestock grazing. These efforts include updating the grazing regulations, increased use of categorical exclusions to streamline the NEPA compliance process for grazing permits and leases and evaluating the use of vacant allotments to reduce wildfire risk.

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Question 2: The president's budget request includes the establishment of a consolidated Federal Wildland Fire Service under the Department of the Interior. A change like this has long been debated among industry, states, and federal agencies. How will the new fire service work alongside state wildland firefighting agencies to ensure proper response and readiness?

Response: The proposed U.S. Wildland Fire Service would continue to work alongside state wildland firefighting agencies just as we do today, through established interagency coordination, mutual aid agreements, and shared response standards. By maintaining alignment with National Wildfire Coordinating Group standards for training, qualifications, and incident response, and reinforcing existing partnerships, the USWFS will ensure continued interoperability and a unified approach to wildfire preparedness and response.

Question 3: The administration has a clear goal to improve domestic energy and mineral supply chains in order to reduce our reliance on foreign adversaries. What efforts has the Department of the Interior taken to improve the efficiency and timeliness of the permitting process for responsible resource development projects on federal lands?

Response: As I noted at my hearing, our first step to improve domestic energy development was to ensure that the Department is holding lease sales, as required by law, which the last administration did not. We have implemented new permitting procedures that allow us to complete an environmental assessment in less than 14 days, and an environmental impact statement in less than 28 days. And, at the direction of President Trump, the Department will soon issue a final rule to update and modernize its National Environmental Policy Act procedures and significantly improve efficiency, predictability, and timeliness of permitting for projects on federal lands. We continue to improve our business processes and look forward to continuing this process with all stakeholders in the coming year.

Question 4: Several of President Trump's recent executive orders have identified specific minerals and metals for consideration on the USGS critical minerals list. Please provide an update on the ongoing efforts to review and update the critical minerals list.

Response: The Department, through the U.S. Geological Survey, published the final 2025 List of Critical Minerals on November 6, 2025, outlining 60 minerals vital to the U.S. economy and national security that face potential risks from disrupted supply chains.

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Questions from Senator Ron Wyden

Question 1: On multiple occasions during the hearing, including in response to my question about wildfire preparedness in Oregon, you responded to concerns about the wildfire workforce by insisting it is not an issue due to wildland firefighters being exempted from the hiring freeze. As you are well aware, many land management agency employees that held “red cards” historically have provided critical support to wildfire operations. Many of these employees are no longer in federal service due to the administration’s efforts to reduce the federal workforce.

How are you ensuring that there is an adequate workforce to address every aspect of wildfire operations during fire season and are you able to assure Oregonians that wildfire resource orders will not go unfilled this year due to an insufficient workforce?

Response: The Department was well-prepared to address wildfire activity this year. Secretary’s Order 3427, *Exemption of National Security and Public Safety Positions from Federal Civilian Hiring Freeze*, exempted wildland fire positions from the federal hiring freeze, allowing the Department and its bureaus to continue hiring wildland fire personnel to provide for public safety.

Throughout 2025, the Department sustained a strong and stable wildland fire management workforce, employing a total of 5,708 personnel, including firefighters and support personnel who are critical to incident response and other wildland fire management duties and support roles. This figure is closely aligned with 2024 staffing levels, when the Department employed 5,780 personnel. The majority of the Department’s wildland fire personnel served in operational firefighting roles within designated occupational series and held incident qualification cards, commonly referred to as “red cards.” This operational core remained steady throughout the year.

Approximately 115 employees from the Department’s wildland fire management program participated in the Deferred Resignation/Retirement Program (DRP). Of those, 59 held red cards. The Department extended an opportunity to DRP participants who held active red cards to return on a voluntary basis for the 2025 fire year to assist with wildfire support and incident response if needed.

Question 2: The proposed budget creates a consolidated “federal suppression response apparatus” by transferring all the fire management functions within the Forest Service to a wholly new agency under DOI. As an ecological process, wildland fire management is an essential subset of land management.

How will you ensure that the proposed severing of the current ties between land management and wildfire management won’t result in less efficient and effective firefighting and lost opportunities to improve broader land management goals?

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Response: The FY 2026 Budget proposes a strategic unification of the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (USDA FS) and the Department of the Interior's wildland fire management programs by establishing a new U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) in Interior. This strategic unification will create a more cohesive and efficient organization for managing and preventing wildfires across federally-administered lands. It will streamline operations and optimize resource allocation while significantly enhancing the overall effectiveness of wildland fire management. Under the proposed USWFS, field-level integration would continue; fire personnel would continue to coordinate directly with land management units to ensure safe, effective, and context-specific wildfire response. This structure is intended to improve integration, clarify roles, and support more agile and risk-informed decision-making on the ground.

Question 3: Prescribed fire and cultural burning are some of the most cost-effective tools for managing landscapes and reducing wildland fire risk. There is bipartisan support for expanding the use of fire in this way to achieve land management objectives.

How will your department ensure land managers throughout the country – federal, state, local, and non-governmental – have the training, access to resources, and authorities they need to manage forests and rangelands safely and appropriately with fire?

Response: The Department manages a diverse set of ecosystems across over 500 million acres of Interior-managed lands, including overseeing successful prescribed fire programs. The Department is committed to delivering training under the new U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) on a national scale, ensuring that federal, state, tribal, and local government personnel have access to valuable learning opportunities. Additionally, the Department will collaborate with interagency groups and compacts to extend training availability to non-governmental personnel. The USWFS will enhance common training and qualification requirements, channeling more resources into supporting field personnel and fostering a more efficient system overall. This new organization will empower field personnel with the necessary training, resources, and authorities to safely manage forests and rangelands, utilizing fire as a crucial tool in their efforts.

Question 4: The Forest Service leads internationally in wildfire response and suppression due to unparalleled experience learned from on-the-ground experience. The Forest Service employs far more firefighters than the Department of Interior's firefighting agencies and handles the bulk of the contracting for food service, showers, transportation and equipment to support operations.

Can you please explain how this transfer of responsibility from a proven capable agency justifies the cost and risk associated with its transfer? If you have completed a full analysis and plan for this transfer, will you provide it to Congress before it considers the proposal further?

Response: The FY 2026 Budget proposes a strategic unification of the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (USDA FS) and the Department of the Interior's wildland fire

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management programs by establishing a new U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) in Interior. This unification will reform and unify federal wildland fire resources and operations while implementing consistent standards to drive performance among senior leaders.

Under the USWFS, existing wildland fire management activities in the Department and its bureaus, and in the USDA FS, will be unified to streamline federal suppression response, risk mitigation, and coordination with non-federal partners to combat the wildfire crisis, supporting faster coordination due to fewer jurisdictional barriers. The USWFS will manage all federal wildfire response policies, with an elevated focus on innovation and deployment of new technology across federal lands regardless of their statutory constructs. The USWFS also will procure and maintain federal wildland fire resources, leveraging a unified procurement process that enables an optimal mix of assets based on national needs and opportunities to negotiate better deals and purchase at scale. As part of this new unified approach, the Administration is eliminating duplicative processes and streamlining program implementation.

This proposal is a recognition that the scale of the wildfire challenge warrants a dedicated, mission-specific organization. Establishing a single, focused wildland fire workforce will allow all five federal land management agencies to concentrate on their core missions – land stewardship, conservation, and resource management, without the increasingly disproportionate demands of managing fire operations. In recent years, fire activity and preparedness have consumed a significant share of agency budgets and personnel, limiting capacity to advance other mission-critical priorities.

