



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

SEP 12 2017

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chairman, Committee on Indian Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed are responses to the questions received by Bureau of Indian Education Director Tony Dearman following his July 12, 2017, appearance before your Committee on S. 943, A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an accurate comprehensive student count for the purposes of calculating formula allocations for programs under the Johnson-O'Malley Act, and for other purposes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this material to the Committee.

Sincerely,

Christopher P. Salotti  
Legislative Counsel  
Office of Congressional  
and Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Tom Udall  
Vice Chairman

**Senate Committee on Indian Affairs  
Hearing on S. 943, S. 1223, and S. 1285  
July 12, 2017**

**Question from Senator Heitkamp**

**Mr. Dearman, is the student count for the Johnson-O'Malley program used for any other programs? Do you expect that once BIE has completed an updated, verified student count, that it would be used for any other purposes? Can you describe the process and number of staff you have who would be involved in compiling BIE's student count number for JOM?**

**Response:** The current 1995 Johnson O'Malley (JOM) student count is utilized specifically for JOM programmatic funding distribution. As the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) works to increase its focus on data across the organization, it will analyze the possibility of utilizing JOM data for other purposes, contingent on various programmatic eligibility requirements. Regardless, an updated count will help BIE identify need and allow us to better allocate resources where appropriate.

The BIE acknowledges the need for improved coordination and outreach for attaining an accurate JOM student count. To that end, the BIE continues to work to fill the vacant Program Specialist (JOM) position. The JOM position will work to conduct outreach with tribes, Native organizations, and contractors in the fall 2017, when schools are in session, regarding the reconciliation of existing BIE, Department of Education, and Census Bureau data as well as the future collection of student count information. In the interim, BIE has detailed staff to provide outreach and carry out the position's functions prior to filling the vacancy.

BIE looks forward to working with Members of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee and key stakeholders to reconcile existing data as well as implement regular and accurate student counts going forward.



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

SEP 12 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski:

Enclosed are responses prepared by the Department of the Interior to questions received following Secretary Zinke's June 20, 2017, appearance before your Committee on the U.S. Department of the Interior's budget request for Fiscal Year 2018.

Thank you for providing the Department with the opportunity to respond to these questions.

Sincerely,

Legislative Counsel  
Office of Congressional  
and Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member

**Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
Hearing on the FY 2018 Interior Department Budget  
June 20, 2017**

**Questions from Chairman Murkowski**

**Question 1: The mineral security of our nation is something we need to look at closely. With our nation importing at least 50 percent of its supply of at least 50 different mineral commodities from other nations, I view this as a significant vulnerability. In the context of the budget, or an infrastructure package, or simply stand-alone minerals legislation, can you talk about whether the administration agrees that this is a threat, and, if so, what do you think we can do to address it?**

**Response:** Our Nation is increasingly reliant on foreign sources for raw processed mineral materials, and these mineral commodities are critical to the Nation's economic and national security. Interior is engaged in various activities to address supply concerns, including participating in the creation of a mineral criticality assessment and early warning system, researching the occurrence of rare earth element deposits in the United States, and undertaking geologic mapping to define areas favorable for exploration.

**Question 2: At Statehood, Alaska was granted the right to acquire more than 104 million acres of land (to include the subsurface mineral estate) to ensure our success as a state. Alaska Natives were also granted lands to settle aboriginal claims. In the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), Alaska Natives were promised approximately 44 million acres of land. Some Alaska Natives were also granted allotments under the Alaska Native Allotment Act that pre-dates ANCSA. The State of Alaska and the Alaska Natives have not yet received all of the land they are entitled to. Do you agree that the Interior Department, pursuant to federal law, has a role and obligation to convey federal lands to the state of Alaska and to Alaska Natives? Do you view these transfers as separate and distinct from your personal position against transfer of federal lands to states?**

**Response:** The Department has unfulfilled legal obligations to convey federal lands to the State of Alaska and to Alaska Natives pursuant to ANCSA, and I support meeting those obligations as expeditiously and efficiently as possible.

**Question 3: Alaska is the most seismically active state in the nation. We have a system of earthquake monitors, called the USArray, which is currently operated by the National Science Foundation. The monitors are slated to be decommissioned in 2018, but I know that USGS, the NSF, and NOAA have begun discussions on transferring the stations from NSF to USGS. Please provide an update on USGS's progress on the transfer of the stations.**

**Response:** The USGS and NSF have been engaged in program-level conversations about the potential transfer of the stations. The talks are ongoing. Congress requested that the USGS

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provide, by November, an implementation plan for the long term operation of the NSF seismic network in Alaska, and the USGS is developing that plan now.

**Question 4: In Alaska, USGS has been replacing volcano monitors that operate on an analog system with ones that operate on a digital system. What is the status of the upgrades? How many stations remain to be upgraded, and what would happen to that work under the proposed FY 2018 budget?**

**Response:** The 2017 enacted level supports 15 conversions of analog seismic and telemetry stations to digital telemetry on Alaskan volcanoes, a substantial increase from the 3-6 conversions per year previously performed opportunistically with routine network maintenance work out of base funding. After this summer field season in Alaska (ending in mid-Sept.) there will be 128 monitoring stations that are will not have been converted and upgraded. The proposed FY 2018 funding level would support 4-6 station upgrades. The 2018 budget request focuses on core capabilities to provide forecasts and warnings of hazardous volcanic activity with current monitoring networks; produce updated hazard assessments for high-threat volcanoes in the contiguous U.S. only; and to revise the national volcano threat level assessment.

**Question 5: Within the Arctic Council, the United States has taken over as Chair of the Conservation of Flora and Fauna (CAFF) Working Group, with the chair being held by Cynthia Jacobson from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. What funding is in your budget for CAFF and other Arctic-related activities and programs?**

**Response:** The Administration's budget requests a total of \$111,498,000 for Departmental Arctic-related activities. There is no specific funding requested for the CAFF.

**Question 6: Through the efforts of the Alaska Mapping Executive Committee, we have been able to collect elevation data for 84 percent of Alaska. What is the timeline to complete topographic mapping in Alaska?**

**Response:** To date, the USGS has produced 3,731 new Alaska topographic maps in 2016, and in 2017 will produce approximately 3,000 more. The timeline for completing collection of data and converting data into topographic maps of the entire State of Alaska is dependent upon a number of variables. We continue to work with our partners to complete this topographic mapping in the most efficient and effective manner.

**Question 7: What is the status of the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program?**

**Response:** The USGS National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program was mandated by Congress in the National Geologic Mapping Act of 1992 and the current authorization runs through fiscal year 2018. Through a cost-sharing partnership with state geological surveys, geologic map information is collected and distributed to the public via maps and a national

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database. The extent of geologic map data varies in terms of scale and coverage from state to state. Recent advances in geophysical techniques have made it possible to map the surface and subsurface at much greater detail, and in three dimensions, which lead to new insights into geologic processes, energy and mineral potential, natural hazards and water management.

**Question 8: Under current Interior Department policy, every BLM notice associated with an Environmental Impact Statement must go through a review process in the Washington Office before publication in the Federal Register. Since publication of these notices is required before proceeding with the next step in the EIS process, the permitting process can be significantly delayed. Will you review this process and consider delegating authority for issuing Federal Register notices back to BLM State Directors?**

**Response:** Yes. As part of my review of the Department's organization, we are looking at how to better leverage and align bureau resources in the field, cut duplication, and allocate assets and personnel more effectively.

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**Questions from Ranking Member Cantwell**

**Question 1: I would like to follow up on our discussion about hiring a site manager at the Hanford Unit of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park.**

**As I noted at the hearing, the National Park Service announced earlier this year that a site manager for the Hanford unit had been selected, but that her transfer from another park was being delayed during the Trump Administration's hiring freeze.**

**I understand that the hiring freeze is no longer in place, but the appointment still has not been carried out—even though there are currently no Park Service staff on the ground in Hanford and the person selected for this position is simply transferring from one park to another.**

**We were told that any transfer or new hire requires senior DOI approval, but at the hearing you indicated that you didn't think you were holding up this position.**

**Can you please confirm that the appointment of a site manager for the Hanford unit is not being held up and provide me with a time frame for when the transfer will be approved?**

**Response:** As I stated at the hearing, I believe that we need to provide our front lines in the parks with the appropriate resources to get the job done. I appreciate you bringing this issue to my attention. I understand that the NPS has now named a new site manager who will report for duty at Hanford within the next month.

**Question 2: On December 30, 2016, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) published a notice of application for withdrawal and opportunity for public meeting in the Federal Register. The publication of this notice segregated 340,079 acres of National Forest System land in the Methow Valley in Washington, subject to valid existing rights, for up to 2 years from settlement, sale, location, and entry under the public land laws, location and entry under the mining laws, and operation of the mineral and geothermal leasing laws.**

**Sections 2310.3-1(b)(2)(v) and 2310.3-2(c)(2) of title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations specify that the BLM must schedule one or more public meetings on applications for withdrawals involving 5,000 or more acres of land. A meeting must be "held at a time and place convenient to the interested public, the applicant and the authorized [BLM] officer."**

**The BLM gave notice at that time "that a minimum of at least one public meeting will be held in conjunction with the withdrawal application." The BLM also opened a 90-day public comment period through March 30, 2017.**

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**I understand that the Forest Service, the applicant for a twenty-year withdrawal of these lands, has been in discussions with the BLM to schedule a public meeting. It has been nearly six months since publication of the Federal Register notice and nearly three months since the close of the comment period. I am concerned that this meeting is being inappropriately delayed.**

**For example, the BLM promptly scheduled a meeting in Livingston, Montana, concurrent with the notice of the proposed withdrawal in the Custer Gallatin National Forest that you supported as a congressman.**

**A public meeting in the Methow Valley will provide the BLM and the Forest Service essential local community feedback on the withdrawal proposal. The views of the community are a primary reason I have sponsored S. 566, legislation that would permanently withdraw this same federal land, subject to valid existing rights.**

**When will this required public meeting take place?**

**Response:** The BLM is reviewing the comments on the application for withdrawal that were submitted during the comment period. The *Federal Register* notice is currently being processed, and the BLM will ensure the public receives at least 30 days advance notice of the scheduled meeting.



