

Questions for the Record
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Hearing on Nomination of Katharine MacGregor
to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior
April 2, 2025

Questions from Ranking Member Martin Heinrich

Question 1: The United States' relationships with the Freely Associated States—the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau—are vital strategic assets in countering the Chinese government’s growing influence in the Pacific region. In recognition of this, Congress approved funding to implement the Compacts of Free Association over the next 20 years, placing the Department of the Interior in a crucial oversight role.

- Will you commit to upholding the law in the implementation of the bipartisan Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2024?

Response: Yes, if confirmed I commit to complying with the law. I understand the long-standing relationship the United States has with the Freely Associated States and that the Department plays an important role in promoting a strong, mutually beneficial partnership with each of these sovereign Pacific Island nations.

- Given the Administration’s plans to reduce the federal workforce, will you ensure that the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau do not suffer disproportionate or adverse impacts as the Department implements the Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2024?

Response: President Trump is committed to making the federal government more efficient and more accountable. If I am confirmed, my role will be to ensure that we meet our mission and implement President Trump’s agenda in accordance with the laws passed by Congress.

- How will you guarantee that any workforce reductions do not undermine U.S. national security interests in the Indo-Pacific?

Response: Protecting the security of the American people and American interests is a central role of the Federal government and one that I take very seriously. If I am confirmed, I will ensure that the Department works closely with the State Department and other agencies on strategic goals in the Indo-Pacific.

Question 2: As the science arm of the Interior Department, the U.S. Geological Survey provides critical data to safeguard resources, protect communities from natural disasters, and ensure policies are driven by facts, not politics. The DOGE’s termination of over 30 USGS site leases—mainly affecting the Water Resources Mission Area and Water Science Centers—threatens real-time monitoring of floods, droughts, and water quality. This directly impacts public safety and water managers’ ability to make informed decisions.

- Given these disruptions to mission-critical work, what is your plan to provide USGS scientists with the necessary facilities to continue their science and research without interruption?

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- How will you ensure that decisions like this one do not compromise the quality and credibility of USGS science?

Response: As I have not been in the building, I have not been briefed on the status of USGS facilities and personnel. If I am confirmed, I will be briefed on this ongoing matter and be prepared for further discussion. I will follow the law to ensure the important work at the USGS continues efficiently.

Question 3: Since 1980, Congress has authorized the Bureau of Reclamation's Rural Water Program to develop municipal and industrial water supply projects in rural areas and on Tribal lands. In this current fiscal year, the Bureau of Reclamation allocated funding to five rural water projects in South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana and New Mexico. A rural water project in New Mexico, the Eastern New Mexico Rural Water System, is critical to sustaining a potable water system for Eastern New Mexico communities and Cannon Air Force Base. This project is counting on existing Bureau of Reclamation contracts and appropriations to match state and local funding and meet loan payment obligations by 2030.

- Will you commit to honor the Eastern New Mexico Rural Water System project contracts that obligate the Bureau of Reclamation to provide the federal matching dollars towards the project's completion?

Response: I understand the importance and challenges of providing reliable water supplies for rural and tribal communities. If confirmed, look forward to working with you and your colleagues on this issue.

Question 4: Will you commit that funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will continue to be made available for projects and activities associated with water conservation and drought mitigation to help address the growing uncertainty and risk related to available water supplies across the Western United States?

Question 5: Will you commit to uphold the funding that has been under contract or obligated by the Bureau of Reclamation for projects in the Colorado River Basin from the Inflation Reduction Act?

Question 6: Will you commit to uphold the funding that has been awarded by the Bureau of Reclamation for projects in the Colorado River Basin from the Inflation Reduction Act?

Response to questions 4, 5 and 6: I am not at the Department and not aware of details of the specific funding concerns you have raised. As I stated in my hearing, I know the Colorado River provides water to more than 40 million people and that the Department play an important role. If confirmed, I commit to looking into these questions, and I will be happy to continue the discussion.

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Questions from Senator Ron Wyden

Question 1: We treasure our coastline in Oregon and have long opposed irresponsible development no matter the type. Will you work with me to ensure that local opposition to offshore oil drilling is respected and lease sales are not offered off the West Coast ?

Response: Input from local communities, Tribes, and governors is an important part of the offshore planning process. If I am confirmed, I commit to work with you on this and other issues of importance to your office.

Question 2: Will you ensure values like drinking water and recreation get the same attention as extractive uses when the Interior is managing public lands?

Response: Congress has directed the Department to manage its public lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, ranging from energy development, livestock grazing, mining, watershed protection, hunting, fishing, and other forms of recreation. If confirmed I will follow the law in the management and use of our nation's public lands and the values you have mentioned will receive full consideration.

Question 3: There is strong local support for Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in Oregon. Will you honor that local support promise not to diminish the boundary of the designated area?

Response: Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument was established, and later expanded, by presidential proclamation under the Antiquities Act of 1906. As I mentioned during the hearing, decisions on establishing, revising, or revoking national monuments under the Antiquities Act are delegated solely to the President of the United States. If the President makes a decision on this or any other national monument, I commit to following all applicable laws.