Combining procurement under a single wildland fire agency offers an opportunity to modernize and optimize the contracting process. A unified approach enables a national view of resource demand and supports the strategic deployment of wildland fire management assets, whether food service, showers, equipment, or transportation, based on incident needs across the country. Centralizing procurement under a larger budget authority also provides opportunities to negotiate more favorable contracts, reduce redundancies, and realize cost savings through economies of scale.

While a final transition plan is still under development, the Department is committed to engaging with Congress, our interagency partners, and the wildland fire workforce through this process.

Question 5: Suppressing fires is important, but true wildfire resilience begins long before flames ignite. Hazardous fuels reduction, forest restoration, and home hardening are some of our most powerful tools for reducing catastrophic fire risk. Currently, mitigation programs that help prevent community losses due to wildfires are housed alongside Forest Service fire programs.

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How do you propose a new Wildland Fire Service will address community preparedness for wildfires? We understand that over-subscribed, highly effective programs for protecting homes and public infrastructure, like the Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program, will be discontinued per the president's budget.

Response: The proposed U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) will build upon existing wildfire mitigation and preparedness efforts, while enhancing the federal government's ability to coordinate across jurisdictions, integrate suppression and mitigation, and keep at-risk communities central to wildfire risk reduction. Further, the USWFS will prioritize fuels reduction and defensible space, and support wildfire risk reduction programs in close collaboration with Tribal, state, and local partners.

The FY 2026 Budget proposes a new Grants and Partnerships subactivity that includes funding for rural fire assistance. The FY 2026 Budget funding level reflects the fact that states and localities have a central role in funding wildfire preparedness and are best positioned to execute this core function without unnecessary federal constraints. The Administration intends to transfer additional operational capacity and budgetary resources from USDA to DOI in the future.

Question 6: Oregon is home to the oldest-operating boarding school for Native Americans in the United States. This school is already chronically underfunded through the Bureau of Indian Education to the point that many programs are not being offered, and deferred maintenance of the physical infrastructure. I am concerned about the proposed reduction in the Operation of Indian Education Programs appropriation from \$1.555 billion to \$1.192 billion (a 23.3% reduction).

What will you do to ensure that the federal government lives up to its trust responsibilities in providing adequate education for Native Americans?

Response: The Administration is focused on cutting waste and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently and effectively. The FY 2026 Budget respects tribal sovereignty while supporting quality education that honors tribal cultural identity and prepares students for success both within their communities and in the broader society. The federal government's trust responsibility is rooted in treaties, court decisions, and long-standing federal commitments.

The Administration continues to prioritize K-12 learning in the proposed budget. Attention to deferred maintenance, teacher recruitment, academic support, and student outcomes and well-being will be a priority. The Bureau of Indian Education will continue to engage directly with tribal leaders and educators in these efforts.

Question 7: Indian self-determination and self-governance is widely cited as a primary driver behind increased economic development in Indian Country since the 1980s. The President's

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proposed budget would decrease ISDEAA contracting support costs from \$342 million to \$205 million, a 40% reduction. Many tribes, particularly those with smaller populations, express interest in participating in self-determination contracting and self-governance compacting, but cite administrative costs as a barrier to their participation.

How can you justify such a significant reduction to this essential mechanism enabling tribes to take on greater responsibility for their own affairs?

Response: Under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA), tribes are entitled to receive contract support costs (CSC) to manage and administer programs and services under self-determination contracts. The aim of the ISDEAA is to empower tribes to take on greater responsibility for their own affairs, ensuring that they have the necessary resources to operate effectively. The Administration is focused on cutting waste and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently and effectively. It is crucial for ongoing dialogue between tribes and federal agencies to explore innovative solutions that can streamline administrative processes or provide targeted technical assistance. Ongoing support, collaboration, and outreach are essential as the BIA works with tribes to navigate budgets and promote their self-determination goals.

Question 8: The rate of victimization by violent crime experienced by Native Americans is as much as five times that experienced by other ethnic groups. The issue of murdered and missing indigenous women is chronic, with policing and justice system deficits commonly cited as major drivers of this phenomenon. How can you justify the proposed 25% reduction in public safety & justice appropriations from \$560 million to \$420 million, given the continuing magnitude of this problem?

Response: The proposed budget reflects the Administration's focus on cutting waste and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently and effectively, while continuing to carry out core missions and prioritize law enforcement, including efforts to address MMIW cases. The FY 2026 Budget maintains a strong nationwide Missing & Murdered Unit (MMU) presence to collaborate with stakeholders at the federal, state, local and tribal levels. The MMU will ensure appropriate resources, including the most advanced investigative techniques, training and technologies, are applied to MMIW cases throughout the country.

The first Trump Administration created the Operation Lady Justice Task Force to support tribal communities by focusing on the MMIW crisis in the United States. This budget continues that important work.

Question 9: What is your justification for the elimination of the Indian Land Consolidation Program in the President's FY26 budget?

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Response: Fractionated Indian land holdings present significant land management and administrative challenges for both tribes and individual Indian owners, making it difficult to use land for economic development and other beneficial purposes. The Indian Land Consolidation Program has proven to be a costly and inefficient means to consolidating fractionated land. The Administration is committed to seeking solutions to this issue in a manner that upholds tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

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Questions from Senator David McCormick

Question 1: I am supportive of efforts to reduce inefficiencies and unnecessary overhead at agencies like Interior. But it's also critical that National Parks have sufficient staffing to deliver the services that millions of Americans enjoy each year. How are you balancing these competing interests in this budget request?

Response: Being good stewards of our national parks is a priority for the Department. With increasing visitation to national parks, the FY 2026 Budget request ensures visitor safety and the protection of our most cherished resources. The budget prioritizes NPS core operations and identifies and optimizes efficiencies and savings from programs and areas outside the National Park System.

Question 2: Secretary Burgum, the trails, parks, and battlefields across Pennsylvania are foundational to our Nation's history, including Flight 93, Gettysburg, Valley Forge, Independence Park, and others. These sites attract visitors from across the country and around the world. How will your plans for the National Park System impact these and other parks in Pennsylvania?

Response: The FY 2026 Budget focuses on NPS core operations, including ensuring that national park resources are protected and that visitors are able to continue enjoying our national parks safely. Our plans ensure that we reduce the size of the federal government while increasing its accountability to the American people.

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Questions from Senator Mazie Hirono

Question 1: Please provide a list of all DOI positions in Hawaii that have been vacated since January 20, including those that have been fired and accepted early termination or retirement, including locations, position descriptions, and justifications for termination.

Response: The American people gave President Trump a mandate to make the Federal Government more efficient and accountable. Currently, the Department is engaged in certain workforce-related litigation. Other actions were voluntarily taken by employees. As we move forward with meeting the President's mandate, the Department will continue to work with the courts and Congress to ensure that our actions are in accordance with law.

Question 2: A number of USGS regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers, or CASCs, including the Pacific Islands CASC, have submitted proposals in response to a Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO, to secure their 5-year award. I have heard that the NOFO, after being reviewed and revised to address Departmental concerns, has recently been rejected.

Final decisions for the CASC proposals were originally expected to be made by mid-April. It's now June. Is it the Department's intention to sign these agreements? If so, what are the next steps and how quickly can these agreements be signed?

Response: Funding for the existing agreements with the Pacific Islands, South Central, and Northeast CASCs is available through the end of FY 2026.