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**Questions from Senator Wyden**

**Question 1: Our country has seen the beginnings of a concerning movement to sell off our public lands to the highest bidder. Last year, armed occupants even took over a wildlife refuge in Eastern Oregon. When people can't harvest trees and manage forests, when they're blocked from traveling down a rural road or hiking trails in our national parks, it only serves to fuel the fire for the small number of voices who want to sell off public lands.**

**But the president's budget either cuts, guts, or eliminates funding for programs that increase access to our public lands. Programs that support rural jobs, improve forest health, maintain our national parks, restore roads and trails and manage habitats. It's pretty clear to me this budget is an attempt to hamstring the Interior Department and other federal land agencies to the point where they can no longer manage their lands and allow for public access.**

**The Department of the Interior and the new administration have a responsibility to ensure the public has access to our nation's treasures -- our public lands. How do the cuts to the Interior Department budget help the agency meet that responsibility?**

**Response:** This Administration has committed to making the tough decisions that will lead to a balanced budget, and this is what a balanced budget looks like. At the same time, we are fully committed to maintaining our public lands and increasing access to them. We are prioritizing our assets and personnel in the field and are currently going through a process to determine how to shift resources from Washington, D.C. to the units in the field and how public private partnerships can best benefit our public lands.

**Question 2: :** Farmers and ranchers in the West spent nearly a decade coming together in an unprecedented way with private landowners and stakeholders to create management plans that preserve sagebrush habitat and ensure the continued multiple-uses of western lands. The current sage-grouse plans are the reason the Fish and Wildlife Service didn't list the sage-grouse as an endangered species -- something all sides agree would be "lights out" for rural places.

However, recent news reports have made me deeply concerned that you're trying to undo this hard work without talking to Congress or local stakeholders. These conservation programs are not only good for the species, but they also help rural ranchers. In addition to the general cuts to Interior's funding, the budget specifically calls for a cut to sage-grouse efforts by \$11.5 million - a 15 percent cut to the program.

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**Can you lay out how farmers, ranchers and local voices will have certainty that you will continue to support funding for these land management efforts, in spite of these proposed budget cuts?**

**How will you work with Congress to preserve conservation funding for sage-grouse and take into account local voices in your review of the current, widely supported management plans? Because the last thing my constituents want to see is your plan review backfire and Westerners end up with a listing of this bird.**

**Response:** The Budget requests over \$75 million in the Bureau's Wildlife Management program to continue work on the sage landscape, maintaining the Department's commitment to the sage-grouse and its habitat. Like you, my desire is to avoid listing the sage-grouse and I have made a commitment to work with states and other local partners to accomplish this goal.

**Question 3: The president's budget contains massive cuts to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which could have profound negative impacts on Tribal economic development and self-sufficiency. The proposed budget would cut millions from the Bureau's law enforcement, when tribes in Oregon are struggling to pay for even basic services.**

**The budget slashes the Bureau's forestry program, which helps most tribes in Oregon manage their forests. That management in turn generates revenue for basic services for families, jobs in the woods and logs for local mills. The same is true across the country. The budget document itself admits that it would reduce Indian timber harvest by 54 million board feet - a significant reduction when it comes to tribal lands.**

**Can you please explain to what extent Interior consulted with Indian Tribes in Oregon and throughout the country to determine the impact of these cuts and the adequacy of the requested funding levels for the Bureau of Indian Affairs?**

**Can you elaborate on which tribes you consulted? Tribes in Oregon rely on these programs, and the tribal members I have heard from do not feel like there has been adequate consultation.**

**Response:** This budget makes tough budget choices while focusing on the Department's funding of core service activities in Indian Country and makes support for tribal self-determination a priority.

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**Question 4:** In a hearing last week before this committee to discuss the Forest Service budget, I asked Chief Tidwell what the cost of inaction on wildfire funding reforms has been on the nation's forests.

What he told me confirmed what my colleagues and I have been saying all along - that if this broken, common-sense defying system of fighting fires had been fixed years ago, and we had controlled the growing cost of fighting fires, federal agencies could have easily treated millions more acres of forests, better preparing them for future fires and ultimately reducing the cost of fighting wildfires.

My colleagues from Idaho and I have been working to fix this broken system of fire borrowing for more than four years. The gridlock continues, and in the face of inaction, the fires get bigger, and the fire seasons get longer, Washington, D.C. politics prevents any real change from happening.

And as we heard from the Chief, this gridlock is having real impacts in our forests and making the situation worse every year. But the bottom line is, we've got to get this done now. This has got to be the year.

**The FY2018 budget for the Department of the Interior funds 100% of the 10-year average, which as we've seen continues to go up and is no longer considered the best way of determining the true cost of fires.**

**The budget also eliminates the FLAME suppression fund and decreases funding for fuels management, which goes toward making our forests more resistant to fires.**

**Are you supportive of a wildfire budget fix that ends fire borrowing and controls the 10-year average "creep"?**

**Can you explain to me how underfunding wildfire suppression and underfunding fuels management will make our forests healthier and allow the agency to effectively fight wildfires without running out of funds and borrowing from other accounts?**

**Response:** I agree that we need to work together to find a long-term solution to this problem. This budget maintains preparedness levels and supports fuels management activities. But because catastrophic fires don't wait for the budget, we need to craft solutions that make our forests healthy and help prevent fires. We look forward to working with Congress to do that.

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**Question 5: In recent testimony before the House Appropriations Committee, you lauded the Department's revenue generation from forestry activities, and the payments provided from these receipts to tribes. Yet the FY18 budget proposal recommends cutting BIA forestry by over \$3 million. This, in the estimate of the budget itself, would reduce tribal timber harvest by 54 million board feet and tribal revenue by over \$8 million.**

**How is this consistent with this Administration's prioritization of job and revenue creation?**

**Response:** As I indicated at the hearing and in the previous response, this budget makes tough choices. It prioritizes self-governance and self-determination for Indian Country, fully funding the costs for tribes to administer programs for themselves, and maintains essential management functions for tribal resources, among other things.

**Question 6: While the Antiquities Act authorizes the President to designate national monuments, there does not appear to be any authority within the Act to reduce the size of the monuments. Most legal scholars conclude that any ambiguity in the Antiquities Act was cleared up with the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 whereby Congress made clear that only the legislature has the authority to diminish or rescind national monuments.**

**Given this, does the Administration intend to ask Congress for legal authority should it want to proceed to implement the interim report's first recommendation?**

**If the Administration is not planning to seek new authority from Congress, please provide a citation for the legal authority that would allow a President to rescind or diminish a national monument that was established by a previous President.**

**Response:** As provided in his Executive Order, our role in the review of monuments is to provide a recommendation to the President. Final action and authority rests with him.

**Question 7: Bears Ears National Monument was strongly supported by local tribes and the public, evidenced by the hundreds of thousands of public comments and signatures submitted. Despite that support, however, your interim recommendation to the President was to reduce the size of the monument.**

**In Oregon, Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument is critical to the beauty and economic well-being of Oregon and highly supported by my constituents. I wrote to you about this last month to share with you the robust process and support that was behind this**

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**designation.**

**I am greatly concerned about your analysis and recommendation for Bears Ears. Your decision runs entirely contrary to the flood of public comments your Department received reflecting that the vast majority of the public supports keeping the National Monument intact. I am concerned about the implications that decision has on your review of the remaining National Monuments.**

**Given your recommendation for Bears Ears, it seems clear that you are unconvinced by the public comments and the opinions of sovereign tribal nations which called for keeping the monument intact. Looking ahead to your review of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, if public comments are not persuasive for you and are overshadowed by far fewer voices of special interests, then what role does the public comment process play in your analysis of Cascade-Siskiyou, or any other monument? And how do your actions help the department achieve your stated goal of regaining public trust?**

**Response:** Each monument is being reviewed in a holistic fashion. We heard from local communities including state, county and federally elected officials, tribes, local businesses, and trade associations. For all of the reviews, each group's input is weighed as we craft recommendations for the President.

**Question 8:** In your confirmation hearings, you promised to work with Congress and western stakeholders before making any changes to the BLM and Forest Service Plans to conserve sage-grouse.

**In light of the recent Secretarial Order, who in Congress have you engaged regarding review of these plans?**

**What steps are you taking to ensure BLM has the staff needed to manage American assets and heritage, while providing a transparent process for public engagement?**

**Response:** Like you, my desire is to avoid listing the sage-grouse. I am committed to cooperating with states and other local partners to accomplish this goal. The interagency team established by my Secretarial Order has carried out its initial review directly in conjunction with states. The recommendations detailed within the report provide a path forward for additional work to be carried out in consultation with states and local communities.

