

**From:** [Mott, Seth](#)  
**To:** [Steve Delehanty](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: FYI - Questions for the Record from HNRC Hearing on Department of the Interior's Spending Priorities and the President's Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Request  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 16, 2017 9:51:33 AM  
**Attachments:** [HNRC.BOR.USGS.OIA.FWS.BOEM.BSEE.BIA.Responses.for.Dept.Review.docx](#)

---

FYI

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Pool, Taylor** <[taylor\\_pool@fws.gov](mailto:taylor_pool@fws.gov)>  
**Date:** Wed, Aug 16, 2017 at 10:32 AM  
**Subject:** FYI - Questions for the Record from HNRC Hearing on Department of the Interior's Spending Priorities and the President's Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Request  
**To:** Benjamin Tuggle <[benjamin\\_tuggle@fws.gov](mailto:benjamin_tuggle@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Seth Mott <[seth\\_mott@fws.gov](mailto:seth_mott@fws.gov)>

Hi Dr. Tuggle,

The Department is circulating draft responses to the QFRs from the Secretary's June 22 budget hearing before House Natural Resources Committee. There are a lot of question of interest to the Service, including a few that we helped draft. As it pertains to Science Applications, there is a relevant question/response on page 8 of 29 under the heading "Science-Based Decision Making" that I wanted to point out for your awareness.

Given the high level of the policy within the responses, it does not appear that there is much room for comment/edits on these. However, please let me know by COB Thursday 5/17 if you have critical edits.

Thanks,  
Taylor

---

Taylor Pool  
Congressional/Legislative Affairs Specialist  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
E: [taylor\\_pool@fws.gov](mailto:taylor_pool@fws.gov)  
O: 703-358-2128  
C: 202-657-2989

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL REFERRAL**

**Date:** August 15, 2017

**Subject:** HRG #49 - INTERIOR (BOR/USGS/OIA/FWS/BOEM/BSEE/BIA)  
Questions for the Record from 6/22/17 Hearing  
Re: Department of the Interior's Spending Priorities and the President's Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Request

**These responses pertain to the following Departmental bureaus: Bureau of Reclamation, USGS, Office of Insular Affairs, FWS, BOEM, BSEE and Bureau of Indian Affairs.**

--

Seth Mott, Acting Assistant Director  
Science Applications  
202-208-7165 / 703-358-1969  
[seth\\_mott@fws.gov](mailto:seth_mott@fws.gov)  
U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE  
MS: SA 3N091  
5275 LEESBURG PIKE  
FALLS CHURCH, VA 22041-3803

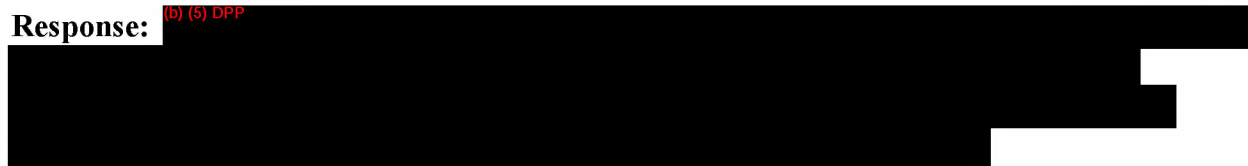
**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

**Questions from Rep. McClintock**

**Question 1.** There are some 150 conservation corps across the nation. These corps have a long tradition of stewardship of our public lands and waters. By partnering with corps, land managers leverage their budgets with cost-effective projects that reduce the multi-billion-dollar maintenance backlog, remediate wildfires, curb the spread of invasive species, improve access to public lands, build and maintain trails, and ensure good fish and wildlife habitat for enthusiasts, hunters, and anglers.

**Q: Are you aware of any impediments that have limited growth of this program?**

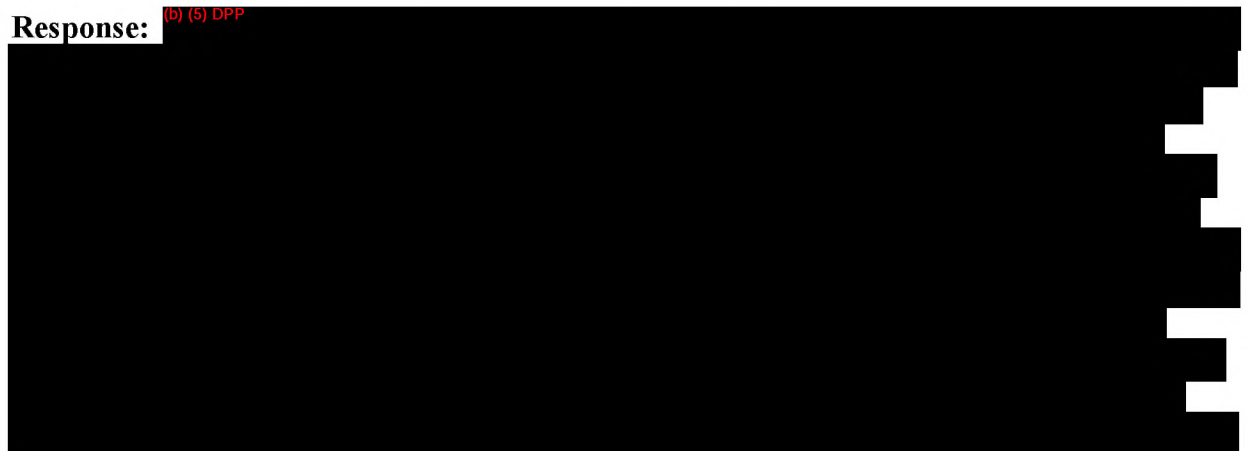
**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the entire response text, with the text "(b) (5) DPP" written in red at the top left corner of the redaction.