Question 3: The Department of the Interior's (DOI) FY 2026 Budget Request includes a cut of \$136.5 million (30%) from the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Natural Hazards mission area. This represents a significant loss of funding for the branch of the USGS that provides scientific data and tools to help emergency responders and communities respond to a variety of natural hazards, from volcanic eruptions to hurricanes.

Since the DOI's FY 2026 Budget is light on details, can you provide me with a list of Natural Hazards mission area programs that would lose funding to meet the proposed 30% cut? Do you have a plan for replacing the critical hazard mitigation services that would be lost as a result of this drastic cut?

Response: The FY 2026 Budget will protect human health and safety by funding the USGS' core mission areas while making the federal government more efficient and accountable. These mission areas include national earthquake and volcano monitoring and reporting capabilities, and support post-wildfire debris-flow assessments.

Question 4: Similarly, the DOI FY 2026 Budget proposes to cut \$224 million (22%) from the Water Resources mission area, which provides data and tools that are fundamental to the effective management of our country's water resources, from ensuring that communities have

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access to clean drinking water to providing emergency managers and the public with critical safety information during flood events. In a time of increasing weather extremes, from severe drought to heavy rainfall and more powerful tropical storms, due to climate change, we need to invest more money, not less, into the Water Resources mission area.

Can you provide me with a list of Water Resources mission area programs that would lose funding to meet the proposed 22% cut? Do you have a plan for replacing the critical water resource management and extreme weather event mitigation services that would be lost as a result of this deep cut?

Response: The FY 2026 Budget prioritizes funding for Federal Priority Streamgages while making the federal government more efficient and accountable. The Budget includes capacity to improve models and assessments of water quality, quantity, and use.

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Questions from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Question 1: The DOI's 2024 *Tribal Law and Order Act Report* estimates \$3 billion is needed to support public safety in Indian Country, including 11,000 additional officers. Yet the FY 2026 Budget proposes a \$107 million cut to the BIA's Public Safety and Justice Account. How is this reduction justified given existing shortages?

What programs would be cut, and how will the Department prevent harm to anti-trafficking efforts and violence prevention?

What impact is expected on officer recruitment and retention?

Response: The FY 2026 Budget request funds local direct service and tribal law enforcement agencies, along with BIA's Missing & Murdered Unit and Drug Enforcement Division, to ensure that strong anti-trafficking and violence prevention efforts continue. The Department continues to work closely with the FBI and the DOJ to help address the over 6,000 unsolved missing and murdered indigenous women cases that we have in this country. The Department is also prioritizing the recruitment and retention of critical law enforcement staff.

Question 2: On April 21st, Senator Murkowski and I sent a letter regarding the *Not Invisible Act Commission Report* to you and the Attorney General, which resulted from legislation signed into law by the President. The report was removed from the DOJ website after the President took office.

What have you done to get that report back online?

Response: I can only speak to actions taken by the Department. However, I understand that this report is currently posted online and that the response report from both Departments is posted on the Department of Justice website. The FY 2026 Budget request maintains a strong nationwide Missing & Murdered Unit presence to collaborate with stakeholders at the federal, state, local and tribal levels in line with the goals of the Not Invisible Act. The first Trump Administration created the Operation Lady Justice Task Force to support tribal communities by focusing on the MMIW crisis in the United States. This budget continues that important work.

Question 3: The FY 2026 Budget proposes a U.S. Wildland Fire Service to consolidate wildfire programs at DOI and the Forest Service. The proposal lacks detail and raises concerns about a rushed transition. Who in the Administration is leading this effort and can serve as a contact for states and stakeholders?

Will this new agency oversee all aspects of wildfire management, including fuels reduction, infrastructure hardening, community preparedness, and post-fire recovery?

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How will the Administration ensure that separating fire from land management does not weaken coordination or reduce the effectiveness and safety of wildfire response?

Response: Escalating wildland fire activity has significantly consumed much of the land management agencies' focus, diverting valuable time and resources from energy development and other critical land management work. Concurrently, the multi-agency wildland fire management approach often results in duplicated efforts, varying standards, and inefficiencies in both operations and career development.

While the interagency framework has made strides in tackling these challenges, establishing a single U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) would more effectively meet the Nation's wildland fire management needs. Given the expansive nature of wildland fire, collaboration with various agencies including the Departments of War and Homeland Security, will remain essential for successful wildland fire management. However, core functions like suppression and response, fuels reduction, and post-fire recovery will be centralized within the new organization.

While infrastructure hardening will still fall under the purview of the respective agency responsible for that infrastructure, the USWFS will play a vital role in providing subject matter expertise and continuing community education initiatives to reduce wildfire risk. The proposed USWFS would oversee all major components of wildfire management, including hazardous fuels reduction and post-fire recovery, and would coordinate efforts across agencies and jurisdictions to reduce wildfire risk.

DOI recognizes the importance of a deliberate, well-coordinated approach to developing the proposed USWFS and is committed to engaging states, Tribes, and other stakeholders throughout the process. The unification of the wildland fire management programs will be guided through cross-agency coordination with senior Departmental leadership.

Under the proposed USWFS, field-level integration would continue; fire personnel would continue to coordinate directly with land management units to ensure safe, effective, and context-specific wildfire response. This structure is intended to improve integration, clarify roles, and support more agile and risk-informed decision-making on the ground.

Question 4: The FY 2026 Budget proposes \$192 million for BLM's Energy and Minerals Management account, a 7% decrease due in part to the total elimination of funding for renewable energy development on public lands, despite increased funding for oil and gas. This subaccount has historically included geothermal energy, which is a constant and reliable source. Does the proposed elimination include geothermal development? If not, which office would handle future geothermal projects?

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How does eliminating funding for renewable energy deployment on public lands support the growing number of American businesses investing in the clean energy economy? What happens to companies whose operations rely on partnering with the federal government?

Response: Geothermal energy development supports reliable, baseload energy. In April, the Department issued policy changes to expedite environmental compliance reviews which may be utilized by the BLM's geothermal energy program. These authorities were recently used to approve three geothermal energy projects in Nevada. Beginning in the FY 2026, the BLM's geothermal energy program will be managed under the agency's oil and gas (fluid minerals) management program.

Question 5: The FY 2026 Budget proposes cutting BLM's National Conservation Lands System by 72%, providing just \$15 million to manage over 900 units across 38 million acres, less than half of the program's lowest funding level in history. Since 2010, the system has grown by over 12 million acres. In Nevada, BLM manages over 48 million acres, including Red Rock Canyon, Sloan Canyon, Avi Kwa Ame, and other key sites used for recreation, wildlife, and cultural preservation. What would this drastic cut mean for conservation lands in Nevada and nationwide in terms of access, habitat protection, and local economies?

Given your recent proposals to shift some NPS sites to state management, is the Administration considering a similar approach for National Conservation Lands?

Response: The Administration is focused on making the federal government more efficient and accountable and, as I discussed at the hearing, we are looking to take actions at the Department that make sense from a budget and a mission standpoint. As we steward our public lands, we will continue to comply with federal law to implement our mission and the President's priorities.

Question 6: In the Las Vegas Valley, BLM oversees hundreds of small urban parcels, requiring federal approval for routine city functions, such as rights-of-way and upgrades to municipal or school facilities. This makes BLM, in effect, an urban landlord in Southern Nevada. Managing thousands of realty applications and Recreation and Public Purpose leases demands close coordination with local governments. Can you commit to prioritizing efficient land management and improved collaboration in Southern Nevada?