**Question 9:** The budget includes an 84 percent cut to LWCF. LWCF is essential to maintaining and increasing access to our public lands. Cuts this deep would mean LWCF

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**could essentially only cover staff salaries, with possibly a little left over for emergency acquisitions. Willing sellers will be left in the lurch, and projects that could expand access by connecting previously inaccessible public lands could be lost to commercial development.**

**Given these cuts, how does this budget reflect the need to improve recreation and other access to public lands?**

**Response:** The President's budget proposes to balance the federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and many maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. Land acquisition is an area where the Department has flexibility to defer expenditures.

**Question 10:** We both agree that Americans deserve a fair, market value return on the coal, oil, and natural gas extracted from publicly owned lands. During your nomination hearing before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, with regard to natural gas extraction you stated that "we're wasting a lot, we're venting a lot, and we're wasting energy, and that is troubling me..." Since then, your agency has halted the BLM's methane rule, which is meant to address the same issues that are troubling you.

**Will you explain how you plan to achieve a fair return to taxpayers, despite halting parts of a rule designed to help achieve those goals?**

**Response:** As I said at the hearing, as Secretary I am dedicated to managing our federal lands and resources as a good neighbor and steward. I believe conservation and energy development can occur simultaneously under effective multiple use management. The Department is committed to assessing the rule and its requirements and crafting pragmatic policies that will incentivize responsible energy development, including minimizing waste of valuable natural gas resources.

**Question 11:** The budget cuts the Bureau of Land Management's budget by 15%, which includes conservation and environmental programs. Yet the Department of the Interior's oil and gas programs survive the overall 12% cut to Interior. Interior's offshore program gets an increase, and there's a \$16 million plus-up in the BLM's oil and gas permitting office. The budget intends to open up oil and gas drilling in ANWAR, and cuts renewable energy programs both on and off shore.

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In your nomination hearing, you stated your support for an all-of-the-above energy policy that can reduce our nation's dependence on energy imports and benefit the environment.

**Can you explain how Interior's budget accomplishes these goals?**

The President's budget cuts funding for renewable energy development on federal lands despite seeing exponential growth over the last few years, reducing that sector's growth and threatening the jobs it creates. But the budget for oil and gas is increased, despite a flat oil and gas market.

**Why does this administration care more about oil jobs than any other?**

**Response:** The Budget supports implementation of a comprehensive energy program that will put America on track to achieve the President's vision of an America First energy plan, freeing us from dependence on foreign energy. The FY 2018 budget takes the first steps toward energy dominance by implementing an all-of-the-above strategy. It not only increases funding for oil and gas development programs onshore and offshore, but also supports renewable energy and boosts coal development from public lands. This budget will improve the processing of energy permits and energy related rights-of-way, and will support the development of a new 5-year offshore leasing plan.

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**Questions from Senator Lee**

**Question 1: BLM law enforcement has a poor reputation in Utah. Rather than fostering a cooperative relationship with local residents and authorities, BLM agents have created an atmosphere of distrust and fear. I'm concerned that DOI's budget request includes an increase of more than a quarter of a million dollars for BLM Law enforcement. What do you intend to use these additional funds for, and what are you doing to make BLM law enforcement more cooperative with and respectful of local residents?**

**Response:** Restoring trust between the Department's land management bureaus and the public they serve is one of my top priorities. Ensuring public safety on our public lands is an important law enforcement function, but I acknowledge the BLM has a great deal of work to do in order to be a better neighbor. This is why I am committed to leading the Department to move forward in a way that fosters a sense of cooperation with public land users and local communities.

**Question 2: I was encouraged by your recent secretarial order to review federal sage grouse conservation plans. The state of Utah had its own sage grouse management plan in place, which increased sage grouse populations in the state by 40 percent in a single year. But in 2015, the previous administration inexplicably scrapped the state's successful, locally driven plan and imposed its own highly restrictive top-down strategy. You mentioned in your order a desire to "enhance the involvement" of the 11 western states impacted by federal sage grouse conservation policies. What are some of the specific opportunities you plan to give states to empower them with real authority in the management of sage grouse within their borders?**

**Response:** Our primary goal is to ensure that management of the sage-grouse is done in such a way that listing of the bird is avoided. The interagency review team has conducted an initial review of these plans, keeping a wide range of state-driven options and ideas on the table. Each affected state has different needs and issues. As the Department moves forward with the strategy for sage-grouse habitat conservation, we want to make sure that what we do is done in direct consultation with state and local governments.



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**Questions from Senator Stabenow**

**Question 1: Secretary Zinke, the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and U.S. Geologic Survey partner with many of my constituents on projects that restore and protect the Great Lakes and contribute to our scientific understanding of them.**

**The Fish and Wildlife Service helped remove Nashville Dam on the Thornapple River in southwest Michigan, which has improved fish habitat and water quality and provided more recreational opportunities.**

**Researchers at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore have established a program to reduce botulism outbreaks that have killed thousands of shore birds there.**

**The U.S. Geological Survey, along with the Fish and Wildlife Service and other partners, installed rocky reef in the St. Clair River, which created 40,000 square feet of spawning habitat for lake sturgeon.**

**This work was made possible by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, funding which supplements the budgets of these agencies and enables them to expand their ability to partner with local communities and my state to protect and restore the drinking water for over 30 million people.**

**These activities are not possible, however, without robust support for the base budgets of these agencies. Yet, the Interior Department's FY2018 budget would slash funding for each. Funding to USGS would be cut by \$138 million, to the Fish and Wildlife Service by \$200 million, and to the Park Service by \$200 million.**

**How will the Interior Department be able to maintain the level of work we have seen for the past few years in protecting and restoring the Great Lakes under the Administration's FY2018 budget request?**

**Response:** Geographic Programs fund a variety of ecosystem protection activities within specific watersheds, including the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, Puget Sound, and others. These activities are primarily local efforts and the responsibility for coordinating and funding these efforts generally belongs with states and local partnerships. Eliminating the Geographic programs refocuses agencies on core national work. These programs perform local ecosystem protection and restoration activities, which are best handled by local and state entities. The Geographic Programs, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, have received significant

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federal funding, coordination, and oversight to date. State and local groups are engaged and capable of taking on management of clean-up and restoration of these water bodies.

**Question 2: The MotorCities Heritage Area inspires and educates Michigan residents and visitors on how the automobile changed our state, the nation, and the world. This site exemplifies Michigan's pride in our automotive and labor history and has a positive influence on our region's future. In FY17, MotorCities received only \$491,000 but the site generates \$35.4 million in tax revenue, supports 4,560 jobs, and is estimated to have an overall economic impact in the region of \$410.4 million. Your proposed budget eliminates all funding for this National Heritage area as well as the other 48 heritage areas across the country.**

**When asked about eliminating funding for these important cultural areas during last week's House Appropriations Committee Hearing, you provided no further justification than "tough choices had to be made." I find this to be eye opening when you also propose to increase funding for fossil fuel production on public lands. Can you explain how you justify eliminating funding for some of our most important cultural and historical areas while shifting that funding to fossil fuel development?**

**Response:** The President's budget proposes to balance the federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. The National Heritage Area Program can be supported through partnerships and community engagement.

**Question 3: Secretary Zinke, you have said the President's budget "saves taxpayers by focusing program spending, shrinking bureaucracy, and empowering the front lines."**

**Could you specifically identify how the proposed budget empowers your agency's front lines?**

**Response:** This Administration has committed to making the tough decisions that will lead to a balanced budget, and this is what a balanced budget looks like. We are prioritizing our assets and personnel in the field and are currently going through a process to determine how to shift resources from Washington, D.C. to the units in the field and how public private partnerships can best benefit our public lands.

**Question 4: On April 12, 2017, you issued a memorandum that required DOI headquarters to approve all grant awards over \$100,000. I am told that this action is**

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**significantly slowing down the expenditure of congressionally appropriated funds and is negatively impacting local science support and partner organizations.**

**Doesn't this order centralize decision making within D.C. instead of allowing local experts to efficiently carry out their work across the country?**

**Response:** Interior distributes about \$5.5 billion in grants and cooperative agreements every year. In an effort to increase accountability so we know where our taxpayer money is being distributed, we initiated this review. It has been a good way for me to better understand this spending and how it relates to Interior's mission. We have an efficient process in place and the reviews are moving along quickly.

**Question 5: The National Parks Service has a well-known maintenance backlog across the country, including sites in Michigan like the Sleeping Bear Dunes and Isle Royale National Park. According to a report by the Pew Charitable Trusts, total deferred maintenance on Park Service lands in Michigan totaled nearly \$50 million.**

**It is my understanding that Interior's FY2018 budget cuts the Park Service's Operations account by \$200 million compared to FY2017 levels. In addition, I understand the budget proposes to decrease Park Service staff by 1,200.**

**While you have testified about your commitment to addressing the Park Service's maintenance backlogs, could you explain how the FY2018 budget would accomplish that objective? It strikes me as difficult to address these needs when you are cutting the resources and the personnel that are required to maintain our National Parks.**

**Response:** Across the Department, 2018 funding for land management operations is reduced by approximately seven percent, which will impact staffing levels. However, the budget also prioritizes funding non-recurring infrastructure projects that will help address the deferred maintenance backlog. In the long run, this will create a better experience for visitors and staff by ensuring that facilities are safe, functional, and can be operated more efficiently.

