

# Departmental Highlights



# Departmental Overview

“The time to invest in our future is now. Working together, we can strengthen our Nation for all Americans, protect the environment, and ensure that future generations continue to not only enjoy but improve our way of life.”

—Secretary Deb Haaland



As the steward of 20 percent of America’s lands, the Department of the Interior (DOI) serves several important roles for America. Interior is the manager of our country’s national parks, national wildlife refuges, and other public lands. The Department works with States, Tribal Nations, and other partners to conserve and steward the Nation’s natural resources and cultural heritage for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of the American people. Interior’s programs are important to the Nation’s economy: generating jobs, supporting local economic growth, building resilience to our changing climate, and managing important natural resources. Interior is also charged with unique responsibilities and legal obligations to protect Indian trust assets and resources and provide direct services to federally recognized Tribes, Alaska Natives, and individual Indian beneficiaries to honor the Nation’s Federal Indian trust responsibilities.

The President’s 2024 Budget Request for Interior builds on the momentum the Administration has achieved through historic and long-awaited investments to advance commitments to Tribal Nations, climate resilience, clean energy, conservation, environmental justice, and American jobs. The 2024 budget continues to reflect the importance of science, diversity and inclusion, and collaboration between Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners in carrying out Interior’s important missions.

## The 2024 Budget

The Department’s 2024 budget totals \$18.9 billion in current authority (\$18.3 billion in net discretionary authority)—an increase of \$2.0 billion, or 12 percent, from the 2023 enacted budget. An additional \$350.0 million is accessible through a budget cap adjustment for wildfire suppression to ensure funds are available in the event the regular annual appropriation is inadequate to meet suppression needs. The budget also provides an estimated \$12.6 billion in permanent funding in 2024. Within the increase for 2024, \$438.5 million will be used to cover fixed-cost increases, such as rent and Federal salary adjustments needed to maintain Interior’s core operations carried out by close to 70,000 people living and working in every corner of the country.

The President’s 2024 Budget allocates important mandatory funding available through the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), including \$1.6 billion for deferred maintenance projects through the Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). The 2024 budget allocates \$681.9 million in mandatory funding for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

programs, which includes \$306.2 million for voluntary land acquisition projects and programs.

The President's 2024 Budget complements the landmark investments in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Those funds are providing the significant boost needed to address long-standing health and safety risks from abandoned coal mines and orphaned oil and gas wells across the country; transform the landscape for clean energy development and carbon reduction efforts; accelerate the completion of Indian water rights settlements; and strengthen the resilience of critical ecosystems, Tribal Nations, and communities to meet the challenges of critical drought and threats of wildland fires, which pose unprecedented risks across the country.

## Legislative Proposals

The 2024 budget request includes the following legislative proposals and technical budgetary adjustments.

**Wildland Firefighting Workforce**—The President's 2024 Budget proposes legislation and funding to implement significant reforms to increase the Nation's investment in the wildland fire management workforce. The cornerstone of these long-term reforms is a permanent increase in pay. The Administration proposes legislation to establish a special base rate salary table for wildland firefighters, create a new premium pay category that provides some additional compensation for all hours a wildland fire responder is mobilized on an incident, and establish a streamlined pay cap that provides waiver authority to the Secretary using specific criteria. The budget supports this legislative proposal with funding for these Federal pay reforms and similar pay increases for Tribal personnel. These proposals build upon the historic reforms in BIL to ensure wildland fire personnel receive the enhanced support they need to meet evolving mission demands as both the frequency and intensity of catastrophic wildfires are expected to continue to increase due to climate change.

**Indian Water Rights Settlements**—Building upon investments in the BIL, the budget proposes

\$2.5 billion in mandatory funding over 10 years to expand the Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund to cover the costs of enacted and future water rights settlements and \$340.0 million in mandatory funding over 10 years for ongoing costs including operations and maintenance costs associated with enacted water settlements managed by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Providing a stable, dedicated funding source for Indian water rights settlements helps to ensure these commitments are honored and Tribal communities have safe, reliable water supplies to support public and environmental health and economic opportunity.

**Good Neighbor and Stewardship Contracting Authority**—The 2024 budget proposes legislation to expand Good Neighbor and Stewardship Contracting authorities currently available to BLM and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to include FWS and NPS. Including these bureaus would allow them to enter into cooperative agreements or contracts with States, Tribes, and counties to perform watershed restoration and forest management services on bureau lands. Expanding stewardship contracting authority would enable FWS and NPS to enter into stewardship contracts or agreements to achieve bureau land and resource management goals. These contracts enable agencies to apply the value of timber or other forest products removed from the lands as an offset against the cost of land and resource management services provided through the agreement. The budget also proposes appropriations language to extend by 1 year the current Good Neighbor Authority for BLM and USFS, which expires at the end of FY 2023.