Question 4: I feel strongly that divesting from public lands is a huge mistake. Do you agree that maintaining these lands in public ownership with limited exceptions for the benefit of all Americans is the best public policy?

Response: Ultimately, Congress has already provided the Department of the Interior with several legal authorities when considering the sale of multiple-use lands. One example, the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA), has proven to be an incredible lawful tool provided by Congress to ensure public land availability for important public purposes, including housing, while also generating billions of dollars that have benefited education, conservation, and important water facilities in the State of Nevada. If confirmed, I will follow all applicable laws related to this matter.

Question 5: Wildfire risk on public lands is driven in large part by low value hazardous fuels that have not been removed because it is not commercially viable to do so without added

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incentive. How will you ensure this work is prioritized and not forgotten in favor of commercial timber sales that may not result in the same wildfire risk reduction and forest restoration benefits to nearby communities and other users?

Response: As we discussed at the hearing, we are in agreement on the need to reduce hazardous fuels. The consequences of wildland fire are devastating. It is critical that the Department's land managers utilize all the tools in the toolbox to address wildfire risk, including reducing fuel loads and promoting active range and forest management, including those you mentioned in the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 and the many additional efficiencies that we discussed in our meeting. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department works closely with interagency, state, tribal, and local partners to prevent, respond to, and recover from, wildland fires.

Questions from Senator Maria Cantwell

Question 1: National Park Service Staffing

Ms. MacGregor, in February 2025, the administration fired approximately 1,000 National Park Service employees across the country. As a result of the administration's staffing reductions, the Park Service lost 9% of its staff in a matter of weeks. In Washington state, at least 31 probationary employees were fired.

- Will these significant indiscriminate firings of our federal public lands workers result in overgrown, unmanaged, and inaccessible trails?
- Will you commit to ensuring that the National Park Service has sufficient staffing, on par with at least fiscal year 2023 staffing numbers, to operate the parks and ensure a positive visitor experience?

Response: As I am not currently employed by the federal government, I have not had the opportunity to be briefed on the status of National Park Service personnel. I have worked with and appreciate the contributions of the men and women who maintain our national parks and public lands across the nation. If I am confirmed, I commit to ensuring that decisions made by the Department comply with the law as we implement President Trump's policy objectives.

Question 2: NPS Seasonal Employees

Ms. MacGregor, in January 2025, the Trump Administration announced a hiring freeze for all federal employees, meaning that vacant positions—like seasonal park staff—cannot be filled. Our national parks rely on seasonal employees to bear the burden of deferred maintenance work.

- If seasonal staff can't be hired in time, are you concerned that some park services could be limited, and emergency response times will increase?
- If seasonal staff can't be hired in time, are you concerned we could see a spike in maintenance needs, trash collection issues, and more and negatively impact visitor experience?

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- What will you do, as Deputy Secretary, to ensure that the seasonal park staff are hired and onboarded in a timely manner, ahead of the recreation season?

Response: If I am confirmed, I commit to working with you on staffing at the Department to make sure we have what we need to ensure the government works efficiently for the American people.

Question 3: Outdoor Recreation

Ms. MacGregor, nearly 20% of land in the United States is managed by the Department of Interior and a significant amount is used for outdoor recreation, which is a major economic driver, especially in Washington state. Outdoor recreation generates \$1.2 trillion in economic output every year and accounts for 5 million jobs.

Many rural gateway communities that depend on outdoor access and recreation—whether from hotels, restaurants, outfitters, guides, or tour operators—to carry their economy.

- Will you support efforts to protect more public lands and waters through designations such as wild and scenic designations -- that will support the outdoor recreation economy and create jobs in gateway communities?
- What will you do, as Deputy Secretary, to ensure that gateway communities and their outdoor recreation economies are not negatively impacted by DOGE and the administration's policies at the Interior Department?

Response: I firmly believe that access to our nation's public lands for recreational activities is one of the greatest stewardship services that Interior provides for the American people – especially given that outdoor recreation has a direct health benefit. As just one of the millions of people who visit our parks, public lands, and waters regularly to recreate, I also fully understand the importance of the local economies who ultimately support an enhanced visitor experience. If confirmed, I will look for ways to enhance public access to federal lands which will benefit local and state economies.

Question 4: Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

Ms. MacGregor, the Great American Outdoors Act ensured that historic promise of LWCF's funding — which comes from the royalties paid into the U.S. Treasury from oil and gas drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf, not from taxpayer dollars — is allocated to priorities at the state and local level as well as to protecting our National Parks, Wildlife Refuge and other public lands in a locally-driven, bottom-up process according to where there is most need, urgency, and opportunity to work with willing landowners to protect the best of this country. It is highly competitive and projects always garner broad support in order to succeed.

- Do you agree that the LWCF has a long track record of empowering communities, creating more access for hunting, fishing, and recreation, and driving successful conservation outcomes?
- How do you view LWCF as a tool to maximize recreation and sportsmen opportunities and improve federal land management?

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- Will you commit to continuing to support full use of the annual \$900 million of mandatory spending for the LWCF?