Additionally, the current estimate for the NPS deferred maintenance backlog is \$11.3 billion which is difficult to address fully using only annual appropriations. NPS continues to pursue innovative public/private partnerships, such as the Centennial Challenge program, and uses the Recreation Fee program to reduce some of the backlog. We will continue to work with NPS and Congress to develop innovative funding ideas to reduce the backlog.

**Question 6: The BLM and USDA's Forest Service share responsibility for managing the bulk of**

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the nation's wildfire suppression needs. Climate change, coupled with a century of aggressive suppression and increased development in the wildland urban interface, has resulted in larger and more complex fires. As you know, these fires are very expensive to suppress and drain other parts of land management agencies' non-fire budgets. This problem is particularly acute for the Forest Service. As we've tried to tackle this issue in the past, we've run into problems with OMB and other agencies that don't have expertise in natural resource management.

**To avoid these problems in the future, will you commit to working with Secretary Perdue to meaningfully engage OMB Director Mulvaney and other relevant Administration officials in a dialog regarding a comprehensive solution to the fire budget problem?**

**Response:** I agree that we need to work together to find a long-term solution to this problem. This budget maintains preparedness levels and supports fuels management activities. But because catastrophic fires don't wait for the budget, we need to craft solutions that make our forests healthy and help prevent fires. We look forward to working with Congress to do that.

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**Questions from Senator Flake**

**Question 1: You and I have discussed the importance of tribal water rights settlements in Arizona and their potential to provide much needed water supplies on reservations. Settlements also create certainty and allow for partnerships with non-tribal water users. I am encouraged by your commitment to work with me on tribal settlements in Arizona. However, I am concerned about the unfilled positions in the Department that are related to tribal water rights and the impacts those vacancies have on ongoing negotiations. Can you give me an anticipated timeline for staffing of your tribal water rights team sufficient to evaluate the Hualapai Tribal water rights settlement?**

**Response:** Senator, my team is working as expeditiously as possible to fill important positions at the Department. With regard to the Hualapai Tribal water rights settlement, the Secretary's Indian Water Rights Office negotiation team continues to evaluate this settlement. I would be glad to keep you apprised as developments unfold.

**Question 2: In western Arizona the wild burro situation has grown out of control. The latest population estimates show Arizona's burro population as almost three times what the BLM has determined as the highest appropriate management level. Burros cause extensive damage to natural landscape, compete with native animals for food, and pose a public safety hazard. I have repeatedly asked the BLM for a path forward for the management of wild horses and burros. This year's budget request proposes a \$10 million reduction for the wild horse and burro program while returning all the management tools provided by the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act. I would like to emphasize that while BLM works to improve the wild horse and burro management it should not be focused predominately on horses and instead needs to address the burro issues facing western Arizona. What efforts will the BLM undertake this year to control the growing burro population and bring them down to acceptable management levels?**

**Response:** The current program is financially unsustainable, and I agree a new approach is needed. Rangelands are incapable of handling this overpopulation and these ecosystems are out of balance. In addition, program costs have more than doubled due to the cost attributable to care for excess horses and burros located off-range. To meet the Department's long-term goal of realigning program costs and animal populations to fulfil our statutory obligation to maintain appropriate herd management levels, BLM must have the necessary tools as provided in the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act to manage on-range herds more effectively and humanely.

**Question 3: On May 3rd, 2017, the Acting Special Agent In Charge of District III of the Bureau of Indian Affairs sent a letter to tribal chiefs of police in Arizona regarding**

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**detention contracts with counties. The letter asked tribes to begin to adhere to a maximum bed limit for Navajo, Yavapai, and Kane Counties, as well as the Hualapai Tribe. It is my understanding that, at least for some tribes, these limits are below the typical daily population housed in county detention facilities. The letter went on to explain that if tribes were to exceed the daily maximums the contracts might be suspended. This would leave counties without the beds they need to keep dangerous criminals off the streets and without the time or resources to find enough beds elsewhere. The BIA has suggested that tribal police and courts implement “alternative sentencing” and commute sentences to meet the reduced bed limit. It is troubling to me that the BIA’s shifting use of resources may manipulate outcomes in our criminal justice system by predetermining the type of punishment the courts may impose. Is the BIA currently imposing a daily population limit on contract detention in county facilities? If so, how does the BIA propose that counties and tribes will meet this daily limit?**

**Response:** The BIA is not currently imposing a daily population on contract detention in county facilities. BIA sent the May 3, 2017 letter referenced in your question at a point in time when the bureau was contemplating a year-long Continuing Resolution and was looking to manage any potential limited funding. On June 22, 2017, the BIA sent a letter to the Tribes in Arizona rescinding the May 3, 2017, letter.

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**Questions from Senator Franken**

**Question 1: Secretary, following up on our conversation at the hearing, when I asked you to tell me how much warming government scientists predict for the end of this century under a “business as usual” scenario, the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Climate Assessment predicts about 8 degrees Fahrenheit, with the possibility of well over 11 degrees Fahrenheit. Do you agree with this?**

**Response:** As I have stated, I do believe the climate is changing and man does have an influence, but I do not believe scientific models can predict global warming scenarios with much certainty.

**Question 2: Could you help me understand your response to my colleague Rep. McCollum at a House hearing last week? You said that when we consider the climate: “Man has had an influence. But man has a negative influence not only on CO2, but you look at arsenic, you look at the chemicals that we have from agriculture, so man has not been a particularly good influence on a lot of things.” Was your intent to downplay the importance of addressing carbon dioxide?**

**Response:** My intent was to discuss the effects of human activity on our environment in a broader context.

**Question 3: When do you plan to start holding meetings of the White House Council on Native American Affairs? The council serves to break down barriers across agencies to ensure efficient programs for Indian Country.**

**Response:** The White House Council on Native American Affairs is operating under the management of the White House to ensure Tribes have a direct line of communication with our Executive Branch leadership.

**Question 4: It has been widely reported that earlier this year, the White House directed agencies to ignore oversight inquiries from Democrats. This is, frankly, unacceptable. And even Senator Grassley expressed his clear opposition in no uncertain terms.**

- A. Do you agree with the White House’s position?**
- B. Is it the official position of the Department of the Interior to ignore Democrats’ oversight inquiries?**
- C. Will you commit to responding to Democrats’ inquiries on this committee, as well as those of other relevant committees?**

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**Response to A, B, and C:** As I stated multiple times at the hearing, I believe in transparency and have encouraged members, no matter the party, to reach out to me when they have a request and we can discuss. I think it is important that we work together.

**Question 5:** Last Friday, the *Washington Post* reported that you are shaking up the Department of the Interior—reassigning up to 50 senior career public servants. While, this is within your purview, but according to long-serving DOI officials, there's never been anything similar involving so many people.

- A. What is the purpose of this mass reassignment?**
- B. Some have suggested that you are targeting career civil service employees who worked at a senior level during the Obama Administration for retribution. Is this the case?**
- C. If not, why do this now? Why do this before the eventual heads of various agencies have a chance to assess the current leadership and suggest changes?**
- D. Was this move your idea or did it originate from Acting Deputy Secretary James Cason, because the reassignment letters that the senior officials received came from him?**
- E. Is this part of a larger DOI reorganization? And if so when will you present plans for Congress and the public to consider?**

**Response to A, B, C, D, and E:** The Senior Executive Service (SES) is intended to be a corps of versatile, senior Departmental staff. When Congress created the SES corps, the intent was to construct a mobile cadre of Executives. Rotation of SES provides an opportunity to improve talent development, mission delivery, and collaboration. It facilitates problem-solving and effective decision making. The purpose of these moves was to shift staff to areas where their skill set was better suited or to get staff out of Washington and into the field where they are needed most, which is a priority.

**Question 6:** Secretary, during your confirmation hearing you spoke about the importance of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to preserve special areas and improve public access to the outdoors. You also touted your support of the program while serving in the House. This is something that we really agree on—the LWCF has done great things in Minnesota, such as improving state and local parks and helping to protect some of the most beloved areas of the state. This is why I am so disappointed to see the proposed cuts in the President's budget. Did the administration consult with you before releasing the budget proposal? Did you support their proposal to cut LWCF? If so, how do you justify this shift, do you still support the program?



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**Response:** In recent years, a large portion of the Department's LWCF portfolio has focused on projects to acquire new lands both on federal lands and through grants to states. The President's budget proposes to balance the federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and many maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. Land acquisition is an area where the Department has flexibility to defer expenditures.

**Question 7: The Lewis and Clark regional water system reaches across three states connecting 20 communities and water systems with a much needed, reliable water source. However, current federal funding for Lewis & Clark has slowed to a point where the states, including Minnesota, have prefunded the federal government's share in order to maintain progress. Just last week, the State of Minnesota approved an additional \$3.5 million in funding for Lewis & Clark in order to reach the town of Worthington, Minnesota which needs this connection in order to provide their citizens safe drinking water and a reliable source of water to support the town. Do you see a project like Lewis & Clark as a priority for your agency and the Administration and what can you do as Secretary to ensure the federal government meets its commitments to the water system, as well as the states and communities relying on Lewis & Clark?**

**Response:** Rural water projects, such as the Lewis and Clark project, help build strong, secure communities and are important to supporting the livelihood of local economies. At the same time, they must compete with a number of Reclamation's priorities, including aging infrastructure, Indian water rights settlements and other priorities intended to address future water and energy related challenges, but I do appreciate the importance of this issue.

