

Statement of
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Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

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Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing on the Trump Administration's efforts to modernize the Executive Branch, including Secretary Zinke's plan to improve the responsiveness and accountability of how the Department of the Interior, and its bureaus, serve the American people.

Since his confirmation, Secretary Zinke has made the review and reform of the Department's operations a key feature of his goal to modernize operations. In my statement, I will first address the general details of the Administration's government-wide plan for reform and reorganization that implicate the Department's interests. I will then address Secretary Zinke's vision for a modernized, more efficient, Department of the Interior.

Despite dramatic changes in technology, today's federal government continues to operate with outdated infrastructure, organizational constructs, and processes. As a result, it often cannot provide the level of service and flexibility that the American people expect. It is for this reason that President Trump issued Executive Order 13781 in March 2017, launching a government-wide effort to reform and reorganize the Executive Branch to better meet the needs of the American people. The EO directed the Office of Management and Budget to propose a plan, informed by input from each agency, the public, and our stakeholders, on the best path forward to reorganize governmental functions within each agency.

In response to this charge by the President, Secretary Zinke began his own internal review of the Department's functions and structures and laid out his early vision for a reorganized and modernized Department that is equipped to provide conservation stewardship and service for the next 100 years.

During this ongoing review, Department leadership has gathered information from career employees, Members of Congress, governors, tribes, and stakeholders. We have worked with others in the Administration to refine ideas and assess reorganization and reform recommendations relevant to its government-wide review and to the Secretary's own, internal review.

Government-wide Reform Plan

The ideas and recommendations generated through this review process were also informed by the analysis in the President's Management Agenda, made public in March 2018, and were evaluated using a framework that balanced the government's mission, service, and stewardship objectives. This government-wide effort culminated in the report, *Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century: Reform Plan and Reorganization Recommendations*, released on June 21, 2018.

Relevant to the Department, this report contains recommendations to merge responsibilities from other agencies into the Department in order to improve the management and regulatory processes that those agencies carry out. It includes the following key reforms related to the Department, which are discussed in more detail in the report. The Department looks forward to working with Congress to see these proposals implemented.

Enhancing Fish and Wildlife Management. The plan recommends that the National Marine Fisheries Service, once part of Interior but currently part of the Department of Commerce, be brought back to the Department and merged into the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This would consolidate administration of the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act and create a stronger and more holistic fish and wildlife organization. Combining the two Services' management capacities will also result in improved permitting – particularly with regard to infrastructure projects – more consistent federal fisheries and wildlife policies, and improved service to stakeholders.

Improving Water Resource Management. The plan would consolidate and re-align the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works missions, moving the Corps missions related to flood and storm damage reduction, aquatic ecosystem restoration, regulatory and other activities to the Department, where we already conduct very similar activities. Other Corps Civil Works

functions related to its commercial navigation mission would move to the Department of Transportation. This realignment would increase consistency in federal policy in natural resource management and transportation planning, resulting in better federal investment decisions. It would also leverage the expertise and relationships that the Department maintains with state fish and wildlife agencies, achieving the greatest benefit to fish, wildlife, and their habitat.

Consolidating Environmental Cleanup. The plan proposes to integrate portions of the cleanup programs at the Department and the U.S. Department of Agriculture into EPA's Superfund program in order to streamline the Federal Government's response to abandoned mine sites in need of environmental assessment and cleanup.. Under this proposal, both the Department and USDA would maintain existing compliance, bonding, and reclamation programs for non-CERCLA sites. With up to 5 percent of the estimated 80,000 or more abandoned mines on federal lands potentially requiring CERCLA-level cleanup, this consolidation would reduce the number of decisions and approvals, eliminate policy inconsistency among agencies, and expedite the cleanup of these contaminated sites.

Several other proposals indirectly affecting the Department are described in the plan.

These proposals all align with Secretary Zinke's vision to take a more integrated interagency approach to natural resource management founded on science; reduce administrative redundancy and jurisdictional and organizational barriers that get in the way of making sound decisions informed by superior knowledge of local circumstances, make smarter use of resources; improve collaboration and coordination in government; and facilitate joint problem solving that is important and necessary to bring the Department into the 21st century.

Department-specific Realignment

Dovetailing with the development of the government-wide reform plan spearheaded by OMB, Secretary Zinke is working to improve overall operations, internal communication, responsiveness to the public, and stakeholder engagement at the Department and its bureaus, consistent with the President's March Executive Order.

Today, the Department consists of ten bureaus with wide-ranging missions. Each bureau manages its jurisdictional responsibilities using unique regional structures. There are 61 distinct regional units for these ten bureaus, all following different geographic boundaries. This hodge-podge creates inconsistency and slows all coordination efforts.

The Secretary's vision is to reorganize this structure by establishing science-based, unified regional boundaries where decision-making related to priority functions will be made at the local level with consistent, informed, centralized coordination.

The proposed boundaries were developed by looking at watersheds, wildlife corridors, and ecosystems, while taking into account the need for workable regional boundary lines. The Department has shared proposed maps for these unified boundaries with the public, including the latest draft version that includes 12 regions. Development of these boundaries and maps has been an intentional and iterative process, seeking feedback from the public, stakeholders, Members of Congress, state and local governments, tribes, and our employees.

The Department is also working to improve efficiency through the expanded use of shared services, including the co-location of bureau offices and shared administrative support services, where practical.

To support the Department and to begin this reorganization effort, the Administration included \$17.5 million across the Department in its FY 2019 budget request. We are also carrying out a pilot project on this effort in the State of Alaska, an ideal location for such an effort because of its single time zone, large Department presence, and consolidated regional office location. An additional pilot is proposed for the region that includes the Upper Colorado Basin – Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico.

These pilot programs will focus on the use of shared services and inter-bureau coordination efforts and will help ensure that the eventual nationwide implementation of these unified regions will be accomplished with consideration of the full complexity of the Department's operations and in a way that is sensitive to regional differences.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs is currently leading a process of consultation with Indian tribes regarding this proposed reorganization. Consultation sessions

have been scheduled at various locations throughout this summer. Tribes are being asked for their input on our internal reorganization and whether Indian Country should “opt in” by making changes to the existing Indian Affairs regions.

Once implemented, these reforms will improve service delivery, specifically for recreation, by reducing complexity and empowering decision-makers with a shared geographic frame of reference, making stakeholders’ interactions with the Department easier and more accessible; for conservation, by fostering a collaborative approach, more coordinated and timely management actions on our federal lands and resources; and for permitting, by allowing the same landscape, geography, and environmental factors to be taken into account.

It will also provide better and more cost-efficient access to services, such as Information Technology, training and human resources, and procurement and acquisition of goods and services, for Department and bureau staff.

Conclusion

A transformation of this size will take time and teamwork to implement. Within the Department, we are facilitating an ongoing discussion that involves input from and partnering with our employees, Congress, tribes, state and local governments, and other stakeholders. The relocation of any bureau headquarters would occur gradually in the future, only after such input has been received and fully evaluated, and after Congress receives any necessary reprogramming request.

Our goal is to make government more responsive and accountable to the people through these thoughtful and ambitious proposals, and our hope is that the Administration’s plan serves as a foundation for constructive dialogue.

Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Cantwell, this concludes my statement and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.