Response: The Department is focused on efficient and effective land management that maximizes output, meets the needs of local communities and is rooted in collaboration with stakeholders. I look forward to working together to reduce the size of the federal government while increasing its accountability to the American people.

Question 7: The Interior and Housing and Urban Development Departments are collaborating to address the housing affordability crisis. Can you provide an update on this effort and explain how public input is being incorporated?

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How are you ensuring that public access and recreation are considered when evaluating public lands for affordable housing?

Under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, BLM may offer land below fair market value for affordable housing in consultation with HUD. In 2023, updated guidance allowed BLM to offer land for as little as \$100 per acre. However, awareness of this authority remains low. Will you commit to working with me to raise awareness of this tool and ensure the updated guidance remains in effect?

Response: The Department has partnered with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to establish the Joint Task Force on Federal Land for Housing to identify underutilized public lands suitable for residential development, streamline land transfer processes, and promote policies that increase the availability of affordable housing. The Task Force will identify areas where housing needs are most pressing and work with state and local leaders who know their communities best. The Department is committed to maintaining a transparent and inclusive process and ensuring public access to outdoor recreation opportunities.

Question 8: The BLM's recent onshore oil and gas leasing reforms, modeled in part on the *End Speculative Oil and Gas Leasing Act*, have improved efficiency by prioritizing leasing near existing infrastructure and in high-potential areas, reducing speculation and better serving taxpayers. In Nevada, this approach led to an 86% lease sale success rate in March 2025, compared to just 9% between 2016–2024. Why, then, is BLM re-offering low-potential parcels, some near Great Basin National Park, that previously failed to sell and have not been re-nominated by industry, despite regulations designed to avoid precisely this kind of wasteful leasing?

Response: The Department is committed to fulfilling its statutory responsibilities under the Mineral Leasing Act and the Working Families Tax Cut Act and is working diligently to fulfill the President's direction to unleash American energy. This includes encouraging oil and gas exploration and development by removing unnecessary and burdensome regulations, creating economic benefits for the nation. For example, during BLM Wyoming's June 2025 lease sale, 22 parcels that were offered previously were successfully sold, generating \$1.4 million in total receipts and demonstrating interest in these areas.

Question 9: Congress provided over \$12 billion for western water and drought mitigation through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, including \$450 million for the Large-Scale Water Recycling Program and \$4 billion for Colorado River Basin drought relief, both provisions that I helped author. To date, roughly \$300 million has been awarded under the recycling program and \$2.2 billion in IRA drought funding remains unspent. What is the current status of these remaining Congressionally-appropriated funds, and when can we expect them to be expended?

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Response: IIJA and IRA funding continues to be reviewed for alignment with the President's priorities, and the Department is evaluating how to best allocate the remaining IIJA and IRA balances. For example, for the drought mitigation funding, Department is considering how those funds can provide the most benefit in negotiations of post-2026 operating guidelines of the Colorado River.

Question 10: The current Colorado River Operating Guidelines expire at the end of 2026, and despite decades of collaboration, the Upper and Lower Basin states have yet to reach agreement. Time is running short, and strong federal leadership is essential. How are you personally working to help the Basin states reach consensus and avoid litigation before the current guidelines expire?

Response: The Colorado River and its tributaries are among the most important natural resources in the United States, and I recognize the importance of finding a path forward on the Colorado River post-2026 operational period. The Assistant Secretary for Water and Science is engaging with the Basin States to help achieve a seven-state consensus approach and to publish the draft Environmental Impact Statement. For the past eight months, we have been intensively engaged with the negotiations among the seven basin states, and the Department is actively providing technical support to help foster agreement, avoid litigation, and protect and preserve the Colorado River for those who depend on it.

Question 11: BLM manages over 60% of Nevada's land, yet staffing shortages are severely impacting its ability to meet core responsibilities, ranging from hazardous fuels management to permitting and habitat restoration. I've heard from stakeholders across sectors that the agency simply lacks the workforce to keep up, and Nevada alone has reportedly lost 60 employees. Workforce instability, including buyouts and inconsistent hiring practices, is undermining both morale and output. Will you commit to addressing these staffing shortfalls in Nevada and across the West to ensure timely reviews and services?

What impacts are these workforce uncertainties having on public safety, recreation, conservation, and regional economies? How will you ensure these essential services continue?

Before offering buyouts or implementing the Deferred Resignation Program, did the Department conduct an analysis of how such changes would affect its ability to meet statutory obligations? If so, please provide that analysis to the committee.

Response: As governor of North Dakota, we were able to reduce spending by 27 percent and to increase the money that went to our public lands because we focused on our core mission and reduced overhead, red tape and redundancies. At the Department, I similarly understand the importance of recreation and conservation on our public lands, and their contributions to local economies. As we move forward to implement our core mission, the Department is committed to ensuring that we have the appropriate staff and resources in Nevada and across the country to do so with greater efficiency and accountability.

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Question 12: The FY 2026 Budget proposes shifting management of many National Park System units, such as monuments, historic sites, and recreation areas, to states and local governments. This could affect up to 370 of 433 NPS units, including Tule Springs and Lake Mead in Nevada. Congress has designated these sites as nationally significant, and federal stewardship reflects that intent. Why is the Administration proposing to offload management of these sites, and who stands to benefit from this shift?

What criteria are being used to determine which sites would be affected?

Response: As I noted at my hearing, we are looking, at a macro level, at ways that we could reduce the overhead and spending at the NPS while meeting our core mission. We are in the proposal stage of this process. We are looking at the data that we currently collect, such as visitor data, to test its reliability, and to see what other data frameworks may be appropriate to consider when making this evaluation, because I would want to have any decisions we make be data-driven. Ultimately, we have to be more efficient and provide an exceptional visitor experience at our national parks. We can do both of those things – it is not an either/or proposition.

Question 13: The Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART program has funded 60 projects and five plans in Nevada, delivering over \$110 million in federal support, matched by \$304 million in non-federal funds, for drought planning, watershed restoration, and water reuse. Despite its proven value, the FY 2026 Budget proposes to eliminate the program entirely, even as the West continues to face historic drought conditions. Do you believe the federal government has a responsibility to help communities address drought and water shortages?

If WaterSMART is eliminated, how will the Bureau of Reclamation support communities dealing with drought and deteriorating water infrastructure?

Response: The Department is committed to the Bureau of Reclamation's core mission of delivering water and power to the west and the FY 2026 budget request of \$1.2 billion focuses on maintaining assets that provide safe, reliable and efficient management of water resources through the western United States. In addition, water conservation and drought planning – whether executed with federal resources or local funding secured by the communities directly affected by drought– remains critical in the West, particularly in the Colorado River Basin and Reclamation intends to maximize available funding to address drought issues.

Question 14: In 2024, wildfires burned over 70,000 acres of federal land in Nevada, threatening communities and incurring significant recovery costs. In response, I introduced the *Strategic Grazing to Reduce Risk of Wildfire Act* with Senator Curtis, which directs DOI and the Forest Service to work with stakeholders to implement targeted grazing as a wildfire mitigation

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strategy. Do you support using grazing on public lands to reduce hazardous fuels and wildfire risk?

Will you commit to working with me and Nevadans to ensure grazing remains a viable tool in our wildfire mitigation efforts?