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**Questions from Senator Manchin**

**Question 1: In West Virginia, the Land and Water Conservation Fund is the reason you and your agencies have incomparable public assets such as the Harpers Ferry and the Gauley and New Rivers National Recreation Area. In 2016, West Virginia received more than \$400,000 in grants from the state side of the fund. These funds were used for all sorts of upgrades that will make the West Virginia outdoors even more wild and wonderful. I know it is just as important to your home state, where it protects the Greater Yellowstone area and Glacier and, I understand, key recreation access and drinking water supplies for your own hometown of Whitefish, Montana. I was surprised by your FY18 budget recommendation for LWCF, which would gut the program by 84 percent and stop many conservation and access projects dead in their track. Furthermore, your budget submission offers what I consider a false and dangerous choice between maintaining facilities in these parks and conserving public access and the actual resources people go to the parks to enjoy. Good management requires that you do both, just as I worked to do with West Virginia's state parks when they were under my care as governor.**

**The FY2018 Budget in Brief document says, "The LWCF receipts authorization expires at the end of fiscal year 2018 and the Administration will review options for reauthorization, including consideration of a range of conservation-related investments that could be funded through the LWCF."**

**Simple yes or no question, do you support permanent reauthorization of LWCF?**

**Do you have any recommended policy proposals for permanent LWCF reauthorization that you would like to share with the Committee today?**

**How do you intend to balance those commitments with a budget that essentially wipes out LWCF, and specifically endorses diverting those very revenues you previously sought to defend for their intended LWCF uses?**

**Response:** Yes, I continue to support the LWCF. In recent years, a large portion of the Department's LWCF portfolio has focused on projects to acquire new lands both on federal lands and through grants to states. The President's budget proposes to balance the federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. Land acquisition is an area where the Department has flexibility to defer expenditures.

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**Question 2: The President's budget proposes eliminating the Heritage Partnership Programs Commissions and grants, a program of the National Park Service. National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape. There are currently 49 – two of which are located in West Virginia. These are not land management programs – they are cultural and heritage programs that generate revenue. As an example of the positive economic impacts of a national heritage area designation, the National Coal Heritage Area in southern West Virginia generates \$207 million in economic impact, supports 2,744 jobs and generates \$16.8 million in tax revenue. National Heritage Areas leverage federal funds to create jobs, generate revenue for local governments, and sustain local communities. NHAs average \$5.50 for every \$1.00 of federal investment. According to the budget justification, this is a program that is better funded locally. The problem with that is there are 49 National Heritage Areas spread all over the country, the local hunger to contribute to these programs will vary depending on location, mission, etc.**

**Do you believe the National Park Service has a role to play in ensuring that funds that have already been invested continue to yield as high of a return as possible?**

**Are you concerned that the administration may be viewing opportunities for potential cuts from a high level, and not considering hearing the local support for these programs?**

**Response:** National Heritage Areas provide cultural benefits, and are an example of the benefits of partnerships. However, the President's budget proposes to balance the federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this, priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. The National Heritage Area Program can be supported through partnerships and community engagement.

**Question 3: Secretary Zinke, during your confirmation hearing you said that we must find ways to get the younger generations –specifically millennials—into the outdoors. You said, specifically, “We have to motivate and incentivize outdoor activities to teach our millennials the importance of the great outdoors. If you look at the numbers, and the demographics are actually a little different. The people that are visiting the parks are the older generations. So we have to look at new ways of incentivizing younger millennials to experience the parks...”**

**I couldn't agree more, and part of my motivation as a Senator is to conserve areas that are simply too special to not be preserved so that we can pass them off to our children and grandchildren. West Virginia is an outdoorsman's paradise, with some of the best hunting, fishing and other recreational opportunities you can find. Like you, I am a grandfather,**

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**and I have enjoyed taking my grandchildren hunting and fishing to teach them the joys, and serenity of the great outdoors. That is why I can't escape the irony of the President's budget request proposing to eliminate several programs that do exactly what you described in your confirmation hearing—getting millennials out to enjoy and conserve our public lands and quite possibly become the next Teddy Roosevelt. The President's budget proposes to eliminate the Fish and Wildlife Service Youth Conservation Corps Program, and reduce funds for the National Park Services Visitors Services Youth Projects and Interpretation and Education Projects as well as the Volunteers in Parks Program.**

**Do you still stand by your statement in your confirmation hearing that we must find ways to get the younger generation into the outdoors?**

**Do you believe this budget reflects that goal?**

**Response:** Yes, I believe that it is important to get our children and grandchildren out to our parks and public lands to experience our collective heritage. By focusing on priorities to ensure that we take care of the assets we currently own, as this budget does, we make sure that these lands will be maintained and available for future generations.

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**Questions from Senator Heinrich**

**Question 1: In 2014, Congress made improvements to sec. 365 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to provide additional resources to seven of BLM's busiest field offices to hire and support sufficient staff to meet current demands. Subsection 365(e) requires BLM to report to Congress annually on the allocation of the additional funds among the seven Project offices and the accomplishments of each office. The first annual report, due February 2016, has never been submitted to Congress as required by law. The second report was due in February 2017. When will BLM provide the two overdue reports?**

**Response:** The BLM is now in the process of developing and finalizing the reports.

**Question 2: I continue to hear about problems arising from the large number of long-standing job vacancies in BLM's field offices in New Mexico. Of particular concern are significant vacancies in Farmington, the Federal Indian Minerals Office and Carlsbad. Currently there are 60 vacant positions in BLM offices in New Mexico, with as many as 21 vacant positions in Carlsbad alone. Clearly the administration's hiring freeze contributed to the delay in filling these important federal jobs. What actions are you taking to address promptly the need to fill the large number of job vacancies in New Mexico's various BLM offices?**

**Response:** Overall, the BLM has faced challenges with recruitment, training, and retention of technical staff. That said, the BLM is working to boost recruitment and other hiring incentives to compete with agencies and industry for qualified staff. As part of my review of the Department's organization, we are looking at how to better leverage and align bureau resources in the field, cut duplication, and allocate assets and personnel more effectively.

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**Questions from Senator Hirono**

**Question 1: The President's budget proposes cutting the USGS Natural Hazards Program by more than \$20 million. This cut specifically removes \$3.6 million from the Volcano Hazards Program.**

**Right now in Hawaii we have lava actively flowing from Kilauea Volcano. In addition to monitoring Kilauea USGS personnel at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory are also actively monitoring earthquake activity from Mauna Loa, the world's largest volcano. Mauna Loa occupies over half of Hawaii Island and its eruptions produce lava at a much higher rate than those of any other volcano in Hawaii. The last time it erupted in 1984 the lava came within 7.2 km of Hilo, the largest population center on Hawaii Island. Hawaii County (comprised of Hawaii Island) is the fastest growing county in the State and the potential for an eruption from Mauna Loa to threaten lives and property in Hawaii is very high.**

**How will the administration's proposed cut to the Volcano Hazards Program impact USGS's ability to detect, warn, and respond to an eruption at Mauna Loa?**

**Response:** At the FY 2018 proposed funding level, continuous situational awareness and capability for warnings and forecasts of volcanic activity on Mauna Loa (as well as Kilauea) will be maintained with the current monitoring networks.

**Question 2: The President's budget proposes to reduce the Operation of the National Park System account by \$200 million, which would reduce base funding for parks throughout the country, impacting staffing, hours, and services. The budget proposes reducing staff by 1,242 FTEs, causing 90 percent of national parks to reduce current staffing levels.**

**The National Parks subcommittee just held an oversight hearing on opportunities to improve the workplace environment within the National Park Service. It was mentioned how employees are currently overextended with increased park visitation and how that negatively impacts employee morale.**

**Do you think this reduction in National Park Service staff funding will improve or worsen the workplace environment?**

**Response:** Across the Department, 2018 funding for land management operations is reduced by approximately seven percent. However, the budget aims to create a better experience for staff and visitors by prioritizing funding to address the deferred maintenance backlog and shifting

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more resources to the field rather than Washington.

Furthermore, morale is not solely related to the budget, but is affected by many different factors. One important factor is whether leadership is setting a positive example and addressing the inappropriate actions of employees. As Secretary, my expectations are clear. We are committed to addressing these issues.

**Question 3: You have also noted that one of your highest priorities as Secretary is to address the \$11 billion deferred maintenance backlog within the National Park Service.**

**If there was an influx of funding to address the backlog, whether it be as part of an infrastructure package or something else, how do you expect projects to be completed if there aren't enough National Park Service staff to perform those duties?**

**Response:** I believe that we have to realign our employees to make sure that the focus is at the field level. This type of realignment will help to support the proposals contained in the 2018 budget, particularly those prioritizing taking care of the assets we currently own.

**Question 4: Despite a theme of 'climate change denial' within this administration, we in Hawaii are seeing first-hand the impacts of climate change. Since 2012 the University of Hawaii at Manoa has hosted one of the Department of Interior's eight regional Climate Adaptation Centers, which were created to address challenges resulting from climate change and provide land use managers tools to plan and adapt to these changes.**

**The President's budget proposes to eliminate four of the eight regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers to refocus "work on the highest priority needs of Interior bureaus and States." Will the Pacific Islands regional center at the University of Hawaii at Manoa be eliminated under this proposal?**

**Response:** No decision has been made about which centers may be consolidated, but such a decision would be based on competition to determine how to refocus work on the highest priority needs of Interior bureaus and states.