Response: Since its enactment in 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has provided funds to federal, state, and local governments for the acquisition of interests in land and water for recreation and conservation purposes and has created opportunities that strengthened the health and vitality of Americans through recreational access, including hunting and fishing. Funding for the LWCF comes mainly from receipts from offshore oil and gas development on the Outer Continental Shelf. In 2020, President Trump signed the Great American Outdoors Act, providing for mandatory funding from the LWCF at \$900 million annually. The LWCF has been used to expand opportunities for hunting and fishing, among other recreational activities. If confirmed, I will commit to implementing the law as enacted by Congress.

Question 5: Great American Outdoors Act

Ms. MacGregor, under the first Trump administration, Congress passed the largest investment in public lands in US history—the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). Unfortunately, critical conservation funding authorized through GAOA expires at the conclusion of fiscal year 2025. GAOA is a critical tool to address the decades-old maintenance backlog on public lands.

- Do I have your commitment to work with interested Energy and Natural Resources Committee members to push for reauthorization of the GAOA before it expires?

Planned Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) projects likely cannot happen without the federal staff to do the work. These federal awards go to essential public lands projects, completed largely with the help of private contractors who are hired to do the work. Since many of these federal funding awards have already been announced—and in some cases, already broken ground—these contractors likely already have agreements with the federal agencies to complete these projects.

- Will you commit to releasing all the awarded and obligated GAOA funds, that have yet to be dispersed, in a timely manner?

Response: President Trump signed the Great American Outdoors Act into law in 2020, and I was proud to have played a part in its passage. As I mentioned at my hearing, if confirmed, I have a lot to learn about the further implementation of this law, as I understand that the Department’s current maintenance backlog has increased significantly, rather than being reduced as contemplated by the law. If I am confirmed, I will learn more about the current status of the program and commit to working with you and to comply with the law.

Question 6: Tribal Trust and Treaty Obligation

Ms. MacGregor, in Washington state our tribal nations’ treaty rights are sacrosanct. Please provide separate answers for each of the following questions:

- Do you commit to upholding the United States’ treaty responsibilities to tribal nations?

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- What are your plans to ensure that the United States lives up to its trust responsibilities to tribal nations?
- If confirmed, what specific steps will you take to ensure that Tribal consultation is a meaningful and enforceable process, rather than a box checking formality?
- If confirmed, will you commit to working with Tribes on a government-to-government basis, engaging in meaningful Tribal consultation on federal policies that impact them, and honoring Tribal sovereignty?

Response: I am grateful to have had the opportunity to engage with Tribes while previously at the Department and believe that tribal input is important. If I am confirmed, I commit to upholding the United States' treaty responsibilities, consistent with the Department's legal authorities. I agree with Secretary Burgum that Tribes are often in the best position to explain how their needs can be met, and so if confirmed, I will work with Tribes and consult with them to address issues that impact them.

- In the 118th Congress, several bills were introduced that would ratify tribal water rights settlements. What would be your criteria for evaluating and making recommendations to the Administration on proposed tribal water rights settlements?

Response: Tribal water rights settlements can help provide water supply certainty to tribal and non-tribal water users and resolve claims among many parties. I understand the importance of this critical resource and look forward to working with you on this important issue.

- Will you commit to improving the implementation and enforcement of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and the protection of Tribal cultural heritage from looting, destruction, trafficking, and exploitation pursuant to federal law?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to working with the Department of Justice as appropriate in their prosecution of criminal violations of the NAGPRA.

- In 2021, the Department launched the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. Since then, the Department has held listening sessions across the country and produced two volumes of findings. If confirmed, will you commit to working with Tribes and advocates to continuing this work, including advocating for additional funding in the President's budget and supporting federal legislation?

Response: I am aware of the findings of this initiative. If confirmed, I commit to working with you on this issue.

Question 7: Tribal Public Safety

Ms. MacGregor, public safety remains one of the most pressing issues facing Tribes throughout the country, the needs range from the need for more officers, detention, and judges.

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- Can you commit that you will work with the Administration to address this need in the President's Budget and by removing red tape facing our Tribal law enforcement agencies?
- Do you support the Tribal Law Enforcement Parity Act that will allow Tribes to recruit and retain more Tribal law enforcement officers?
- If confirmed, what steps would you take to improve public safety on Tribal lands, particularly as it relates to the Department of the Interior's collaboration with the Department of Justice?
- If confirmed, what specific steps will you take to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples, particularly as it concerns improve interagency coordination on public safety and those agencies' investigative capacity to ensure Tribal and BIA law enforcement have the resources and support they need?

Response: As I mentioned at the hearing, I was proud to work on President Trump's initiative to address missing and murdered Native American and Alaska Native women and proud that several of the cold case offices we established have solved a number of cases. But there remains much to be done. If confirmed, I will better my understanding of these challenges and work with the Secretary and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to develop solutions that prioritize public safety.

Question 8: Tribal Fee-to-Trust Process

Ms. MacGregor, do you plan to take any actions that would change the fee-to-trust process for tribal nations?

- Will you commit to continuing to process fee-to-trust applications?