Response: The Department recognizes the critical need for effective fuels management strategies to provide effective wildfire response, promote fire resilient public lands, and protect communities from the increasing threat of wildfires. The Department supports the use of targeted grazing as a tool in an integrated fuels management strategy. Grazing can help manage vegetation and reduce hazardous fuels, particularly in areas where traditional mechanical treatments are not possible or practical. By working collaboratively with stakeholders, including ranchers, user groups, and local communities, targeted grazing plans can be developed to help reduce wildfire risk while supporting sustainable grazing.

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Questions from Senator John W. Hickenlooper

Question 1: With energy demand rising rapidly—partly due to the AI boom—and new gas plants taking years to build, what is the administration's plan to quickly boost grid capacity—especially given that solar, wind, and battery storage can be deployed right away? As a follow-up, analysis shows that repealing the energy tax credits in the House reconciliation bill would increase electricity prices by \$300-\$400 per year in upper plains states, including North Dakota. Secretary Wright has talked about the importance of preserving some energy tax credits. Do you agree with him?

Response: I agree with President Trump's America First energy strategy that is focused on affordability, reliability and accountability for the American people, and support ending preferential treatment for unreliable, subsidy-dependent, intermittent power sources.

Question 2: The seven Colorado River Basin States are negotiating a long-term plan for Colorado River operations – and we need that basis for agreement soon to make sure we can get a final plan in place for 2026 and beyond. Will you commit to provide the Colorado River Basin states with the resources and technical staff they need, so they can move quickly on modeling and finalizing an agreement?

Response: The Department is committed to ensuring the Colorado River Basin States have the resources and technical support they need to develop the post-2026 operating guidelines for the Colorado River. We recognize the Colorado River serves over 40 million people in the seven Basin States, powering critical infrastructure and economic growth in our cities, and supporting a vast and vital agriculture sector. Addressing the challenges of the Colorado River demands ongoing technical, legal, and operational expertise, and we are committed to providing support as the Basin States achieve a seven-state consensus agreement for the Colorado River post-2026 operational period.

Question 3: Water conservation and drought planning is critical for making the most of every drop in an era of water supply scarcity. But Interior's budget zeroes out Reclamation's WaterSMART program, which supports water projects and planning that makes us more resilient to drought in Colorado and across the West. Why has Interior cut back on its programs that boost drought resilience at the same time as we are seeing Colorado River reservoirs drop back down to concerning lows?

Response: The Department is committed to the Bureau of Reclamation's core mission of delivering water and power to the west and the FY 2026 budget request of \$1.2 billion focuses on maintaining assets that provide safe, reliable and efficient management of water resources through the western United States. In addition, Water conservation and drought planning – whether executed with federal resources or local funding secured by the communities directly affected by drought– remains critical in the West, particularly in the

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Colorado River Basin and Reclamation intends to maximize available funding to address drought issues.

Question 4: Congress provided \$4 billion to mitigate the impacts of drought in the Colorado River Basin through the Inflation Reduction Act. Projects that were awarded “Bucket 2 Environmental” funding in Colorado and across the Upper Basin would help the Colorado River better to withstand the depths of the long-term aridification we are experiencing basin-wide. Funding for the majority of those projects has been frozen for the past several months. Will you help us move the funding for these projects forward, so we can better support drought resilience for the benefit of the Basin as a whole?

Response: The Department continues to engage with our basin state and tribal partners on the future of the Colorado River Basin. As of January 2026, 29 contracts have been executed or extended to save 951,000 acre-feet of additional Colorado River water, some of which will provide continued benefits for our partners. Remaining federal funding is undergoing an inventory and further assessment to ensure alignment with Administration priorities that include the long-term resiliency of the Basin.

Question 5: Energy companies across Colorado have raised serious concerns that the House reconciliation bill would trigger mass layoffs. They warn the 60-day start construction deadline will drive all but the largest solar and wind firms out of business—putting thousands of Coloradans out of work and threatening the future of vital industries in our state. Is the BLM processing solar and wind permits in less than 60 days? If not, how does this administration expect any projects in development for years to begin construction in that timeframe? How do you respond to Colorado’s solar and wind workers who say this bill is a death sentence for their industry?

Response: The One Big Beautiful Bill Act provides that solar and wind projects must begin construction within 12 months after the bill's enactment to qualify for full credit value. However, as stated above, I agree with President Trump's America First energy strategy that is focused on affordability, reliability and accountability for the American people, and support ending preferential treatment for unreliable, subsidy-dependent, intermittent power sources.

Question 6: The Department of Justice just released a concerning opinion with a broad view of the President’s authority to rescind national monuments – much broader than past interpretations. As Secretary of the Interior, you’ve issued an order calling for a review of national monuments. But monuments have strong support: nearly 90% of western voters say national monument designations should stay in place. Will you commit to working through a transparent and public process prior to making any decisions about national monuments?

Response: In accordance with the President’s direction, the Department has consulted with and received feedback from stakeholders, including tribes and local communities as

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we review whether national monuments meet the requirements set forth in law. Ultimately, under the Antiquities Act, any decisions regarding national monuments are reserved to the President.

Question 7: Interior recently announced that, pursuant to the president's declaration of an energy emergency, public comment periods for projects requiring an environmental impact statement (EIS) under NEPA “will be approximately ten days.” This guidance severely limits the potential to reduce overall project timelines – research shows that collaboration among communities and developers on alternative routes leads to project routing decisions that are more acceptable to all stakeholders, accelerating project construction. Similarly, under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), sovereign Tribal governments will be given only seven days to evaluate and comment on the impacts of private and potentially polluting infrastructure on culturally significant lands. These compressed review schedules leave insufficient time to meaningfully collect and consider public comments, particularly as the Department cuts significant staff. How do you anticipate addressing community and environmental concerns as required under the law in such a short period of time? And how will you effectively receive and implement public viewpoints and undertake Tribal consultation under such timelines?

Response: On January 20, 2025, President Trump declared a national energy emergency calling for urgent action to improve the reliability and affordability of energy in the United States. In response, the Department consulted with the Council on Environmental Quality to develop alternative arrangements for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance for energy projects related to the emergency. The alternative arrangements allow certain projects to follow an expedited NEPA process to conduct environmental review. With respect to public participation, under the alternative arrangements, the Department will solicit written comments and announce a public meeting during preparation of an environmental impact statement. The Department has the discretion to determine the length of the written comment, which we expect to be approximately 10 days. The Department has considerable experience in managing community and environmental concerns, particularly for energy projects, and will consider the nature of the action and the urgency of the emergency response when determining the length of comment periods and consultation with Tribes.

The Department also is developing best management practices for implementing emergency alternatives for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act under 36 CFR § 800.12(b)(2). These best management practices will align with the agency’s NEPA alternative arrangements and Departmental guidance for implementing the President’s directive. They will establish a streamlined framework designed to preserve meaningful coordination with Tribal governments and state partners in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act. The Department will utilize early outreach, existing data, records of prior consultations, and established relationships to inform decisions and ensure that Tribal perspectives are fully considered.

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Question 8: BLM Colorado has led nationally in using the Good Neighbor Authority with the Colorado State Forest Service to advance high-priority forest work in key watersheds. But with staff losses mounting – and the proposal to cut BLM’s land resources funding by a third – we risk falling behind on work to build the West’s wildfire resilience. How will you prioritize stopping fires *before* they start with such significant cuts to workforce and land health?