**Question 5: The National Park Service is charged with not only protecting our nation's natural resources, but also the cultural and historic resources that tell the story of our country. An example of this is Honouliuli in Hawaii where the story of Japanese internment is told.**

**What will you do as Secretary to ensure the telling of our nation's diverse history, as well**

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**as the preservation of historic and cultural resources, receives adequate funding and capable management given the dramatic cuts proposed in the current administration's budget?**

**Response:** I am a strong supporter of the National Parks, including those parks that tell our Nation's story. The President's budget proposes to balance the federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own, including historic and cultural resources.

**Question 6: As noted before, climate change continues to be a major factor in landscape, infrastructure, and natural resource planning in Hawaii.**

**How will you ensure that our national park sites in Hawaii and beyond are protected and adequately resources in the face of these changes and what appears to be inadequate funding in the administration's budget?**

**Response:** The President's budget supports actions to mitigate and adapt to extreme weather, drought, flood, wildfire, and other hazards that affect federal lands. These mitigation and adaptation strategies are fundamental to the Department's stewardship mission.

**Question 7: Roughly a third of the nation's listed species are from Hawaii. The proposed cuts to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's programs will disproportionately impact my state and almost certainly result in extinctions of the plants and animals of our natural heritage and revered by the native Hawaiian culture.**

**Land acquisition programs like the Conservation Grants programs, the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition, and Recovery Land Acquisition Grants are not funded in this budget. Acquisition is necessary to actively protect the native forests and wetland areas that are threatened by development, fire, and invasive species. Funds from these programs allow the state to set aside lands for conservation, which provide vital habitat for listed species. Knowing this, do you think Hawaii, which has one of the smallest budgets and most expensive land prices in the nation, should be solely responsible for the acquisition of land to protect one-third of the federally listed species the US government have been mandated to protect by the Endangered Species Act?**

**Response:** The Administration's budget includes \$101 million for invasive species work across the Department and I believe this work is important. Regarding land acquisition, our focus is on being good stewards of the lands we already own. Acquisition of new lands is not a priority for the Department in FY2018.



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**Question 8: The Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance grants program has been cut by 30%. Habitat Conservation Plans allow for permits to be issued to private entities and businesses undertaking projects that might otherwise result in the destruction of endangered or threatened species. The development of an HCP is required by federal and state laws to obtain needed permits, without which the projects cannot move forward. However, developing an HCP can be cost prohibitive and this grant program provides crucial support for economic growth in the state by offsetting costs to small businesses who would otherwise not be able to afford the expense to develop an individual HCP. Hawaii has a low population size and tax base. With reduced federal support, the state will not be able to carry the same workload and therefore will be forced to eliminate many economic opportunities for Hawaii. Furthermore, HCP planning assistance grants prevent delays in mitigation and conservation actions for our most imperiled species.**

**Do you believe that cutting this program will slow development and have negative economic and conservation implications throughout the nation?**

**Response:** No. Due to the fluctuating demand for the development of regional, multi-species habitat conservation plans from year to year, the Department is requesting to reduce funding for HCP Planning Assistance to align with anticipated demand.

**Question 9: Hawaii is home to 37% of the nation's listed bird species. To support their protection, the "State of the Birds" program – a congressional earmark program that started in 2000 has provided USFWS with approximately \$1.6 million for Hawaiian birds. This program provides vital support for some of the nation's most critically endangered bird species, bringing them back from the brink of extinction, like the Hawaiian Crow or alala, which only exists in captivity. By defunding "State of the Birds," many of these birds that depend on the captive propagation facility to build their numbers in the wild will surely go extinct. Thus, all the millions of dollars already invested to recover these birds would be lost.**

**Will this budget cut allow FWS to fulfill their mandate to prevent extinctions and safeguard America's unique natural resources?**

**Response:** Yes. Preventing extinction and achieving recovery of listed species has always been, and will continue to be, one of the FWS's highest priorities.

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**Question 10: DOI is in the consultation process regarding its reorganization. Thus far, what feedback have you received at these consultations? Additionally, can you expand on your reorganization plans and what you plan to do to continue to meet DOI's trust responsibility to Native communities?**

**Response:** Interior's bureaus are organized and report across regions, have their own priorities, and are not good at joint operations. We are looking at how to better leverage and align bureau resources in the field, cut duplication, and push assets and personnel where they should be. We are reviewing a number of comments on reform that we have received from the public and we expect to include some proposals with the FY 2019 budget request.

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**Questions from Senator King**

**Question 1: I wanted to follow up on your comment during the hearing about cuts to individual national parks. In the hearing after I asked if there are cuts at individual parks that will hit their operating budgets, you stated that those kind of cuts would be “very doubtful” to individual parks. Yet Acadia National Park is facing an 8% cut to its Operation and Maintenance budget from the National Park Service FY18 budget request, This cut is also in the context of a national park that has seen nearly 60% increase in visitation in ten years, and is facing a nearly \$70 million backlog.**

**How does the Department of Interior specifically plan to make the National Park Units function more efficiently while visitation levels are at their highest and are projected to continue to grow, yet Operation and Maintenance funding is requested to be cut?**

**Response:** I am a strong supporter of the National Parks. The President’s budget proposes to balance the federal government’s budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long.

**Question 2: You specified in the hearing that Advisory Commissions, though temporarily suspended during the review period, could apply for exemptions to meet formally for scheduled meetings. You also stated that if the Acadia National Park Advisory Commission had a scheduled meeting, “all they have to do is put in a request for exemption.” If a request for an exemption is requested and filed for a scheduled September 11th meeting of the Acadia Advisory Commission, will this request be granted, as you stated?**

**Response:** In order to make sure all commissions are giving local communities adequate opportunities to comment on park management decisions, the Department is reviewing the more than 200 boards, committees, and commissions under its responsibility. Throughout this review process, committees and commissions have been given the option to pursue waivers to meet, and the Acadia Advisory Commission was approved to meet on September 11, 2017. The review is scheduled to be completed later this year so that commissions can get back to work.

**Question 3: Back in January during your nomination hearing, you stated before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee that “I am on record supporting full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund for a reason. I think it is an incredibly important program that has done great work.” Unfortunately the President’s budget calls for an 84% decrease to all LWCF non-outdoor recreational program funding. This hits home in**

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**Maine where LWCF grants have served the state well not only in acquisition but in development, planning or infrastructure investments in land conservation that helps generate outdoor recreation revenue. How does limiting LWCF funding in such a large way help protect the program?**

**Response:** In recent years, a large portion of the Department's LWCF portfolio has focused on projects to acquire new lands both on federal lands and through grants to states. The President's budget proposes to balance the federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. Land acquisition is an area where the Department has flexibility to defer expenditures. In addition, as I pointed out in the hearing, the LWCF program is funded by offshore royalties and revenues, which dropped significantly throughout the last administration. In order to support future funding for programs like LWCF, we must prioritize our revenue portfolio as well, which this budget does.

**Question 4: It is my understanding that LWCF State and Local Assistance Grants over \$100,000 awarded by the National Park Service in 2017 have been put on hold for "an additional layer of review." This is unfortunately putting a substantial burden on local organizations who have worked to line up project partners, funding sources and timetables to accomplish their conservation and park projects.**

**One such project in Maine is in the town of Acton, for the purchase of 25 acres at Goat Hill, a valued destination for the year around and seasonal residents of the region. The current owners have allowed access over the years but have recently decided to sell the 25 acres of hill top. The Town of Acton (pop. 6000) has voted in referendum to contribute more than half of the funds needed for this purchase. Acton's LWCF State and Local Assistance Grant award funding is needed to help with the purchase price and to begin infrastructure investments to be sure the public can access the trail and summit during Maine's peak outdoors season.**

**What is the process for review of projects that have already been awarded, like the project in Acton, and when will the process be completed? Will these communities be given some guidance in the near term on whether and how their work to secure assistance through the NPS state grant program will be affected?**

**Response:** After being confirmed, I made it a goal to be accountable for how the Department spends the taxpayer's dollar. As a part of that effort, I asked for a review of all grants that exceeded \$100,000 so we could have a thorough accounting of what is being dispersed and how it is being used. This is a good governance effort as we look to spend taxpayer dollars in the most efficient and wise manner.

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**Question 5: Can you relay the findings of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's analysis (required by the FY 2016 omnibus that passed in December 2015) as to whether it would be appropriate to include Echinoderms in the Service's exemption to clearance requirements for import and export of fishery products? Additionally, I am still interested in receiving the data on inspection requests and executions, which were also provided for in that same legislation. Any comment on the reason for delay, which is now more than a year past due, would be appreciated.**

**Response:** In response to this directive in the FY 2016 Appropriations Conference Report, the Fish and Wildlife Service carried out an analysis of the history and context of the relevant regulations and exemptions, the role of the Service's inspection processes in the trade, the current legal and illegal trade in echinoderms, and the risk to protected species due to a potential exemption. Based on this analysis, the Service concluded that the exemption granted to shellfish and fishery product imports and exports was not appropriate for echinoderms. We are happy to provide you with the data on inspections requests to you and your staff as well.