Response: If confirmed, I will share the Secretary's commitment to continue processing fee-to-trust applications in accordance with all applicable law.

Question 9: Manhattan Project National Historical Park

Ms. MacGregor, Congress established the Manhattan Project National Historical Park in the Fiscal Year 2015 National Defense Authorization Act. This park is a unique partnership between the Department of Energy, which manages the facilities and controls access, and the National Park Service (NPS), which leads the interpretation. The park is also unique because it is located at three sites in three different states, including at Hanford in Washington state.

Since the inception of the park almost ten years ago, there has been an intentional effort by NPS, DOE, and the communities to work closely together across the three sites, and to avoid any appearance of preferential treatment towards any particular site. That was part of the rationale for locating the park superintendent in a neutral location, Denver. Recently the communities were informed on very short notice by NPS that the agency is planning on relocating the superintendent position to Santa Fe, in close proximity to the Los Alamos unit of the park. That decision has not been finalized yet, however.

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- Would you please share your thoughts on Interior and the National Parks Service's role in supporting the Manhattan Project National Historical Park?

I have significant concerns that NPS did not discuss this potentially significant change with any of the communities beforehand. The communities near the Hanford and Oak Ridge units of the park have sent letters to the NPS Intermountain Regional Director asking for further discussion before any decisions are made.

- Do I have your commitment that you will look into this issue, and not make any final decisions before the key community stakeholders at all three sites have had the opportunity to learn more about this proposed change, and to provide their input to NPS?

Response: While I am not familiar with the specific issue you raise, I am familiar with the important role the Manhattan Project National Historic Park plays in ensuring our long term understanding of that endeavor and that important time in our nation's strong history. I strongly value local input, and as I stated at my hearing, local involvement is embedded in almost all of the statutes that guide us at the Department. If I am confirmed, I will work to better understand your concerns governing the park's management.

Question 10: Offshore Energy

Ms. MacGregor, I am concerned this Administration's single-minded pursuit of oil and gas development above all else could hurt the outdoor recreation industry. This includes concerns that some decisions will come at the expense of hard-won federal designations that protect our most irreplaceable federal lands and waters.

Protecting our shorelines is also vitally important to a coastal state like mine. An oil spill off our beloved coastline could not only cause terrible environmental damage, but it would also threaten Washington's maritime industry that supports over 174,000 jobs and more than \$45 billion in annual revenue.

- Do you support offshore oil and gas drilling in federal waters off the coast of Washington state or the Western United States?

Response: While I do not agree with the characterization of "single-minded pursuit of oil and gas development above all else," I do understand the importance of the recreation economy to your state. The President has set a policy of encouraging energy exploration and production on federal lands and waters, including on the Outer Continental Shelf, in order to meet the needs of Americans, reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy, and solidify the United States as a global energy leader. If confirmed, I will follow the law to support responsible energy development to meet our nation's energy needs.

Question 11: Wind Energy

Ms. MacGregor, all domestic energy sources, including wind, will be key to meeting upcoming rising energy demand needs.

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- Will you support a timely conclusion of the review of Federal wind leasing and permitting directed by the Presidential Memo that halts all Federal permitting of wind energy, even on private land, until that review is finished?

Response: If I am confirmed, I will comply with President Trump’s directives to meet the energy emergency in accordance with law.

Question 12: Western Water

Ms. MacGregor, Western water policy is going to be one of the most important and challenging issues you will face. In the state of Washington, we have unique water challenges in experiencing extreme flooding in the western half of the state and managing annual droughts that exacerbate water supply for our farmers in the eastern portion of the state. We also generate 60% of our energy from hydropower.

How we manage water is critical and a key to success is working collaboratively with the Bureau of Reclamation and developing consensus from the ground up with communities and water users.

- If confirmed, will you support ground-up, consensus-driven solutions to water management?
- Will you support the development and implementation of technology, like Water A.I., that can better manage water supply, storage and use?

Response: As I said at the hearing, communities across the West depend on getting water policy right. I agree with the Secretary that community-driven consensus is one of the best ways to achieve water supply certainty and that technological innovation can be an important tool.

The Yakima Basin Integrated Plan is a basin wide water project that focuses on balancing and fulfilling the needs of a robust agricultural sector, flood risk management, and salmon recovery. It’s vital the Bureau of Reclamation continues to fund these projects.

- If confirmed, will you work to promote the need for water projects, like the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan and other irrigation and water conservation projects, to be considered in any infrastructure legislation?
- Will you commit to including funding for the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan in the Department of Interior’s proposed budget?

Response: If I am confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan and the needs in the Yakima Basin and to working with you and your colleagues on any potential legislation to address the issues you raise.

Question 13: Fixed Climbing Anchors

Ms. MacGregor, the issue of access to wilderness areas in my state is very important, at places like the Enchantments and North Cascades National Park. The last administration proposed

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controversial policies that would prohibit the use of fixed anchors, a standard climbing safety practice, for rock climbing and mountaineering.

- How do you plan to go forward with the climbing policies that are now required by the EXPLORE Act and can you give me assurances that access to my state's iconic wilderness areas won't be restricted for rock climbers and mountaineers?