**Tribal Contract Support Costs**—Contract Support Costs funding is a critical Tribal sovereignty payment enabling Tribes to assume responsibility for operating Federal programs by covering the costs to administer the programs. The budget proposes to reclassify Tribal Contract Support Costs from discretionary to mandatory funding beginning in 2024. Interior's 2024 budget submission displays these requirements as fully offset proposed mandatory funding totaling \$431.4 million.



Bears cross the Brooks Falls Trailhead in Alaska.

DOI Photo.

**Payments for Tribal Leases**—Section 105(l) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act provides that Tribes and Tribal organizations carrying out Federal functions under a self-determination contract or self-governance compact may enter into a lease agreement with the Department of the Interior for the tribally owned or rented facility used to carry out those functions. This critical Tribal sovereignty payment is allowing Indian Affairs to get Tribes closer to meeting the full cost of program implementation and improve their facilities. The 2024 budget proposes to reclassify 105(l) lease agreement requirements from discretionary to mandatory funding beginning in 2024. Interior’s 2024 budget displays those requirements as fully offset proposed mandatory funding totaling \$82.5 million.

**Compacts of Free Association (COFA)**—The Administration supports funding the renewal of our COFA relationships with the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau. The 2024 budget will seek \$6.5 billion in economic assistance over 20 years to be provided through a mandatory appropriation at the Department of State, with language calling for continued implementation by the Department of the Interior. The total amount

requested as part of a COFA mandatory proposal will also include \$634 million for continued U.S. Postal Service services to the Freely Associated States (FAS). Funding for postal services will be requested as a direct payment to the Postal Service Fund. The United States remains committed to its long-standing partnerships with the governments and the people of the FAS as we work together to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific.

**Injurious Species**—The budget supports congressional efforts to amend Title 18 of the Lacey Act to return the longstanding authority of FWS to prohibit interstate transports of injurious species. Recent incidences of injurious species, such as invasive mussels contaminating commercial products, demonstrate the need to restore this authority.

## Addressing Climate Challenges and Building Resilience

The United States faces a profound climate crisis that is rapidly changing how we consider the future, evaluate risk, and protect resources. Together with agencies across the Federal Government, States, Tribes, and other partners, the Department of the Interior is working in realtime to address

the immediate and long-term needs driven by the changing climate. Catastrophic fire, flood, and drought events brought about by the climate crisis are increasingly top-of-mind considerations, especially for Interior's resource managers. These events demand immediate attention and resources, but long-term success requires more work to build climate resilience.

The 2024 budget recognizes Interior's important role in the whole-of-government approach to tackle climate change and build long-term resilience. The 2024 budget continues funding to face immediate climate challenges and lay the foundation to build America's resilience while promoting economic growth, creating good-paying jobs, and ensuring 40 percent of the benefits of certain Federal investments accrue to disadvantaged communities.

### **Wildland Fire Management**

The devastating impacts of severe wildland fire seasons have become all too real for communities and wildland firefighters across the country. The National Interagency Fire Center reports 68,988 wildfires occurred across the United States in 2022, burning 7.5 million acres. The number of wildfires was noticeably higher than the 10-year average, which has been consistently increasing. For 2024, the President's Budget expands the Nation's response to the impacts of wildland fire beyond the near term to include aggressive longer-term actions.

The Administration remains committed to the President's vision to increase investments in the Federal wildland fire management workforce to deliver an updated, competitive, and equitable pay structure. The Administration also recognizes the important role of Tribal personnel in managing wildland fires. The 2024 budget honors President Biden's commitment to wildland firefighters by taking significant steps forward in ongoing bipartisan efforts to build a more professional, year-round workforce, better aligned with the challenges of today's wildfire activity.

Enacting these reforms is essential to meet the challenges posed by longer and more intense fire seasons while providing wildland firefighters a more livable wage, addressing long-term competitiveness and equity issues, helping prevent burnout and



Secretary Haaland at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.

DOI Photo.

fatigue, and ensuring stable recruitment and retention. The cornerstone of these long-term reforms is a permanent increase in pay. The Administration proposes legislation to establish a special base rate salary table, create a new premium pay category to provide additional compensation for all hours a wildland fire responder is mobilized on an incident, and institute streamlined pay cap authority that allows the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to waive the pay cap using specific criteria. The budget funds these Federal pay reforms and similar pay increases for Tribal personnel.