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**Questions from Senator Duckworth**

**Question 1: On April 12, 2017, a memorandum directing Department of Interior bureaus and offices to submit all grant and cooperative agreements of \$100,000 or greater, or modifications to awards which will result in a total award reaching \$100,000 or greater for that award number, for review. This is already having impacts heritage areas.**

**Given that this funding was appropriated by Congress, I am concerned by the action Interior is taking and how it is impacting the communities these funds were intended for.**

**Can you report provide details regarding who is managing this review process and how long it will take for the reviews to occur and grants to be processed in a timely fashion?**

**Response:** Interior distributes about \$5.5 billion in grants and cooperative agreements every year. In an effort to increase accountability so we know where our taxpayer money is being distributed, we initiated this review. It has been a good way for me to better understand this spending and how it relates to Interior's mission. We have an efficient process in place and the reviews are moving along quickly.

**Question 2: As you are aware, there is an \$11+ billion National Park Service maintenance backlog. What specific plans does the Administration have on how this backlog will be addressed in the Administration's infrastructure proposal?**

**Response:** As demonstrated in the President's budget, it is important that we take care of the assets that we own. The Department continues to work with the Administration on the enactment of this budget and any infrastructure proposals moving forward.

**Question 3: During your confirmation, you shared that the National Park Service deferred maintenance backlog is a priority, as is supporting front line park rangers. However, the Administration's budget cuts the park service operating budget by 8% and reduces staff levels by over 1,200 people.**

**How can we reasonably expect the maintenance backlog to be addressed if we're cutting the staff that would do this work?**

**How are you proposing to support front line rangers when you are seeking to cut more than 1,200 rangers?**

**Response:** I believe that we have to realign our employees to make sure that the focus is at the field level, rather than in layers of bureaucracy. This type of realignment will support the

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proposals contained in the 2018 budget, particularly those prioritizing taking care of the assets we currently own.

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**Questions from Senator Portman**

**Question 1: I've been working on the implementation of my World War II Memorial Prayer Act, which was signed into law by President Obama on June 30, 2014. This Act requires the Interior Department to install a plaque at the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. with the prayer that President Roosevelt gave to the nation on the morning of D-Day. I understand that the site for the plaque has been approved, but that the design of the plaque is still being reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission. I have written to the Park Service to encourage them to move as quickly as possible to complete this project. Can you make the completion of this project a priority for the National Park Service?**

**Response:** I support the placement of this plaque, and the sacrifices of all our men and women who defend our nation. I understand that the design concepts for the plaque were favorably presented to the National Capital Planning Commission in July. After approval of a final design, the NPS will work the Friends of WWII to complete this commemoration as expeditiously as possible.

**Question 2: The Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, which includes the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, has been on the National Park Service's Tentative List for consideration to become a World Heritage site since 2008. I understand that the next step is to issue a Federal Register notice to announce the nomination. Will you work with the Ohio partners to ensure that this nomination process continues to move forward?**

**Response:** I look forward to learning more about this nomination and reviewing it as the process moves forward.

**Question 3: As you know, my National Park Service Centennial Act was signed into law on December 16, 2017 (P.L. 114-289). The Act provides a reliable funding stream for the Centennial Challenge fund and the Park Foundation's endowment. I know you have been pushing for the change in the senior pass fee in a timely manner and I believe it will actually result in a leverage of greater than 2 to 1 over time. Can you please provide an update on when the Department will announce and implement that increase providing crucial funding to the parks?**

**Response:** The Senior Pass increase took effect across the country on August 28, 2017. The National Park Service issued a news release with this information on July 10, 2017.

**Question 4: I've worked with Senator Mark Warner to introduce the National Park Service Legacy Act, which will provide funds from oil and gas leases for backlog projects. I was encouraged during your nomination hearing when you said you'd like to see NPS**



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infrastructure projects included in the infrastructure reform plan, and hope that my National Park Service Legacy Act can help with this effort. As the infrastructure package hopefully begins to take shape do you believe that the Legacy Act could be an option to provide additional funding to reduce the deferred maintenance backlog? Can you help us in the Administration with these efforts?

**Response:** Yes, I look forward to working with you, Congress, and the Administration on options to address and reduce the deferred maintenance backlog at the Department.

**Question 5:**As you know, another program that is funded by oil and gas leases is the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Like you, I support the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and I support its permanent reauthorization. The LWCF is also of particular interest in my home state of Ohio, as two factory buildings at the Dayton Aviation Heritage site were included on the list of LWCF priorities in the previous budget request. These factory buildings were where the Wright Brothers built the first airplane, and are the oldest surviving aviation-related buildings in the U.S. It is important to have these buildings acquired by the Park Service so that our aviation heritage is preserved and can be taught to future generations. I am aware that the President's budget proposes to severely cut LWCF and does not include any new land acquisition projects. However, Congress appropriated \$400 million for LWCF in the FY17 Omnibus bill. If Congress continues to appropriate money for LWCF, will you support the activities of the LWCF program?

**Response:** The President's budget proposes to balance the federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. In addition, as I pointed out in the hearing, the LWCF program is funded by offshore royalties and revenues, which dropped significantly throughout the last administration. In order to support future funding for programs like LWCF, we must prioritize our revenue portfolio as well, which this budget does. That said, I continue to support the LWCF and will work with Congress to ensure support for our federal lands.

**Question 6:** Finally, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey both play critical roles in protecting the Great Lakes from invasive species, such as Asian Carp, zebra mussels, and sea lamprey. In the FY17 Omnibus bill, Congress appropriated \$16.6 million to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to combat invasive species and \$5.6 million for USGS to continue monitoring and track the movement of Asian Carp to ensure they do not enter the Great Lakes. The Fish and Wildlife Service and USGS have also been important partners in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in combating invasive species and restoring habitats and toxic areas. Will you make sure that the Interior Department

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**continues its role in protecting the Great Lakes if Congress provides the necessary resources?**

**Response:** Interior continues to play a leadership role in addressing invasive species issues, including serving as Co-Chair to the National Invasive Species Council and as one of several federal agencies that directs funding toward programs and projects in the Great Lakes watershed, including those that address aquatic invasive species, toxics and contaminated sediments, nonpoint source pollution, and habitat protection and restoration. Interior will continue ongoing efforts in the Great Lakes watershed consistent with the funding directives provided by Congress.

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**Questions from Senator Cortez Masto**

**Question 1: : The Southern Nevada Public Management Act is an important program for Nevada that both my colleague Senator Heller and I support. Since its enactment, SNPLMA has funded over 1,200 projects, with notable investments across Southern Nevada, Lake Tahoe and Lake Mead. It is a critical program that represents a successful compromise by Nevadans to allow the Department to sell public land and invest that money in public works and conservation projects. The Administration's proposed budget cancels SNPLMA's account balances, which I believe is an affront to a state's ability to compromise and improve its economy. Secretary, you believe that states should be able to determine local issues and once they do that their compromises should be respected. So, do you support cancelling the funds for this account?**

**Response:** The budget makes tough choices that are necessary to achieve balance in ten years. The budget does not eliminate the SNPLMA program, which will continue, but proposes cancelling \$230 million from the unobligated balances in the SNPLMA special account. This will not affect projects that are underway or have already been approved by the Bureau.

**Question 2: Why do you believe the Administration is undermining a successful compromise by Nevadans?**

**Response:** As indicated in the response to the previous question, the SNPLMA program is not being eliminated. It will continue. The budget proposes to realize \$230 million in savings from unobligated balances in the SNPLMA special account.

**Question 3: The 2018 budget will encourage the Department to be more innovative and look at creative ways to manage programs and increase revenues, which will have a longer-term positive impact on economic output. Interior can and will maintain its assets, offer a world-class experience on public lands, and promote economic growth by developing public-private partnerships, encouraging responsible energy development, and reorganizing the workforce. In particular, as I said at my hearing, we need to provide our front lines with the appropriate resources to get the job done.**

**Response:** The 2018 budget will encourage the Department to be more innovative and look at creative ways to manage programs and increase revenues, which will have a longer-term positive impact on economic output. Interior can and will maintain its assets, offer a world-class experience on public lands, and promote economic growth by developing public-private partnerships, encouraging responsible energy development, and reorganizing the workforce. In

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particular, as I said at my hearing, we need to provide our front lines with the appropriate resources to get the job done.

**Question 4: The Administration's budget proposes \$68 million in cuts to the PILT Program. PILT funds are utilized in 49 states and nearly every Congressional district. Nevada is ranked tenth in the amount of PILT funding received. In 2016, Nye County received \$3.1 million through PILT, and a 10 percent cut would significantly affect their ability to provide critical services to their communities, like education, law enforcement, and healthcare systems. Do you believe these cuts are fair to rural areas? How would you address critical cuts to this program if the President's budget is implemented by Congress?**

**Response:** The FY 2018 request budgets responsibly for the PILT program. The request for PILT is about 12 percent below the 2016 enacted level, commensurate with the overall reduction for Interior programs in the FY 2018 Budget. The \$397 million in discretionary funding requested for PILT reflects this Administration's support to the communities neighboring our public lands without assuming enactment of separate authorizing legislation.