Response: The EXPLORE Act recognizes the importance of outdoor recreation on public lands to our economy and to our livelihoods. I share this view and support recreational activities on public lands, including rock climbing. If confirmed, I will ensure the EXPLORE Act is implemented as directed by Congress, consistent with Administration priorities.

Question 14: Federal Landscapes

Ms. MacGregor, under the first Trump administration, Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante national monuments were dramatically reduced—the protected area was cut down by 85%.

These are sacred sites and culturally important lands to tribes in the region. Despite overwhelming support to keep these areas protected, the first Trump administration attempted to roll back protections to allow mining and oil and gas development. President Biden restored full protections to Bears Ears, Grand Staircase Escalante, as well as other monuments that were stripped of protection by the Trump Administration.

- In areas like Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monuments, do you believe the value of the cultural resources, such as sacred sites, and outdoor recreation opportunities these monuments protect outweighs their prospective value from resource extraction?
- Will you commit to honoring and upholding protections for our existing national monuments?

Response: Decisions on establishing, revising, or revoking national monuments under the Antiquities Act of 1906 are delegated solely to the President of the United States. If the President makes a decision on this or any other national monument, I will follow all applicable laws.

Question 15: Protecting Public Lands in Alaska

Ms. MacGregor, I have worked to maintain unique and irreplaceable federal lands in Alaska like the Tongass, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and Bristol Bay, home to the world's largest sockeye salmon run. There have always been development pressures, but what we proved is the relatively small short-term economic returns are not worth hurting places that are like nowhere else in the world, and in the case of Bristol Bay, support a multitude of good fishing jobs.

I bring this up because I know you will be pressed on issues impacting Alaska. I hope you will consider in each case whether short-term and limited economic gains from a resource extraction project outweighs the long-term impacts to developing these areas.

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For example, the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act mandated two lease sales in the Arctic Refuge. The Congressional Budget Office projected the oil and gas leasing program would yield \$2.2 billion. However, both lease sales produced little to no bidding interest and thus revenue. In the first lease sale held during the first Trump Administration, no major oil companies showed up to bid. And the sale generated a mere \$12 million — less than 1% of the total revenue that was projected. The second lease sale held last week was also a complete dud; not a single company bid – big or small. It appears that the private sector realizes that the economics don't support drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

- Given the last two auctions, do you think new lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would result in meaningful private sector interest or substantial revenues?
- If so, why do you believe an additional lease sale would be different than the past two sales?
- Are you aware of the different positions within the Alaska Native community regarding oil and gas development on the Arctic Refuge?
- Will you commit to meeting with all Tribal stakeholders before taking any actions in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

Response: In 2017, Congress was clear in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that the Secretary was to implement an oil and gas leasing program in the Coastal Plain. In 2025, President Trump and Secretary Burgum have issued orders to ensure that the Administration is efficiently and effectively maximizing the development and production of the natural resources located in Alaska. If I am confirmed, I will review recent Departmental actions to implement the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to ensure compliance with law.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is home to one of the most threatened populations of polar bears in the world: the Southern Beaufort Sea population. The Department of the Interior recently announced that it plans to open up the entire Coastal Plain for oil and gas exploration. Polar bear experts, including those within the department, have said that oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development on the Coastal Plain would irreversibly and significantly harm the Coastal Plain's polar bear population. The impacts from seismic exploration alone can cause death and serious injury to denning bears and cubs.

- Are you aware that experts say there is a potential that polar bear deaths caused by oil and gas development on the Coastal Plain could have population-level impacts to the Southern Beaufort Sea population?
- If confirmed, how will you ensure that the Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the Arctic Refuge and threatened polar bears, can fulfill their mission to “to conserve, protect, and enhance... wildlife ... and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people” within the context of the Department's drive to open up all critical polar bear denning habitat to oil and gas development?

Response: Congress has been clear in its directive that the Secretary must implement an oil and gas leasing program in the Coastal Plain. If confirmed, I commit to following the law.

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Question 16: National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska

Ms. MacGregor, The Western Arctic region in Alaska is also a vast one-of-a-kind place with immense oil and gas development pressure. The Western Arctic is a critical carbon sink, premiere tourist destination, contains unparalleled wildlife habitat, and has been home to Indigenous traditions for countless generations. The Department of the Interior recently released a report and guidance that conclude that there cannot be development in the Western Arctic without harm to caribou and other key species, and it names subsistence as a “significant resource value” for the reserve that any development would jeopardize.

- Do you support Tribal subsistence uses of the Western Arctic, including the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A)?
- Are you aware of the different positions within the Alaska Native community regarding oil and gas development on the NPR-A?
- Do you commit to ensuring that Tribal subsistence uses of NPR-A, including caribou are not jeopardized?

Response: I agree with Secretary Burgum that energy production is and will continue to be compatible with Alaska Native subsistence uses.