**Questions from Rep. LaMalfa**

**Question 1.** As we all know, the Endangered Species Act is in need of significant reforms, with the success rate of species' moving from endangered to fully recovered around 1-3%. In my district, the Service's own scientists recommended delisting the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle, yet it remains listed today and imposes major costs to flood protection and other projects. Listing of other species, like the Sierra Nevada Yellow-legged Frog, has resulted in such low-impact events as a trail run being canceled. Federal agencies actually believed humans running on existing trails could negatively impact listed frogs. What is the Fish and Wildlife Service doing to review the listing status for threatened or endangered species which have been recommended for delisting, like the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle?

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the entire response text, with the text "(b) (5) DPP" written in red at the top left corner of the redaction.

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 2.** Last year, we saw the Fish & Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service issue conflicting requirements for the operation of Shasta Dam, one demanding higher water releases, the other demanding lower releases. These proposals would have dramatically reduced water supplies for homes and farms.

Could centralizing responsibility for ESA-listed species with the Fish & Wildlife Service prevent conflicting directives like these? For example, having the Fish & Wildlife Service subsume the responsibilities of the National Marine Fisheries Service?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Questions from Rep. Jody Hice**

**Question 1.** As you are aware, President Trump has asked for an all-hands-on-deck approach to offshore research and development, and you yourself signed an order on May 1, 2017 directing Interior to look at the entire Gulf of Mexico region for potential drilling sites. However, A.M. Kurta, acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, sent a letter to Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL), on April 26, 2017, stating his belief that military training and related exercises in the eastern Gulf necessitate a continuation of Congress's ban on drilling in the area.

- **Eastern Gulf Of Mexico – Shared Use with DOD**

➤ As a Navy SEAL Commander, you have a strong understanding of the need for military preparedness. How do you reconcile the mission of your Department to promote responsible federal offshore development with the DOD's mission of military preparedness? Can the two coexist if the moratorium is lifted?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

(b) (5) DPP

➤ In the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, military preparedness operations coincide with potential oil and gas development. This requires constant, open communication and an understanding and respect for the mission of both Departments occupying the land. How will you coordinate with the DOD to ensure mutual, responsible management of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

- **The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management’s (BOEM) “National Oil and Gas Leasing Program” (previously known as the 5-Year Plan)**

➤ You’ve called a new five year plan, now known as a “National Oil and Gas Leasing Program.” How will the new plan differ from the previously approved plan?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

- **Atlantic**

➤ In order to responsibly manage our nation’s natural resources, we must first account for what we have. Please explain the importance of conducting geological and geophysical research in our offshore areas, and how we can use this information to make informed decisions regarding resource management.

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

(b) (5) DPP



**Questions from Rep. Thompson**

**Question 1.** Last year, EPA finalized a rule on Privately-Owned Treatment Works (POTWs). Since then, I've weighed in with the agency to express great concern over its impact on treatment facilities in Pennsylvania that appear to be inadvertently caught up in the regulation. Although the rule was intended for unconventional production, I've heard a lot of concern that water derived from conventional production will also be subject to the regulation due to a lack of definitions and the individual basins cited in the rule.

What is EPA doing to correct this problem and ensure that conventionally-derived wastewater is not subject to the POTW rule?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 2.** I would like to request an update on the status of the remedial action at the Folcroft Landfill, a property which was purchased by the US Department of Interior in 1980 and incorporated into the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge under legislative authority provided by Congress. In 2001, the property was added to the National Priorities List (NPL). Congress initially appropriated \$11 million for the development of the Refuge, and then increased funding to \$19.5 million for expansion, including acquisition of the Folcroft Landfill (PL 96-315). The legislative history of the Refuge indicates that Congress intended a portion of the funds to be directed toward investigation and on-going maintenance of the Folcroft Landfill (PL 99-191). Guidance from the EPA requires the Agency to consider future land use in the selection of a remedy. What communication has the Department of Interior had with the EPA regarding the selection of a remedy for the Folcroft Landfill? What remedies are under consideration? Are the remedies under consideration by EPA consistent with the future use of the property outlined in the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge's 2012 Comprehensive Conservation Plan?