Response: The Department’s fuels management program prioritizes hazardous fuels reduction in high-fire risk areas to protect communities and promote watershed resilience. The BLM’s Community Assistance program supports implementation of cross-boundary wildfire risk reduction projects using the Good Neighbor Authority agreement with Colorado State Forest Service and other partners. Our fire prevention programs also include community engagement initiatives, such as Firewise education, which empowers residents to create defensible space around their homes. These efforts reflect the Department’s ongoing commitment to building wildfire resilience in Colorado forests, protecting both our natural resources and local communities through proactive risk reduction.

Question 9: Reforestation is essential to Colorado’s recovery from wildfire, flood, and insect outbreaks. We’re investing in our state nursery to meet growing demand and restore forested watersheds critical to our economy. The Seeds of Success program is a small but vital component of meeting our reforestation needs. Once seed sources burn, their genetic legacy and the plant vigor embedded within is lost forever. Will the Department of the Interior remain committed to seed collection, storage, and propagation?

Response: The Department recognizes the importance of seedling needs to continue to maintain its capacity for reforestation efforts. The Department is committed to seed collection, storage, and propagation, as well as thinning forests to reduce the risk of high severity wildfire, which is a significant cause of forest loss in Colorado. At this time, the Department intends to continue its partnership with the Colorado state nursery and other entities in support of this program.

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Questions from Senator Alex Padilla

Question 1: ShakeAlert is the nation's only public earthquake early warning system, and it serves over 50 million people. Your proposed FY26 budget would cut \$500 million from USGS's budget. This is almost a 40% cut from FY25 and more than a 20% cut from FY19. Given the important work that USGS does to provide critical public information and conduct life-saving research, how do you expect them to continue their irreplaceable work with this significant and dangerous budget cut? Natural disasters do not care if you are in a red state or a blue state, so will you commit to me and the ENR committee that ShakeAlert will not experience any interruptions or reduction in capability?

Response: The President's FY 2026 budget supports ShakeAlert, which can deliver seconds of advanced early warning to people and systems ahead of earthquake shaking, and is built on the Advanced National Seismic System, a partnership between the USGS and State and university partners nationwide. The USGS will, in cooperation with States and other partners, work to operate and maintain the ShakeAlert system in certain at-risk regions of the U.S. West Coast.

Question 3: The President's budget zeroes out all WaterSMART funding, which received \$122 million in FY2024. This drought resiliency program has been a key component of Reclamation's efforts to partner with Western communities on projects that improve water efficiency, reuse, and supply reliability. How can you justify the proposed elimination of the WaterSMART program? What specific steps will the Department take to ensure continued federal investment in water infrastructure, reuse, recycling, and efficiency to support cost-effective water reliability for communities across the West?

Response: The Department is committed to the Bureau of Reclamation's core mission of delivering water and power to the west and the FY 2026 budget request of \$1.2 billion focuses on maintaining assets that provide safe, reliable and efficient management of water resources through the western United States. In addition, Water conservation and drought planning – whether executed with federal resources or local funding secured by the communities directly affected by drought– remains critical in the West, particularly in the Colorado River Basin and Reclamation intends to maximize available funding to address drought issues.

Question 4: The President's budget for the Bureau of Reclamation includes a line that habitat restoration has "nothing to do with building and maintaining water infrastructure," which is simply false. The Bureau of Reclamation has a responsibility to operate its projects to maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations in the affected watersheds. Habitat restoration can be a practical and effective way to restore those fish and wildlife populations and is often a valuable tool for accomplishing Reclamation's mission of providing a reliable water supply to farms and cities. Do you understand my perspective on how habitat restoration can not only benefit fish and

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wildlife but also help Reclamation in its essential mission of providing reliable water supplies in the West?

Response: I appreciate your perspective and will ensure that the Bureau of Reclamation follows the law as it implements its core mission.

Question 5: Following your confirmation hearing, you affirmed in your written responses to respecting Tribal sovereignty and engaging in meaningful consultation with Tribes. However, your FY26 budget proposes deep cuts to Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) programs, including a 90% reduction in funding for postsecondary programs. Combined with recent BIA staff reductions and a freeze on federal funding for essential grants this Administration has caused widespread concern across Native communities. Given your prior public commitment to upholding tribal sovereignty and strengthening communication, how do you reconcile those principles with the significant cuts to tribal education and infrastructure funding you're proposing?

Response: The Administration focused on cutting duplication and waste and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently and effectively. The FY 2026 Budget respects tribal sovereignty while supporting quality education that honors tribal cultural identity and prepares students for success both within their communities and in the broader society. The federal government's trust responsibility is rooted in treaties, court decisions, and long-standing federal commitments. The Administration continues to prioritize K-12 learning in the proposed budget. Attention to deferred maintenance, teacher recruitment, academic support, and student outcomes and well-being will be a priority. The Bureau of Indian Education will continue to engage directly with tribal leaders and educators in these efforts.

Question 6: The President's budget includes cuts to core programs like trust management and law enforcement. How do you justify these cuts given the well-documented need for these programs?

Response: The Department is committed to honoring our nation-to-nation relationship with Tribal Nations, strengthening Tribal sovereignty and self-governance, and upholding our trust and treaty responsibilities. The President's FY 2026 Budget request supports continuing core efforts to advance tribal self-governance and self-determination, foster stronger economies and self-sufficiency, and support safe Indian communities through a wide range of activities while eliminating programs outside our core mission.

The FY 2026 Budget request also ensures that Indian Country has the law enforcement resources it needs; it funds local direct service and tribal law enforcement agencies, along with BIA's Missing & Murdered Unit and Drug Enforcement Division to ensure that strong anti-trafficking and violence prevention efforts continue. The Department is also prioritizing the recruitment and retention of critical law enforcement staff. The FY 2026

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budget prioritizes core Federal trust, treaty, and other responsibilities while ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently and effectively.

Question 7: The President's budget eliminates all Fish and Wildlife funding for State, Tribal, and other partner conservation grants, which totaled \$170 million in FY 2025. These are some of the most cost-effective Fish and Wildlife Service programs in existence, and they typically bring in multiple non-federal dollars for every federal dollar spent, taking smart, proactive steps to prevent the need for listing species and the major costs those listings impose. Do you agree that it is useful to work with States, Tribes, and local stakeholders to develop proactive plans to avoid listing species as threatened or endangered? Additionally, by completely removing all federal support for these efforts, won't the President's budget inevitably hamstringing these smart, proactive efforts to protect species to avoid their listing?

Response: The Department supports working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people, the mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The President's FY 2026 Budget request increases funding for species recovery activities, including delisting species under the Endangered Species Act.

Preventing extinction and recovering listed species has always been, and will continue to be, one of the Department's priorities. The Department is working closely with states, tribes and private landowners to conserve natural resources and preserve working landscapes for the benefit of plants, wildlife, agriculture, ranching, timber, and other traditional land uses.

Question 8: The WIIN Act, is a critical funding source for projects that help develop storage and other water supply sources to irrigate our crops and provide water for our cities. In each of FY 2023 and FY 2024, Congress appropriated to the Bureau of Reclamation \$134 million in WIIN storage funding, \$20 million in WIIN water recycling funding, and \$12 million in WIIN desalination funding. Yet the Administration used its discretion under the FY2025 continuing resolution to allocate only \$50 million for WIIN storage funding, and none for water recycling or desalination. And the President's budget for FY2026 provides no funding for any of these programs. Why is there no funding in the Bureau of Reclamation's budget for much-needed water storage, water recycling, or desalination projects to help meet the water needs of the arid West during droughts?