Question 17: OPEC

Ms. MacGregor, I believe we need to face the reality and be honest that there’s no way we can drill our way to full petroleum energy independence or dominance. Not as long as the OPEC+ cartel can manipulate world supply and hold great sway over our pump prices. Even though we are the world’s largest oil producer, we do not control the vast reserves that other OPEC+ nations do, nor the globally-set price of crude. But we do now at least have alternative fuels. The driver filling up their car with electricity pays just a fraction of what they would pay at a gas station. An Energy Department study found that Washington state EV drivers would save around \$11,000 in fuel costs. Only by finally ending our dependence on fossil fuel can we permanently secure America’s national security, maintain affordable energy prices, and tackle the climate crisis.

- Do you agree that OPEC+ has proven and technically recoverable reserves that greatly outnumber U.S.-controlled reserves?
- Do you agree that the price of crude oil is set on international markets like ICE that respond to the global supply and production of crude oil?
- Do you agree that the above two factors ultimately limits the ability of the U.S. to influence prices when OPEC+ can ramp up and down production as the dominant market supplier?
- Do you agree that the interests of OPEC+ countries like Russia and Iran do not align with our national interest?
- What level of increase in U.S. oil production do you think would meaningfully impact the price of oil and reduce U.S. petroleum prices? Do you believe this will this reduction result in meeting President Trump’s campaign promise to reduce gasoline pump prices to \$2 per gallon?

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- Do you support the trend of domestic oil producers to hold back on additional development and not overextend their assets and balance sheets in order to keep the price of oil at a stable and elevated price?
- If confirmed, how will you help the Interior Department bring affordable fossil fuel alternatives to market?

Response: In accordance with the Executive Order, Secretary Burgum is working with the National Energy Dominance Council to provide recommendations to the President to ensure that the Administration takes appropriate steps to make America energy dominant. I support the goals of the President and the Secretary to expand all forms of reliable and affordable energy production to address the critical domestic and security needs of the nation. What is clear to me based upon recent energy consumption data that is consistently made publicly available by the Energy Information Administration, our nation's citizens rely upon many forms of domestic energy generation/production in their daily lives, a significant portion of which are fossil energy resources. It is my belief that we cannot ignore that fact when working to help meet their energy needs.

Question 18: Unused Oil & Gas Leases

Ms. MacGregor, according to the latest Interior Department data there are over 10 million acres of existing onshore oil and gas leases that have been stockpiled, but are not producing, and there are almost 7,000 approved and available but unused permits to drill on those federal onshore leases.

- Why do you think these leases are not being used to apply for permits to drill?
- Why do you think these permits are not being actually used to drill for more oil and gas?
- The size of these unused lands are about the same as Rhode Island, Delaware, Connecticut, and Hawaii combined, do you think it's reasonable for these public lands to be off limits and unused for years at a time?
- Do you believe the Department of Interior should take a hard look this vast amount of public land being locked-up in unused federal oil and gas leases and consider supporting policies that would relinquish those unused leases if they are impeding other public uses of our federal lands and waters such as hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation?

Response: I do not believe that industry is stockpiling onshore oil and gas leases and APDs, or that oil and gas leases "lock up" federal lands. Onshore oil and gas leases involve significant financial commitment and a lengthy multi-step development process that relies heavily on substantive permitting, science, and engineering to ultimately achieve production in commercial quantities. Moreover, production from these leases generates important revenue that is shared with the States in which the energy is produced, and funds important initiatives such as education, public services, and the Reclamation Fund. These leases come with a time limitation, which ensures timely production or forfeiture. Furthermore, because oil and gas leases generally do not convey the entire surface estate, the BLM still manages the surface and may authorize other multiple-use activities

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concurrent with energy production from the subsurface. I agree with Secretary Burgum that a vibrant energy economy is the best outcome for the American people.

Questions from Senator Mazie Hirono

Question 1: At the end of January President Trump fired numerous Inspectors General, including IG Greenblatt at the Department of the Interior. It is estimated that in FY 2023, OIGs saved \$93.1 billion in taxpayer dollars, while its budget was \$3.5 billion—equating to \$26 saved for every dollar spent. The Inspectors General are trained experts in combatting waste, fraud, and abuse to serve the American public and protect taxpayer dollars. They are not political appointees to serve the whims of a President or Cabinet Secretaries. Do you believe that Inspectors General should be nonpolitical? Is their work important to the functioning of the Department?

Response: The Department of the Interior Office of the Inspector General conducts audits, investigations, and inspections to prevent and detect waste, fraud, and abuse. During my time at the Department, I worked with the OIG on issues of interest at the Department and appreciated the insights provided by the OIG. If I am confirmed, I will again work with the OIG's office on Departmental issues and look forward to doing so.

Question 2: The National Park Service Organic Act requires National Park Service units to be managed “unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations,” while the Federal Lands Policy Management Act (FLPMA) directs BLM to prevent “unnecessary or undue degradation.” How do you plan to balance these responsibilities with the President’s directive to expand mining on public lands?

Response: The importance of ensuring a strong domestic mining capability in our nation cannot be understated. We have seen firsthand as foreign adversaries have used our dependence on foreign sources of critical minerals to gain leverage over our country, ultimately impacting our citizens. I firmly believe that we can continue to maintain the protections that Congress has directed, while also harnessing the unique geology located within our nation’s public lands to ensure an outcome that thoughtfully addresses the long-term needs of the American people.