**Question 3.** What is the timeline for implementation of a remedy? What role will the Department of Interior play in the remediation effort? Can you provide an estimate of the cost of the remediation? What will be the contribution from the Department of Interior and other federal agencies that have been identified as potentially responsible parties? Are any of the \$19.5 million appropriated by Congress still available to fund this effort, or will additional appropriations be necessary?

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

**Question 4.** What measures must be put in place by the Department of Interior to maintain the property once remediation efforts have been completed?

**Response to Qs 2-4:** (b) (5) DPP [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

**Questions for the Record  
House Natural Resources Committee  
Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request  
June 22, 2017**

(b) (5) DPP



**Questions from Ranking Member Grijalva**

Tribal Climate Resilience:

**Question 2.** Are American Indian and Native Alaskan communities facing profound challenges to their culture, economies, and livelihoods because of climate change?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 3.** Would you agree that the federal government has an essential and unique role in helping tribal nations prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change on their land and natural resources?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 4.** Why does this budget eliminate the Tribal Climate Resilience program?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 5.** The Bureau of Indian Affairs' Tribal Climate Resilience Program was one of the few programs at BIA with the word 'climate' in its name. As of last week, the word 'climate' has

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

been removed from the title of the BIA program. Did you direct your staff to not use "climate change," in written memos, briefings or other written communication?

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

**Question 6. Did the President direct your staff to not use "climate change," in written memos, briefings or other written communication?**

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

Regional Biosecurity Plan for Micronesia and Hawaii:

Question 7. The National Invasive Species Council is located within the Department of the Interior and is responsible for coordinating the Regional Biosecurity Plan for Micronesia and Hawaii. Will you commit the Department of Interior to full participation in implementing the Regional Biosecurity Plan?

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

Poaching and Trafficking:

**Question 14.** As a Member of the House of Representatives and now as the Secretary you have said that the Interior Department needs more scientists in the field and fewer lawyers. However your Fiscal Year 2018 budget request decreases full-time staff for the Bureau of Land Management by 11.3%, the National Park Service by 6.4%, and the U.S. Geological Survey by 13.7%. Employees of these bureaus include biologists, geologists, chemists, forestry technicians, and other scientists. Conversely, the Office of the Solicitor – an office comprised almost entirely of lawyers – would add three full-time positions under your proposed budget. How does your budget proposal comport with your statements that the Department needs more scientists and fewer lawyers?

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

Science-based Decision-making:

**Question 15.** Mr. Secretary, when you were still on this Committee, you stated in a 2015 hearing that with respect to the Interior Department’s decision-making process, “I think we need to be more science-based and less politics, and that would be helpful.” However your budget includes significant cuts to numerous scientific programs that conduct vital scientific work. Do you have any science-based evidence that the threats facing our nation’s land, water, and wildlife from climate change have decreased to the point that these cuts are appropriate?

- a. Do you believe that the cuts within your budget will allow decisions made by the Department of the Interior to be more science-based?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

**Question 16.** Your proposed budget includes significant funding cuts for programs that fight poaching and trafficking. It reduces the Fish and Wildlife Service law enforcement and international affairs accounts, and slashes the Multinational Species Conservation Funds by nearly 20 percent. Do you have a plan for how to continue making progress in the fight against wildlife crime under these circumstances?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

Damage to National Wildlife Refuge Property:

**Question 17.** Your budget includes a request for authority for the Fish and Wildlife Service to seek compensation from people who damage National Wildlife Refuge property. Both the Park Service and NOAA have similar authority. Why is it important for the Fish & Wildlife Service to have this authority?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

(b) (5) DPP



**National Wildlife Refuge System:**

**Question 18.** Do you believe the proposed funding levels for Refuges are consistent with your vision of increasing access to America's public lands, while also managing and expanding the Refuge System to protect and enhance America's wildlife resources?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs:**

**Question 19.** When do you anticipate we will see the nomination of an Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs? This is a priority for the people of the territories because it represents the equal treatment of their concerns with the Department's other programs and priorities.

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 20.** According to news reports, around three dozen Senior Executive Service (SES) staff within the Interior Department have received notices that they have been reassigned and transferred into new positions within the Agency. At the earliest possible time that you can disclose information while respecting privacy concerns, please provide answers to the following questions:

- a. How many SES employees have been sent letters informing them that they were being transferred into new positions?
- b. How many of these employees requested those transfers, and with how many employees were the transfers discussed, before the letters were sent?
- c. What are the names and current positions of the employees who have received these letters? What positions are they being transferred into?
- d. Please provide copies of these letters.