Response: The Department recognizes the importance of storage, recycling, and desalination projects to advance critical water supply projects across the West. The allocation of \$50 million is projected to be sufficient to meet the currently estimated maximum Federal cost-shares for ongoing priority projects that are eligible under the WIIN Act Section 4007 authority. We are currently working on the allocation of these funds.

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Question 9: In 2006, the United States entered into a binding legal settlement in Federal district court over the appropriate remedy for the extirpation of a large salmon run on the San Joaquin River caused by the construction of the Bureau of Reclamation's Friant Dam. The United States agreed to release certain flows from Friant Dam for the salmon, and to remove obstacles to fish passage on the San Joaquin River below the dam while maintaining access to irrigation facilities for farmers. Congress codified the settlement in 2009 and authorized federal funding for its implementation. Last year, the Bureau of Reclamation notified Congress that it could not fulfill its obligations under the legally binding settlement, including to restore obstacles to fish passage on the San Joaquin River, without an additional authorization of federal funding. Given Reclamation's cost estimates for the actions it committed to implement under the settlement, is there any way that the United States could fulfill its obligations under this legally binding settlement without an additional authorization of federal funding?

Response: In 2025, the San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP) continued to implement Phase 1 Improvements according to the 2006 Settlement and the SJRRP's Framework for Implementation. Restoration activities include award of its first major construction contract, the Arroyo Canal Fish Screen and Sack Dam Fish Passage Project. Designs for the Reach 2B Mendota Pool Bypass features including river control and fish passage structures, the South Levee and Canal, and Siphon are progressing, as are designs for the Mendota Pool Fish Screen. The SJRRP has made great strides towards fulfillment of the Settlement's Restoration Goal with a burgeoning population of spring-run Chinook salmon returning to the San Joaquin River each year to spawn since 2017 after being gone for over 65 years. The FY 2026 budget request supports project management, design, environmental compliance, land acquisition, and construction support efforts.

Question 10: Ranking Member Heinrich and I sent you a letter last week regarding the Bureau of Land Management's decision to authorize mining at the Colosseum Mine site inside Mojave National Preserve. BLM authorized industrial mining activity at this site under a plan of operations approved in 1985, but as you know, Mojave National Preserve was protected by an act of Congress in 1994 and is managed by the National Park Service. Were you personally briefed on BLM's decision, and do you support it? Under what legal authority do you believe the BLM has the authority to approve operations inside of National Park Service managed lands? You've previously said that no national parks would be harmed in pursuit of domestic energy or mineral goals. How does this decision align with that commitment — especially when the Park Service previously formally objected, and when the Mining in the Parks Act requires a new plan of operations? Will you commit to reviewing this industrial mining project and ensuring that no mining goes forward inside national park units without full compliance with the Organic Act and the Mining in the Parks Act?

Response: I understand that the Mining in the Parks Act of 1976 expressly recognizes valid existing rights on mining claims. Section 507 and 508 of the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 explicitly recognize valid existing rights as well. Within Mojave

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National Preserve, the NPS and the BLM are working together to ensure that any such existing rights may be exercised in accordance with law and the President's priorities.

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Questions from Senator Ruben Gallego

Question 1: The FY26 Interior budget proposes to cut \$609 million, a 50% cut, to the Bureau of Reclamation. With this unprecedented funding reduction in mind, how can you continue to safely, reliably, and efficiently manage the western water system, maintain hydropower production, and address growing needs for flexible water conservation approaches and infrastructure improvements by states, tribes, and water users while facing the worst drought on record in the Colorado River Basin?

Response: The Department is committed to the Bureau of Reclamation's core mission of delivering water and power to the west and the FY 2026 budget request of \$1.2 billion focuses on maintaining assets that provide safe, reliable and efficient management of water resources through the western United States. In addition, water conservation and drought planning – whether executed with federal resources or local funding secured by the communities directly affected by drought– remains critical in the West, particularly in the Colorado River Basin and Reclamation intends to maximize available funding to address drought issues. Additionally, the Department is committed to ensuring the Colorado River Basin States have the resources and technical support they need to develop the post-2026 operating guidelines for the Colorado River. Addressing the challenges of the Colorado River demands ongoing technical, legal, and operational expertise, and we are committed to providing support as the Basin States achieve a seven-state consensus agreement for the Colorado River post-2026 operational period.

Question 2: The new consolidated USFWS proposed in this budget will manage wildland firefighters, wildfire risk mitigation planners, and support personnel previously spread across the Departments of Interior and Agriculture. It is far less clear how fuels management will be done, and who is in charge at which step of the process from prescribed burns to post-fire management. What is the plan for fuels management? Is it wise to consolidate one without the other, if that's the way forward? How will you coordinate across the land management agencies?

Response: The FY 2026 Budget proposes a strategic unification of the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (USDA FS) and the Department of the Interior's wildland fire management programs by establishing a new U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) in Interior. As part of the proposed USWFS, firefighters would continue to be available to support prescribed burns and forest thinning work on USDA FS and Interior-managed lands, just as they are today. These resources can be ordered and assigned to fuels projects or prescribed fires through existing interagency coordination and dispatch systems, ensuring continued support for hazardous fuels reduction across jurisdictional boundaries. While infrastructure hardening will still fall under the purview of the respective agency responsible for that infrastructure, the USWFS will play a vital role in providing subject matter expertise and continuing community education initiatives to reduce wildfire risk. The proposed USWFS would oversee all major components of wildfire management,

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including hazardous fuels reduction and post-fire recovery, and would coordinate efforts across agencies and jurisdictions to reduce wildfire risk.

DOI recognizes the importance of a deliberate, well-coordinated approach to developing the proposed USWFS and is committed to engaging states, Tribes, and other stakeholders throughout the process.

Question 3: What steps have you taken to ensure Tribes have a lasting, meaningful role in the Department's energy, public lands, and water decisions, including Colorado River discussions and robust government-to-government consultation? How does this budget reflect those intentions?

Response: The Department remains committed to honoring our nation-to-nation relationship with Tribal Nations, strengthening tribal sovereignty and self-governance, and upholding our trust and treaty responsibilities. In May, I hosted a two-day meeting with Tribal leaders serving on the Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee. In addition to meeting with the Committee, I met one-on-one with Tribal leaders regarding a wide range of issues including energy, public lands, and water matters.

With respect to the Colorado River, the Department recognizes the importance of post-2026 long-term operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead to Tribes within the Basin. In June, Departmental leaders met with leaders from all Tribes within the Basin to discuss the ongoing development of post-2026 operating criteria alternatives to evaluate as part of the upcoming environmental impact analysis pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act study. During this meeting, Departmental leadership received valuable input from Tribes and committed to organizing additional meetings. The Department has also held multiple one-on-one meetings with tribes regarding the post-2026 process. Finally, the Bureau of Reclamation hosts monthly Tribal Information Exchange meetings to keep Tribes apprised of water supply conditions and forecasts in the Basin and to provide updates on the post-2026 process.

Question 4: The FY26 BLM budget proposes a 72.5% cut to the account for managing National Monuments and National Conservation Areas. With RIFs and forced retirements, there is now only one person left at the National Conservation Lands HQ office. How is the BLM supposed to manage the 38 million acres of National Conservation Lands with a \$15 million budget and virtually no staff? How can you guarantee my constituents that National Conservation Lands in our state, like Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni – Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument, are going to be managed properly with such a minimal budget and workforce reductions?