Question 3: Secretary Burgum’s Secretarial Order on "Unleashing American Energy" calls for a review of withdrawn lands to reduce burdens on mining. If this review leads to lifting protections near units of the National Park Service, how will you ensure compliance with the Organic Act’s conservation mandate, including the conservation of resources that cross park boundaries, like water? Do you commit to ensuring that the National Park Service has the necessary staff to consult on mining activities near National Park Service units if protections are lifted?

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Response: I am not in a position to speculate on the recommendations that Secretary Burgum submits to the President. I can commit that if I am confirmed, I will comply with applicable law.

Question 4: The Mining in the Parks Act of 1976 prohibited new mine claims in national parks, yet over 600 pre-existing claims remain, according to some estimates. If a claimant within a national park moves forward with mineral exploration, like what is allegedly occurring at Mojave National Preserve, will you ensure the National Park Service fully applies the Organic Act's impairment standard before approving a mine plan of operations? Do you commit to ensuring that the National Park Service has the necessary staff to review and sign off on activities proposed by claimants within units of the National Park Service?

Response: As you note, the Mining in the Parks Act expressly recognizes valid existing rights on mining claims. As I am not currently at the Department, I am not versed in the number or extent of mining claims within National Parks. However, if confirmed, I will commit to following this law and others in their applicability to any valid existing rights.

Question 5: Many national parks, particularly in the arid West, depend on groundwater and surface water sources that extend beyond their boundaries. How will you ensure that mining operations outside of parks do not deplete or contaminate these critical water resources?

Response: If confirmed, I will continue the Department's mandate to ensure any lawfully approved extraction activity operates in accordance with applicable federal laws and regulations.

Question 6: Uranium mining near Grand Canyon National Park, lithium exploration near Death Valley, and rare earth element exploration in Mojave National Preserve all highlight the growing tension between mineral development and park protection. Should economic interests in mining ever outweigh the protection of these special places?

Response: Secretary Burgum has made clear that under his leadership at the Department, there will be a renewed focus on securing American energy dominance and responsible stewardship of our public lands and resources. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that as the Department delivers on the President's agenda to meet our growing energy needs, it does so in a manner that leverages our resources responsibly in accordance with the law.

Question 7: Will you commit to consulting with the National Park Service before recommending any changes to withdrawn lands that could impact units of the National Park Service?

Response: If I am confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the men and women of the National Park Service.

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Questions from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Question 1: When you were previously with the Interior Department in the first Trump Administration, you worked on the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and you have spoken publicly about how important that work was to you.

On February 8 of this year, I found out that the Trump administration took the Not Invisible Act Commission Report off of the DOJ website in order to comply with an executive order related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Donald Trump himself signed the Not Invisible Act into law and this report contains valuable recommendations for how to address the MMIW crisis.

If confirmed, will you commit to prioritizing that the directives of the Not Invisible Act continue to be observed, including by working across the Administration to re-post the Not Invisible Act Commission Report on federal websites?

Response: If confirmed, as I mentioned during the hearing, I will continue to support the Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives initiative established under President Trump. I'm not familiar with your concerns regarding the Department of Justice website, but I will work with you to ensure that this issue remains a priority.

Question 2: For years, I have advocated for a state-wide Resource Management Plan (RMP), in order to allow for a comprehensive, science-based approach to holistically manage BLM lands across the state.

Currently, 12 RMPs are in effect, with some completed over 36 years ago. These plans are out of date, impacting BLM's multiple-use management mission across the state.

If confirmed, will you work with the BLM's State Office in Nevada to create a statewide RMP?

Response: I understand the importance of having resource management plans that reflect the current needs of the nation. If confirmed, I will support BLM's review of resource management plans in accordance with law.

Question 3: In February, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum issued Secretarial Order 3418, titled "Unleashing American Energy." This order instructed the Department to conduct a review of national monument designations.

If confirmed, can you commit to respecting the wishes of local communities to preserve these national monuments, including the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument and others in Nevada?

Would you push back against President Trump if he decided to revoke Monument status against the wishes of local stakeholders?

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Response: Decisions on establishing, revising, or revoking national monuments under the Antiquities Act are delegated solely to the President of the United States. If the President makes a decision on this or any other national monument, I will follow all applicable laws.

Question 4: The Department of the Interior (DOI) simply does not have enough staff necessary to carry out all aspects of its missions. Tasks like hazardous fuels management, habitat restoration, and permitting energy projects require a well-trained, experienced, and motivated workforce.

The Trump Administration does not seem to value the work that these employees do. Buyout offers, mass layoffs with short notice, and inconsistent firing and hiring policies have caused mass uncertainty. This confusion and lack of support for employees to perform their duties threatens public safety, economic development, outdoor recreation, and species conservation.

From your perspective, what impacts do these workforce uncertainties pose on public safety, visitor experience, and regional economic impact? If confirmed, will you commit to prioritizing that these critical services and roles are reinstated?