**Question 5: Your agency, like so many others within the federal government, have dealt with continued shortfalls in budgetary funding, which has hurt our government's ability to partner effectively with private industry and have inflicted negative impacts on our nation's parks, forests and wildlife conservation programs. Do you believe more funding would allow the Interior Department to be a better partner to industry and the taxpayer?**

**Response:** This Administration has committed to making the tough decisions that will lead to a balanced budget. Most of the cuts in this budget reflect duplication, a shift in priority or they are activities where partners can step in. In addition, we are prioritizing our assets and personnel in the field and are currently going through a process to determine how to shift resources from Washington, D.C. to the units in the field and how public private partnerships can best benefit our public lands.

**Question 6: Do you believe budgetary and staff cuts have contributed to permitting delays that have caused concern for mining interests and other industries in Nevada?**

**Response:** As part of my review of the Department and its organization, we are looking at how to better leverage and align bureau resources in the field, cut duplication, and allocate assets and personnel more effectively, and as necessary to accomplish this important work.

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**Question 7: As you know, Secretary Zinke, I have voiced my concern about the executive order that requires a review of many national monuments across the country, including Gold Butte and Basin and Range in my state of Nevada. I submitted a comment letter to emphasize the economic and environmental benefits as well as the widespread support of both of these monuments. Will you take into consideration the economic benefit and widespread support of Nevada's monuments before making a decision?**

**Response:** Yes, public comment is an essential component of Interior's process to develop recommendations on monuments currently under review, and thank you for your letter stating your position on the monuments under review in Nevada. In this review, we have sought input on multiple levels, from locals on the ground and county commissioners to Governors, tribal leaders, and Members of Congress, and took all this information into consideration before making a recommendation. A draft report was submitted to the President on August 24, 2017.

**Question 8: If the Administration's proposed budget cuts were implemented, how would they impact the review process moving forward?**

**Response:** The proposed budget would not impact the current review process.

**Question 9: Will the budget cuts affect the Department's partnership with the Resource Advisory Councils or other opportunities for the public to weigh in?**

**Response:** As I have said before, it is important for local stakeholders to have a voice in the decision-making process. Public participation will remain a critical way to ensure local residents who actually live near the land and deal directly with the consequences of land use decisions are heard before those decisions are made.

**Question 10: How will we maintain visitation as sites like Gold Butte and Basin and Range when the Administration's budget aims to cut over 1200 staff positions?**

**Response:** Across the Department, 2018 funding for land management operations is reduced by approximately seven percent, which will impact staffing levels. However, the budget also prioritizes funding non-recurring infrastructure projects that will help address the deferred maintenance backlog. In the long run, this will create a better experience for visitors and staff by ensuring that facilities are safe, functional, and can be operated more efficiently.

**Question 11: As you know, Nevada's public lands are critical to the character and economy of my state. Outdoor recreation brings \$14.9 billion in consumer spending to Nevada, with well over half the population recreating outside each year. At Lake Mead alone, visitors**

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**spent over \$312 million in 2016. Without question, parks are a boon to local economies with over 330 million visits and nearly \$35 billion to the national economy last year. Despite this growth, and the need for federal support, I see that the administration's budget slashes funding for the National Park Service. Why cut funding when parks are so clearly beneficial to our national economy?**

**Response:** I am a strong supporter of the National Parks. The President's budget proposes to balance the federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes our maintenance backlog and focuses on taking care of the assets we currently own.

**Question 12: How long do you think the current infrastructure will last with an increased number of visitors?**

**Response:** National parks are a national treasure, and providing access to these federal lands for a range of activities is of critical importance to the Administration. I believe that it is important to get our children and grandchildren out to our parks and public lands to experience our collective heritage. By focusing on priorities to ensure that we take care of the assets we currently own, as this budget does, we make sure that these lands will be maintained and available for future generations.

**Question 13: Currently, 80% of trail maintenance in Nevada is accomplished by volunteers through organizations such as Friends of Nevada Wilderness and Great Basin Institute. While these partnerships are crucial for maintenance and we appreciate their incredible work, there is widespread concerns that with further cuts, the responsibility of all maintenance will fall on the shoulders on these organizations. Can you address some of those concerns?**

**Response:** It is important that our parks and public lands continue to offer a world-class experience, and I intend to ensure that they are maintained to accomplish that. I believe we can be an efficient manager and a good neighbor at the same time. As mentioned before, we are prioritizing our assets and personnel in the field and are currently going through a process to determine how to shift resources from Washington, D.C. to the units in the field and how public private partnerships can best benefit our public lands.

**Question 14: For nearly 40 years, LWCF has funded land acquisition, conserved threatened and endangered species, and provided critical grants to states. Just in Clark County, Nevada, there are 89 projects that received 13 million dollars of LWCF funding and have improved our natural areas and local economies, including conservation of**

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**recreation areas, local trails, and wildlife refuges. The Administration's budget proposes a cut from \$400 million to \$64 million – that's a decrease of more than 80 percent for a fund that has benefitted conservation and recreation in every state. Do you believe these cuts will destabilize conservation and our rural local economies? How would your agency be able to administer this program with these cuts?**

**Response:** In recent years, a large portion of the Department's LWCF portfolio has focused on projects to acquire new lands both on federal lands and through grants to states. The President's budget proposes to balance the federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and many maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. Land acquisition is an area where the Department has flexibility to defer expenditures. In addition, as I pointed out in the hearing, the LWCF program is funded by offshore royalties and revenues, which dropped significantly throughout the last administration. In order to support future funding for programs like LWCF, we must prioritize our revenue portfolio as well, which this budget does.

**Question 15: Nevada is second in the nation in the amount of geothermal power produced and has the country's largest untapped geothermal resources. However, the Administration's budget repeals the 25 percent share of revenue distribution for geothermal royalties that is provided to counties. These royalties provide up to 10% of revenues to counties in Nevada, so the repeal would be harmful to our local economies. This is another example of how the President's budget hurts rural communities so why is the Administration repealing these payments? Can you address these concerns?**

**Response:** The budget proposal to eliminate the geothermal revenue payments to counties is intended to restore the historic formula for the disposition of federal geothermal leasing revenues, which is 50 percent to the states and 50 percent to the Treasury.

**Question 16: [Missing]**

**Question 17: I understand that the Duck Valley Shoshone Paiute Tribe has a strong relationship with the BLM regional office in Idaho where they meet monthly and collaborate effectively to protect cultural resources. However, the Tribe has mentioned to me that they do not have a similar relationship with the BLM office in Nevada. Will the Administration's proposed budget cuts impact BLM's ability to engage with Tribes in a way that satisfies their obligation?**

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**Response:** I believe sovereignty must mean something and that self-determination is a priority. The review process that is underway will determine how we shift assets from Washington to the units in the field to ensure relationships with local communities and tribes improve. Our goal is to push assets and personnel where they are needed most so the Department, and its bureaus, can more effectively carry out its mission.

**Question 18: Can you please explain how these cuts will not endanger these communities?**

**Response:** The Administration's budget prioritizes self-governance and self-determination, and focuses funding in Indian country on core service activities, fully funding the costs for tribes to administer programs for themselves, and maintains essential management functions for tribal resources, among other things.

**Question 19: President Trump's proposed budget would eliminate the Interior's National Heritage Areas Program, cutting nearly \$20 million from the program. National Heritage Areas are large lived-in landscapes with strong rooting in rural communities and towns. Since 2012, the Great Basin Heritage Area Partnership in White Pine County, Nevada has provided substantial funding and support to the Ely Renaissance Society, the Ely Shoshone Tribe, the Nevada Northern Railway, the White Pine Public Museum, and others projects totaling \$280,736. Those funds have been matched from local stakeholders with non-federal funding and labor valuing \$1.9 million for White Pine County residents. Why has the Administration proposed to eliminate funding to this program?**

**Response:** National Heritage Areas provide cultural benefits, and are an example of the benefits of partnerships. However, the President's budget proposes to balance the federal government's budget by 2027, in order to do this priorities must be identified. The 2018 budget prioritizes taking care of the assets we currently own. The majority of ongoing operational requirements cannot be deferred and maintenance needs have been postponed for too long. The National Heritage Area Program can be supported through partnerships and community engagement.

**Question 20: The budget proposes to eliminate appropriations language that prevents the sale and destruction of healthy, unadoptable wild horses, giving BLM the ability to conduct sales without limitation. I believe that we need to engage with all the key stakeholders in Nevada to address this issue before these actions are taken. Will you work with me to explore a task force to effectively engage with stakeholders and come up with a comprehensive and humane solution to wild horse overpopulation concerns?**

**Response:** The current program is not sustainable, and a new approach is needed. Rangelands are not capable of handling this overpopulation and as a consequence these ecosystems are out of balance. In addition, program costs have more than doubled due to the cost to care for excess



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horses and burros located off-range. To meet the Department's long-term goal of realigning program costs and animal populations to fulfil our statutory obligation to maintain appropriate herd management levels, BLM must have the necessary tools as provided in the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act to manage on-range herds more effectively and humanely.

**Question 21: How will the proposed budget cuts impact the existing conservation measures set forward in the BLM and Forest Service plans for sage grouse? And, how will they impact efforts to replace those conservation measures? What will that process entail?**

**Response:** Like you, my desire is to avoid listing the sage-grouse and I have made a commitment to work with states and other local partners to accomplish this goal. The Budget requests over \$75 million in the Bureau's Wildlife Management program to continue work on the sage landscape, maintaining the Department's commitment to the sage-grouse and its habitat. The interagency team established by my Secretarial Order has carried out its initial review directly in conjunction with states. The recommendations detailed within the report provide a path forward for additional work to be carried out in consultation with states and local communities.