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

- e. Of the individuals who have already received letters, identify those that work in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area and are being moved to positions outside the Washington D.C. metropolitan area.
- f. Of the individuals who have already received letters, identify those that work outside the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and are being moved to positions inside the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.
- g. Of the individuals who have already received letters, identify those that work in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and are being reassigned to positions within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.
- h. Once the complete relocation costs for each employee being relocated is known, including any assistance for selling an employee's home, please provide the complete permanent change of station (PSC) move figures for each employee, their spouse, and dependents to the Committee.
- i. Will you be sending similar letters to more SES employees in the coming months?
- j. In total, how many SES employees do you expect to reassign and transfer?
- k. As is recommended by the Office of Personnel Management, are these reassignments linked to individual Executive Development Plans for each employee? For any employee where the transfer is consistent with information contained in their Executive Development Plan, please provide information on how the transfer is consistent with the Plan to the Committee.
- l. For any employee where the transfer is not consistent with information contained in their Executive Development Plan, please provide the analysis that was conducted or information that was reviewed in order to make the determination to transfer that employee.
- m. Do you subscribe to the belief that there is a "deep state" operating within the Federal Government?
- n. Are Interior Department SES employees a part of the "deep state"?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

Department Staffing:

**Question 28.** I'm concerned about the March Executive Order to reorganize the Executive branch and subsequent Office of Management and Budget (OMB) memo on reducing the federal

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

workforce (M-17-22) and what that could mean for Interior Department agencies. In the case of the National Park Service, I understand that staff levels have been in decline, there are now more than 1,500 vacant positions, and that Interior has frozen hiring for certain positions as a result of this effort. Secretary Zinke, for your confirmation hearing both your verbal and written testimony indicated one of your priorities is to ensure that park rangers have the resources they need, but this exercise threatens that priority.

- a. What has the Department's position been on this government reform effort in conversations with OMB?
- b. Can you commit to following through on your commitment to support staff by ensuring that the Park Service and other Interior agencies aren't further understaffed as a result of this exercise?

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP



**Question 29.** The March Executive Order on reorganizing the Executive branch and subsequent OMB and DOI guidance concern me a great deal. It appears the exercise could be used as an excuse to further understaff the park service and other land agencies and cut funding for certain programs the administration may not find to be critical. The OMB guidance on reducing the federal workforce (M-17-22) directs agencies to use the FY18 and FY19 budget processes to drive workforce reductions. However while there may well be carefully considered opportunities for reform within Interior agencies, I'd like to remind you that funding levels for staff and specific agency programs are ultimately up to the appropriations committees. To prematurely attempt some of these reorganization efforts that would be subject to the decision of appropriators without our consultation and consent would be a poor use of agency resources. Can you commit to soon updating us in writing on the status of this exercise and commit to be in regular contact with us in regard to it?

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP



**Question 30.** What is the current status of the workforce reduction exercise subsequent to the March executive order to reorganize the Executive branch and subsequent OMB memo on reducing the federal workforce (M-17-22)?

- a. Please list by agency the programs you will seek to eliminate or merge for each Interior agency.

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

b. Please list the staff positions you intend to eliminate for each Interior agency.

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

Interior Department Hiring Strategy:

**Question 32.** Mr. Secretary, you've ordered a hiring freeze for any position in Washington DC and Denver. Interior agencies are also subject to a freeze for any GS-12 and higher position, no matter the location. Your office must approve waivers to fill these positions and has placed a priority on positions involved in oil and gas development. You have repeatedly said that Interior's energy strategy will be "all of the above," yet you have singled out positions focused on oil and gas development for priority hiring. While some agencies within Interior are centered on energy development, the NPS and FWS are not, and it goes against their mission. It is concerning that you are putting a priority on oil and gas development to fill jobs within these agencies. Are you trying to change the mission of these two agencies with this new hiring strategy?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

Endangered Species Act:

**Question 39.** Mr. Secretary, you have said recently that you think the states should play a larger role in species conservation but this budget proposal absolutely savages the funding streams that make this cooperative work possible, including cutting Cooperative Endangered Species Fund grants by \$34 million to one-third of the current level. You can prevent listing species by doing proactive conservation work or you can recover species once they require listing; however, this budget cuts funding for both. Do you believe that these funding levels are adequate to help states be full partners in conserving fish and wildlife?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 40.** Along these same lines, you have long opposed the historic conservation agreement reached between states and the Obama Administration to protect the greater sage-grouse and avoid an ESA listing. Your recent Secretarial Order requiring a review of the plans threatens to turn this conservation success story into a failure, and this budget is not helping. The budget cuts \$11.5m – 22 percent – from BLM’s sage-grouse conservation efforts.

- a. Do you think these cuts will have a negative impact on greater sage-grouse populations and sagebrush habitat?
- b. Do you think these cuts make it more likely that the bird will require the protections of the ESA?
- c. Do you oppose the inclusion of a rider on your Department’s appropriations bill that would prevent you from listing the species even if it is shown that such an action is necessary to prevent extinction?
- d. FY 17 funding for sage-grouse conservation efforts is already out the door but your recent order has created uncertainty about if and how it will be used. Are BLM field offices authorized to use that funding for sage-grouse conservation efforts under the current conservation plan, or has your office ordered them to stop?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 41.** As a Member of Congress, you voted against the protection of threatened and endangered species 100 percent of the time. You are now in charge of implementing the Endangered Species Act, not undermining it, but this budget shows that you may not have fully made that transition yet.