Response: President Trump has been focused on cutting waste and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently and effectively. As I stated at my hearing, a number of Department employees voluntarily left the agency, either to take an early retirement or

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pursue other opportunities; they were not fired. The President's FY 2026 Budget ensures that BLM is able to implement its core multiple use mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. With respect to national monuments, in accordance with the President's direction, the Department has consulted with and received feedback from stakeholders, including tribes and local communities as we review whether national monuments meet the requirements set forth in law. Ultimately, under the Antiquities Act, any decisions regarding national monuments are reserved to the President.

Question 5: The Grand Canyon is an iconic cultural landscape that is carefully managed based on science produced by the U.S. Geological Survey's Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC). The President's FY 2026 Budget proposes a 90% cut to the funds for GCMRC (\$10 million) and the entire Ecosystem Mission Area of USGS. How can you maintain the ecological and cultural integrity of the Grand Canyon and also ensure compliance with federal laws—like the Grand Canyon Protection Act and Endangered Species Act—that you committed to in your confirmation hearing, while essentially defunding this vital research and monitoring work?

Response: The Department's USGS provides actionable science to decision makers about energy and mineral resources, natural hazards, and water resources using state-of-the-art science, tools, and technology. USGS also provides authoritative mapping and characterization of the Earth's land and water features. The FY 2026 President's budget focuses on funding its core mission, and does not request funding for areas, including the ecosystems mission area, that include programs duplicative of non-Federal research programs and support social agendas. Some of the work that has been funded through the ecosystems mission area may be continued at the state level, at academic institutions across the country, and by other federal agencies which are better positioned to focus on such issues.

Attachment 1 - DOI Fuels Acres by Category and Month, Fiscal Year 2025

State	Category (Acres)		Month (FY 2025 Acres)												FY 2025 Total	
	Mechanical	Other	Prescribed Fire	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	Total Acres Treated
Alabama	699	372	4,786	-	-	-	403	3	771	1,296	-	266	-	3,084	84	5,857
Alaska	3,058	73,816	73,194	60,052	-	22	12	24	22	53,193	18,339	981	231	66	17,136	150,068
Arizona	14,746	13,305	33,080	7,501	16,093	10,755	2,119	3,518	333	401	233	1,549	2,667	3,977	11,965	61,081
Arkansas	13,403	53	5,395	195	-	121	564	1,074	3,636	-	-	-	347	112	12,802	18,851
California	26,746	34,986	12,804	881	8,911	448	10,773	4,110	1,869	4,970	7,420	9,142	822	8,967	16,023	74,536
Colorado	16,670	34,490	7,077	778	1,657	1,590	517	1,331	4,177	812	2,100	298	2,968	9,366	32,644	58,237
Delaware	134	-	178	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	134	312
Florida	41,279	11,746	161,532	-	945	15,425	3,675	1,275	6,878	38,905	17,509	380	66,586	8,629	54,350	214,557
Georgia	4,198	438	23,312	-	-	-	574	14	-	1,770	1	9,208	48	419	15,914	27,948
Hawaii	2,575	4,207	-	36	-	-	21	-	-	-	71	2,695	1,454	14	2,491	6,782
Idaho	52,787	153,290	7,544	24,664	5,911	2,025	544	18,809	23	1,347	6,312	52,215	257	28,378	73,536	214,021
Illinois	39	-	4,340	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,340	39
Indiana	168	881	8,389	-	2	459	-	-	-	-	733	-	-	-	8,232	9,438
Iowa	804	880	19,392	-	40	-	-	-	-	-	575	-	7	18,677	1,677	20,976
Kansas	187	1,544	11,393	-	-	127	-	-	1,060	6,055	3,770	-	-	-	2,112	13,124
Kentucky	31	-	124	124	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	155
Louisiana	2,907	1,117	34,901	1,117	-	-	-	-	-	34,185	2,136	1,220	267	-	-	38,925
Maine	25	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31
Maryland	340	800	11,764	-	-	-	227	2,979	7,557	1,253	-	18	-	-	870	12,504
Massachusetts	7	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	17
Michigan	176	-	2,877	-	-	-	-	-	-	489	842	35	127	1,476	-	3,053
Minnesota	8,302	576	40,588	-	3	-	4	13,290	4,193	860	1,282	222	22,586	6,586	-	48,995
Mississippi	3,351	2,133	13,585	-	-	2,238	-	-	821	5,902	-	2,826	-	-	1,173	19,469
Missouri	1,078	1,078	8,071	-	-	156	-	-	1,879	-	-	-	-	3,066	-	5,035
Montana	17,536	25,079	3,039	107	492	4,219	760	161	5,410	6,797	8,139	19,016	675	5,804	28,884	80,421
Nebraska	15,214	-	5,117	-	-	-	-	-	3,513	1,034	-	-	-	15,214	860	20,931
Nevada	74,789	178,382	6,887	13,144	18,689	54,518	13,475	15,589	10,028	3,513	15	1,835	28,015	22,450	23,559	260,053
New Jersey	15	-	1,503	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,503	-	-	-	15	-	1,518
New Mexico	22,094	84,980	3,862	118	5	2,453	331	4,448	60	522	100	2,459	52,252	887	45,301	108,916
New York	56	-	242	-	-	-	-	-	-	162	56	24	29	5	22	298
North Carolina	3,002	1,568	15,023	-	-	1,361	-	-	10,107	3,503	-	-	138	3,015	1,469	19,593
North Dakota	1,516	21,332	14,769	-	-	-	-	-	21,387	2,426	10,351	2,387	35	415	716	37,617
Ohio	18	-	-	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
Oklahoma	9,440	3,871	50,073	130	152	2,311	742	1,602	14,105	9,494	716	169	11	2,842	31,110	63,384
Oregon	63,622	97,043	21,844	2,222	4,979	11,510	2,560	6,885	1,726	15,227	8,223	3,716	3,953	46,437	75,606	182,509
Puerto Rico	174	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	152	-	22	-	-	-	174
South Carolina	3,175	934	11,297	-	401	-	-	-	500	3,636	9,332	89	47	-	1,401	15,406
South Dakota	8,004	40,740	11,043	109	248	-	98	89	154	362	7,134	1,706	894	1,791	47,202	59,787
Tennessee	89	-	1,555	-	-	-	-	1,390	-	165	-	-	-	-	89	1,644
Texas	9,710	308	62,559	114	3,772	221	367	31,995	5,331	2,488	5,991	571	161	14,004	7,962	72,977
United States Virgin Islands	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Utah	55,153	44,869	4,587	7,628	27,403	14,992	62	7,391	8,668	3,598	3,561	6,512	3,212	3,289	15,293	104,609
Virginia	844	128	3,418	433	122	-	-	69	528	3,006	128	25	-	-	79	4,390
Washington	12,591	1,003	9,823	139	567	395	827	1,143	2,414	2,420	3,346	3,099	318	1,380	7,069	23,417
West Virginia	44	-	54	-	-	-	-	-	98	-	-	-	-	-	-	98
Wisconsin	3,109	76	6,341	763	-	159	-	-	33	664	994	-	-	2,765	4,148	9,526
Wyoming	12,314	156,618	3,265	-	59	149	293	1,104	449	726	1,879	193	787	22,374	144,184	172,197
TOTAL	506,200	994,558	752,099	120,273	89,821	125,654	38,916	102,267	152,681	195,770	124,837	149,224	160,734	260,552	735,022	2,249,851