Response: In my previous service at the Department of the Interior, I recognized and appreciated the contributions of many federal employees with whom I worked. I understand the importance of ensuring public safety on our nation's lands and waters. If I am confirmed, I look forward to rejoining many of the stellar career professionals who worked hard to support our priorities and will ensure that we have the resources needed to meet our statutory directives, including wildfire preparedness.

Question 5: I have long supported both legislative and administrative efforts to curb speculative oil and gas leasing on public lands. In Nevada, speculators have nominated tens of millions of acres for leasing, with little results except for greater expense to the taxpayers. Would you agree that some lands should be prioritized for other uses, such as hunting, fishing, grazing, mining, recreation and other uses.?

- How will you ensure that our public lands are managed to reduce speculative oil and gas leasing and other spurious activity taking place on our public lands?
- Would you uphold existing policies and rules that steer leasing away from public lands with no or low potential for development?

Response: Congress has directed the Department to manage public lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, ranging from energy development, livestock grazing, mining, watershed protection, hunting, fishing and other forms of recreation. The BLM has long balanced these multiple uses of our nation's public lands, while also meeting our statutory requirements to conduct quarterly lease sales to ensure the energy needs of the American people are met. If confirmed, I will follow the law in order to achieve the balance of multiple use outlined in our governing statutes.

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Question 6: On March 17, 2025, HUD and the Interior Department announced a Joint Task Force to “identify underutilized federal lands suitable for residential development...and promote policies that increase the availability of affordable housing.” My bill, the Southern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act, does exactly this. It was approved by this committee last year with bipartisan support. It is a community-driven bill with broad bipartisan support from local municipalities, tribes, economic development interests, and conservation organizations. It identifies specific federal land for potential disposal to facilitate expected population growth and regional economic development needs, and prioritizes deployment of affordable housing projects.

- Will you support community-driven legislation like my bill that facilitates land disposal for housing economic development needs?
- As part of this Task Force, would you agree that lands identified for housing purposes should exclude lands already prioritized for other uses, such as hunting, fishing, grazing, recreation, habitat preservation, and other uses?
- Would you agree that lands should be prioritized near areas already developed with existing infrastructure and can provide enduring affordability for those people that cannot afford home ownership?
- Do you support selling our public lands to pay down the debt or other cost cutting efforts?

Response: As I stated in my hearing, I know housing affordability is a major issue, not just in the West, but across the country. There is no doubt that the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) has proven to be an incredible, lawful tool provided by Congress to ensure public land availability for important public purposes, while also generating billions of dollars that have benefited education, conservation, and important water facilities in Nevada. Secretary Burgum and HUD Secretary Turner recently announced an initiative to open underutilized federal land to build affordable housing, particularly for overlooked rural and tribal communities. If I am confirmed, it will be a priority to advance this initiative in accordance with all federal laws, and I look forward to reviewing your legislation and working with you and this committee to meet this critical need.

Questions from Senator John W. Hickenlooper

Question 1: On the Colorado River, we’re facing a big question: how do we manage our water well into the future when there is less of it than ever to go around? The seven Basin States are in the middle of a major water negotiation which will shape the course of how the West will grow our communities and economies for decades to come. We need to lock in a plan within the next few months to stay on track to implement that plan before existing agreements run out. As Deputy Secretary, you will be in a key position for supporting that negotiation and helping find an outcome that works for the Basin as a whole. As thorny as water issues can be, there’s a

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saving grace: they're bipartisan. Here in the Senate and back in Colorado, we work across party lines to figure out how to make the most of the limited water we have. Will you work with me – and the Basin States and Tribes – to push for rapidly securing a plan for water management on the Colorado River?

Response: The Colorado River is a critical water resource to the seven basin states, Tribes, water users, and other stakeholders. As I stated at my hearing, there are many opinions among stakeholders as to the appropriate approach to manage water within the Colorado Basin. Ultimately, this is a state-brokered process. The Department will play a role, but what has been most successful in the past is for the states to come to a consensus agreement on future management of this critical resource within the Colorado basin.

Question 2: The Trump administration has asserted an “energy dominance” agenda, but is taking actions to block energy infrastructure investments and renewable energy development on our public lands and waters. Ms. MacGregor, will you work with me to meet our nation’s growing energy needs, including by boosting solar, wind, and storage development on our public lands?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to address the national energy emergency and increasing our domestic supply of reliable, affordable energy in accordance with law.

Question 3: Public lands in Colorado are crucial to our economy, public health, our ranching industry, and our way of life – and because of that, we are able to build our public lands work on a strong foundation of local support. But many Coloradans are concerned about the threats to rollback protections of our treasured places – and want to make sure we can continue to camp, hike, fish, and enjoy those places for generations into the future. I invite you to join me in Colorado to see the strong stakeholder support we’ve gained on our efforts to protect our lands, before taking any action to remove those protections. Will you work with me on the public lands issues that mean so much to Coloradans?

Response: I have personally camped, hiked, and participated in innumerable outdoor recreational opportunities on public lands in Colorado and believe we can continue to maintain a balance between the varying statutory uses of land in your State. If confirmed, I will work with you on public lands issues, and I would be honored to join you in Colorado to visit the special places that are important to you and your constituents.