Even though it is widely known that current funding levels are insufficient to make significant progress toward protecting and restoring imperiled fish and wildlife populations, this proposal

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

slashes funding for species listing, recovery, habitat protection, consultation, and work with states and tribes to prevent listings.

Given that we are in the middle of a global extinction crisis driven by irresponsible land use and climate change do you believe that this budget will allow you to meet your statutory obligations under the ESA to prevent extinction and recover threatened and endangered species?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 42.** Republican Members of this Committee, including you in the past, have argued that the ESA is a failure because more species are not being delisted. This is in spite of the fact that the ESA has been 99 percent effective in preventing species from going extinct.

In order to be delisted, though, species must be shown by the best available science to have recovered. Before the process of recovery can even begin, species must first be listed so that they can receive the protections of the Act just to “stop the bleeding.” This is the simple, stepwise fashion in which the ESA works.

Unfortunately, this budget proposes to cut the listing program by more than 17 percent. It also proposes to cut the recovery program by more than \$3.5 million.

- a. Do you believe these cuts will allow you to meet your obligations to give species ESA protections when it is show that it is scientifically necessary?
- b. Do you believe this budget will achieve your goal of delisting more species without running afoul of the requirement to base decisions on the best available science?
- c. Do you believe that at these funding levels FWS will be able to avoid losing lawsuits over failing to take required actions to protect species in a timely manner?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

(b) (5) DPP



**Review of 5-Year Offshore Leasing Program, as Instructed by April 28th Executive Order:**

The Department of the Interior has begun a review of the 5-year offshore leasing program, as instructed by President Trump's April 28, 2017, offshore energy executive order. Given the likely adverse impacts of this action on the environment, fishing, and tourism industries, I am deeply concerned with President Trump's decision to lift the leasing ban in regions currently closed to development. Secretary Zine, please address the following:

**Question 58.** The executive order directs a review of areas currently closed off from drilling, including the Mid- and South Atlantic, the Chukchi Sea, and the Beaufort Sea. Please provide all risk assessments and analysis undertaken to determine how lifting the ban on drilling in these areas would not adversely affect fragile ecosystems or damage fishing, restaurant, or tourism interests.

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 59.** What additional actions or plans does the Department intend to take to protect coastal communities from the possibility of another catastrophic oil spill, particularly in light of the unique challenges of responding to an oil spill in these environments?

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

a. For example, has the Department conducted any analysis with or otherwise coordinated with the Coast Guard to ensure that Area Contingency plans are sufficiently robust to address an oil spill the magnitude of the Deepwater Horizon?

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

[Redacted response text]

**Question 60.** The March 16, 2017 budget blueprint calls for a \$1.5 billion, or 12 percent, reduction to the Department's fiscal year 2018 budget. How would these proposed cuts affect the ability of the Department to draft a new 5-year plan, which presumably would also include oil spill response and mitigation plans, while administering an even greater number of oil and gas leases?

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

[Redacted response text]

**Question 61.** American fishing, tourism, and recreation industries rely on a healthy ocean ecosystem to generate billions of dollars each year in economic activity. If this review goes forward, please indicate what additional analysis the Department intends to conduct to determine what safeguards will be required to protect these industries.

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

[Redacted response text]

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 62.** Given the significant growth of U.S. oil production on both private and public lands over the past seven years, the U.S. is now one of the largest producers of crude oil in the world, and the world leader in total liquid hydrocarbon production. In fact, oversupply in oil production has led the U.S. to begin exporting crude oil for the first time in generations. Further, gas prices in 2016 were the lowest they have been in more than a decade. Given these market conditions, why is a new planning process required now, as opposed to waiting only three years to continue on the normal planning schedule?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 63.** Under the current leasing program, approximately 70 percent of the economically recoverable offshore resources in the OCS are available to the oil and gas industry for leasing. In the Gulf of Mexico, companies hold leases on approximately 16 million acres, but have developed only approximately 26 percent of that acreage. Please provide all the assessments and analysis the Department has undertaken to determine the need for additional leasing acreage at this time.

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

(b) (5) DPP



Secretarial Order 3349 and Executive Order 13783:

On March 29, 2017, you signed Secretarial Order Number 3349, which was designed to implement the directive in the Executive Order of March 28, 2017 (Executive Order 13783), to “review all existing regulations, orders, guidance documents, policies, and any other similar agency actions...that potentially burden the development or use of domestically produced energy resources.” The Executive Order and Secretarial Order also rescinded or ordered the rescission of a number of important Obama Administration climate and mitigation policies, lifted the moratorium on new coal leases, and ordered the review of four commonsense regulations affecting oil and gas operations on National Park Service lands, fish and wildlife refuges, and other public lands. In order to understand the potentially massive changes in public lands policy and management that will arise from the Executive Order and Secretarial Order, please provide the following documents described in Secretarial Order 3349:

**Question 64.** The list of all Department Actions related to mitigation policies provided to the Deputy Secretary by each bureau and office, as required to be completed by April 12, 2017, as per Section 5(a)(i) of Secretarial Order 3349;

**Question 65.** The list of all Department Actions related to climate change policies provided to the Deputy Secretary by each bureau and office, as required to be completed by April 12, 2017, as per Section 5(b)(i) of Secretarial Order 3349;

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**


**Question 66.** The report from the Director, Bureau of Land Management, on the rule entitled, "Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation," as required to be provided to the Assistant Secretary – Land and Minerals Management by April 19, 2017, per Section 5(c)(ii) of Secretarial Order 3349;

**Question 67.** The report from the Director, National Park Service, on the rule entitled, "General Provisions and Non-Federal Oil and Gas Rights," as required to be provided to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks by April 19, 2017, per Section 5(c)(iii) of Secretarial Order 3349;

**Question 68.** The report from the Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, on the rule entitled, "Management of Non-Federal Oil and Gas Rights," as required to be provided to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks by April 19, 2017, per Section 5(c)(iv) of Secretarial Order 3349; and

**Question 69.** The reports from each bureau and office head provided to the Deputy Secretary that identify all existing Department Actions that "potentially burden...the development or utilization of domestically produced energy resources," as required by April 19, 2017, per Section 5(c)(v) of Secretarial Order 3349.

**Response Qs 64-69:** (b) (5) DPP



DOI Memo Directing Bureau and Acting Directors to Report to the Acting Deputy Secretary:

On April 12, 2017, you sent a memo to the Assistant Secretaries of the Department of the Interior directing them to ensure that all bureau heads and office directors report to the Acting Deputy Secretary on all "proposed decisions" that have "nationwide, regional, or statewide impacts," and that decisions may not be made until the Acting Deputy Secretary has "reviewed the report and provided clearance." The memo also directs bureau heads and office directors to report to the Acting Deputy Secretary all Fiscal Year 2017 grants and cooperative agreements of \$100,000 or greater before the final award is issued, in order to "assess how we are aligning our grants and cooperative agreements to Department priorities."

In order for us to better understand how this memo will affect Departmental policy and operations, please provide answers to the following questions:

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

**Question 70.** Has any guidance been provided to bureau heads or office directors regarding what constitutes a decision with "nationwide, regional, or statewide impacts"? If so, please provide that guidance.

**Question 71.** Is the Acting Deputy Secretary maintaining approval or modification authority over the grants, cooperative agreements, and decisions that are provided to him as a result of the April 12 memo?


**Question 72.** Has the Acting Deputy Secretary denied any grants or cooperative agreements, or required or requested changes to the terms of those grants or cooperative agreements, as a result of information provided to him as a result of the April 12 memo? If so, please identify those grants or cooperative agreements, and information regarding why the Acting Deputy Secretary denied or required or requested changes to those, as appropriate.

**Question 73.** Who in the Secretary's office or Deputy Secretary's office, other than the Acting Deputy Secretary, is also reviewing the information provided to the Acting Deputy Secretary as a result of the April 12 memo?

**Question 75.** For all grants and cooperative agreements awarded between April 12 and the date of this letter, please provide the information under items #1 through #11 as provided to the Acting Deputy Secretary under the "Template for Data Call on Fiscal Year 2017 Grants and Cooperative Agreement Awards."

**Question 76.** For all records of decision issued after review by the Acting Deputy Secretary between April 12 and the date of this letter, please provide all information provided to the Acting Deputy Secretary under the "Template for Data Call on Proposed Records of Decision and Other Significant Decision Documents."

**Response Qs 70-76:** (b) (5) DPP



DOI Regulations Task Force:

On April 24, 2017, an article in E&E News reported that you had appointed a task force for abolishing regulations, consisting of five political "beachhead" employees and one career staffer, but no Senate-confirmed personnel and no one with clear technical expertise in land management, wildlife management, environmental protection, or safety regulation. While the task force is required under Executive Order 13777, there is no reference to this task force in your Secretarial Order implementing Executive Order 13783 (SO 3349), and no information provided about how this task force will operate, where it fits in the regulatory review process created by SO 3349, whether any of its activities or decisions will be transparent and be made

**Questions for the Record  
House Natural Resources Committee  
Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request  
June 22, 2017**

known to the public, whether it will accept public comments, or any other logistical detail. In order to better understand this task force and how it will operate, please provide the following information:

**Question 77.** The names of each member of the task force and their qualifications for analyzing regulations related to land management, wildlife management, environmental protection, and safety;

**Question 78.** How career staff with technical expertise in land management, wildlife management, environmental protection, and safety will be involved in the operations of the task force;

**Question 79.** How the task force fits into the process laid out in Secretarial Order 3349;

**Question 80.** The timeline for the regulatory task force to make decisions;

**Question 81.** The criteria to be used by the task force to make decisions related to whether or not to modify or rescind existing regulations;

**Question 82.** Whether there will be any public meetings of the task force and whether or not the task force will accept comments from the public; and

**Question 83.** Whether any documents created by the task force are intended to be made public once the task force has completed its work.

**Response Qs 77-83:**

(b) (5) DPP



U.S.G.S. Climate Change Report:

In May of this year, the Washington Post reported that officials within the Interior Department ordered employees at the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to remove a reference to climate change from a press release announcing the publication of a new study on sea level rise and coastal flooding. Scrubbing this press release over the objections of some of the scientists involved in the study deprived media outlets and the general public of the context of the study. In order to prevent future abuses of this kind, I request responses to the following questions:

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

**Question 84.** Did Acting Deputy Secretary of the Interior James Cason, or anyone in his office, or at the Office of Management and Budget, review the USGS press release before it was issued?

**Question 85.** If so, who made the decision to remove the line reported by the authors of the study to read: “Global climate change drives sea-level rise, increasing the frequency of coastal flooding.”?

**Question 86.** If not, what was the highest level Departmental office that reviewed and edited the press release?

**Response to Qs 84-86:**

(b) (5) DPP

**Questions from Rep. Brown**

Environmental Justice:

**Question 1.** Mr. Secretary, decades of studies have proved that minority, low-income, rural, tribal and indigenous populations face tremendous environmental and health disparities. Do you agree?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

**Question 2.** In 1994 President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898 requiring that the U.S. EPA and other federal agencies implement environmental justice policies. That order required all federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice considerations in their missions, develop strategies to address disproportionate impacts to minority and low-income people from their activities, and coordinate the development of data and research on these topics. Do you support the goals of this order?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 3.** Under your budget, this order faces its gravest assault. The Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC), part of the Office of the Secretary, is the focal point for implementing the Department's environmental justice policy, including the environmental justice executive order, and ensuring compliance. The proposed budget would cut the Office of the Secretary – your office – by over 80%. How can a cut this large not undermine the environment and health of minority, low-income, rural Americans, tribal and indigenous communities?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Questions from Rep. Torres**

Tribal Concerns:

**Question 1.** Mr. Secretary, there has been some disturbing rhetoric coming from some members of this committee, as well as some in the Administration, attacking the sovereignty of tribes and questioning the recognition process and the land into trust process. Will you reaffirm your and the Department's commitment to its trust responsibility to all tribes that are currently federally recognized, including the ability to take land into trust?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Question 2.** To follow up on that, I would like you to address the ongoing issue that is the Carcieri decision. That decision has troubled Indian Country since it came down 2009, and has left many land decisions in limbo. It's been almost 10 years now – do you agree that Congress needs to resolve the Carcieri issue once and for all?

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

3. The Tiwahe Initiative has proven to be exceptionally successful at assisting tribes in addressing the inter-related problems of poverty, violence, substance, abuse and their associated outcomes like youth suicide. Tiwahe is currently in its pilot phase and impacting 61 tribes directly, with an additional \$24 million in Tiwahe Social Services and ICWA funds distributed to tribes across the country. In spite of this success, Tiwahe is being targeted for elimination. Can you tell us if the Department will be able to support the Tiwahe Initiative's success through its continued funding?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP

**Questions from Rep. Hanabusa**

Hazards Programs:

**Question 1.** The U.S. Geological Survey's natural hazards programs are critical for communities across our nation to understand the science behind natural disasters and how we can best prepare for them. The Earthquake Hazards Program and the Volcano Hazards Program as examples today, since they are of particular importance to Hawaii. These programs use science and technology to monitor signs of activity to help ensure the public is given ample warning of an earthquake, tsunami, or volcanic activity, so that proper precautions can be taken to reduce the amount of damage and loss of lives.

Your budget seems to reflect the opposite. On cuts to the Earthquake Hazards Program, it says "This reduction would diminish the EHP's ability to execute its core activities..." On cuts in the Volcano Hazards Programs, it says "This reduction would diminish the VHP's ability to execute its core activities to provide forecasts and warnings of hazardous volcanic activity at volcanoes in the United States with the current monitoring networks," among other things.

These proposed cuts are deeply concerning. Although they are not large, they could have serious consequences, especially if these cuts hinder these programs' abilities to "execute its core activities".

- a. Please explain the rationale behind these proposed cuts.

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



Invasive Species:

**Question 2.** Invasive species is a global problem that will continue to invade our lands and waters with devastating economic and ecological impacts unless we actively protect our resources. It has been shown time and again that prevention of invasive species saves far more money than trying to eradicate the pest after it has been introduced. It is problematic to cut invasive species funding, seeing as invasive species continue to cost the United States more than \$120 billion in damages annually. (Pimental et al. 2005).

Invasive species management requires a holistic effort due to the impacts to both aquatic and terrestrial resources. Especially troubling in the budget are reductions for the Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Insular Affairs, and National Parks Service for invasive species management, while funding is increased by more than \$4.5 million for the Bureau of Reclamation, which focuses on dams. While there are invasive species in dams, the issues plague areas on both land and in the sea. The funding shift away from offices within the Department of Interior that have jurisdiction over areas with invasive species and to an agency with little expertise in this area would be an inefficient waste of taxpayer money.

My home state of Hawaii, for example, has very unique ecosystems that are particularly vulnerable to invasive species. We require robust invasive species funding to prevent further damage from such species as the Brown Tree Snake, Little Fire Ant, Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle, and the Coqui frog, much of which is best managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

- a. Given that the threat from invasive species is not diminished and reducing prevention will cost us much more in eradication, can you explain the rationale behind cuts to invasive species management?
- b. How is the Bureau of Reclamation going to effectively manage invasive species in places like Hawaii where the Bureau has no presence?

**Response:**

(b) (5) DPP



**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

(b) (5) DPP



**Questions from Rep. Sablan**

**Question 1.** In 2005, Interior's Office of Insular Affairs started a competitive system for allocating among the U.S. territories \$27.72 million in Covenant Funds that originally all went to the Northern Marianas to help build our public infrastructure. The Northern Marianas currently receives only about a third of the money. The competition is largely based on financial management criteria. Financial management is important but so is infrastructure. According to the EPA, Saipan, the main island in the Northern Marianas, is the only U.S. municipality without 24-hour potable water. That is a serious health concern. Isn't it time to look at new criteria for the \$27.72 million in Marianas Covenant Funds, so that public health and safety needs are prioritized?

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP



**Question 2.** OIA budget justifications for FY 2018 tout the importance of various programs including the Technical and Maintenance Assistance Programs, the Brown Tree Snake Control and Coral Reef Initiatives, and the Empowering Insular Communities program. Yet the request includes steep funding cuts to each of these programs. I appreciate the need to control spending, but these across-the-board cuts would likely end up costing much more, both at the federal and local levels, if programs are not properly implemented. The Brown Tree Snake Control Program costs a few million, but if these snakes spread, as they have on Guam, the cost in damage to electrical systems and the extermination of native endangered birds would cost tens of millions

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

or more. Isn't it a wiser use of taxpayers' money to prevent problems than to try to fix them after the damage is done?

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

**Question 3:** Territorial Representatives Bordallo, Radewagen, Plaskett, and I sent you a letter dated March 9, 2017, asking that you retain the position of Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas. We have not received a response to date. The Office of Insular Affairs has administrative responsibility for coordinating federal policy in the U.S. territories of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Keeping the position of Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas, equal to other Assistant Secretaries in the Department, is an important symbol of respect for our constituents as it shows their concerns are taken as seriously as citizens residing in the states, and insular area issues are viewed equally significant as other issues under the Department's jurisdiction. In your reorganization of the Interior Department, will you retain the position of Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas?

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

**Question 4.** In my reply to your letter soliciting comments to assist your review of the Marianas Trench National Monument under Executive Order 13792, I wrote about the promises made to the people of the Northern Mariana Islands that remain unfulfilled. For years, we have been urging Interior to produce the management plan, required when President Bush created the Monument. The plan is key to fishing and other resource use in the Monument, public education and outreach, and the development of a Monument visitors center. Please provide an update on any progress and a specific date for issuance of the Monument Management Plan the Fish and Wildlife Service has been working on for eight years now.

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

(b) (5) DPP



**Questions from Rep. Huffman**

**Question 3.** California salmon runs have collapsed during the recent drought, in both the Klamath and Bay-Delta watersheds. This year marked the lowest they have been on record, prompting a complete fisheries closure on the Klamath.

- i. How will your agency prioritize salmon restoration in the coming fiscal year? How is this need reflected in the Department of the Interior's budget, as proposed in the President's Budget Request?
- ii. Does the Department of the Interior plan to participate in financing the proposed Delta tunnels (California WaterFix) that are currently under evaluation by federal regulators and the Bureau of Reclamation?
- iii. Is there a finance plan for those tunnels? If so, can you provide it to us?
- iv. Are any Bureau of Reclamation contractors ready to pay their proportional share of the cost of the tunnels?
- v. How confident are you that this project will not result in the large cost overruns that are commonly characterize large infrastructure projects?
- vi. Is the Bureau of Reclamation considering asking federal taxpayers to subsidize the construction of a Shasta Dam raise?


**Response to i:**



(b) (5) DPP

**Questions for the Record**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Hearing on the FY 2018 Budget Request**  
**June 22, 2017**

**Response to ii-iv:** (b) (5) DPP



**Questions from Rep. Napolitano**

**Question 5.** Many water agencies in the arid west are looking towards recycled water projects as the most cost effective solution to drought management; do you believe we should start to refocus our investments towards recycled water?

- a. What does President Trump's budget do to support recycled water projects?
- b. How can an increase in funding impact the amount of water projects that can be introduced in the drought-stricken west?

**Response:** (b) (5) DPP