The special base rate table will apply to all Federal wildland firefighters and will raise base pay at all grades on a sliding scale. For example, entry-level firefighters at grade GS-3 will receive a pay increase of 36 percent, and the most senior firefighters, at grades GS-14 and GS-15, will receive an increase of 3.0 percent and 1.5 percent, respectively. The portal-to-portal premium pay will apply to all Federal wildland fire incident responders, with standardized compensation for all hours they are mobilized on an incident.

The 2024 budget request for the Department's Wildland Fire Management programs is nearly \$1.7 billion, including \$1.3 billion for the Wildland Fire Management account and \$350.0 million for the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund. This request is an increase of \$243.1 million, or 17 percent above the comparable 2023 enacted amount for base fire programs, of which \$72.0 million supports the pay increases for Federal and Tribal wildland firefighters. In addition, the 2024 budget provides an increase of \$45.0 million more than the 2023 enacted amount to increase firefighting capacity by an estimated 325 Federal and 55 Tribal full-time equivalents (FTEs).

The 2024 budget also supports reforms to address significant challenges associated with recruiting and retaining wildland firefighters. The President's Budget includes an increase of \$10.0 million for Interior (and another \$10.0 million for the Department of Agriculture) to establish a comprehensive joint Interior-Agriculture program to enhance firefighters' mental and physical health

and well-being. These efforts will help to better meet firefighters' needs and build longevity to sustain the workforce in a demanding work environment by helping them manage critical incident stress and preemptive stress. The budget also increases funding for Facilities Construction and Maintenance by \$22.0 million to repair, renovate, and construct housing for personnel. These funds will go a long way toward addressing the problem of inadequate or unaffordable housing facing many wildland firefighters working in certain geographic locations.

The budget will further improve wildland fire management by increasing aviation contracts and uncrewed aerial systems support by \$20.0 million, increasing program management for incident support by \$18.3 million, and increasing funding for Tribal contract and administrative support and Reserved Treaty Rights Lands projects by \$9.0 million.

The President's 2024 Budget, featuring this suite of workforce reforms—improved compensation, increased workforce capacity, vital health and



BLM Fire Crew conducting controlled burn in Oregon.

BLM Photo.



BIL-funded Utah Lake System Pipeline—Salem Canal.

CUPCA Photo.

problem, Reclamation is supporting an across-the-board approach to address drought on multiple fronts. Efforts include collaboration with partners to develop new water supply and infrastructure projects, science, forecasting and modeling tools, water management improvements—from software to maximize the amount of hydropower produced with available water

well-being assistance, and improved housing—will transform interagency Wildland Fire Management by improving recruitment and retention and laying the foundation for further advancements. The Administration looks forward to working with Congress to enact this important legislation and the requested funds needed to implement these reforms in FY 2024.

### **Drought and Ongoing Water Challenges**

Persistent drought conditions across the West are exacerbating fire risk and increasing concerns for water availability. Prolonged drought in much of the West and low runoff conditions accelerated by climate change have led to historically low water levels in Lakes Powell and Mead, and many other reservoirs are also being affected by drought. In the Colorado River Basin, the period from 2000 through 2022 was the driest 23-year period in more than 100 years of record-keeping. Based on paleohydrology data, this period was one of the driest in the past 1,200 years. Extreme drought conditions across the West are forcing very difficult challenges and choices to manage available water supplies.

Reclamation is at the forefront of Interior’s drought response, mitigation, and resilience efforts. Reclamation is taking a comprehensive approach to address the historic drought conditions affecting 17 Western States. Recognizing that no single action or solution will adequately address the

supplies to water reuse and recycling projects—and long-term planning to develop innovative strategies to address hydrologic changes.

Through historic investments in the BIL and now the IRA, Reclamation is helping coordinate a massive governmentwide drought relief and climate resilience effort. The BIL provided \$8.3 billion to Reclamation over 5 years to advance drought resilience and expand access to clean water for families, farmers, and wildlife. This investment is already at work to repair aging water delivery systems, secure dams, complete rural water projects, advance water storage, and protect aquatic ecosystems. The IRA invests another \$4.6 billion to support efforts to mitigate drought in the Western States, develop domestic water supply projects for disadvantaged communities, design and implement projects to cover water conveyance facilities with solar panels, and provide emergency drought relief for Tribes. Combined, the two initiatives represent the largest investments in climate resilience in the Nation’s history and provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address water infrastructure and availability challenges.

The Administration’s 2024 budget for Reclamation complements this transformative investment by sustaining a strong commitment to drought mitigation in the bureau’s annual appropriations. The 2024 budget includes \$1.4 billion for Reclamation’s programs and projects, which

supports a suite of water conservation, recycling, and planning programs to help communities mitigate drought and climate change impacts.

The 2024 budget includes \$62.9 million for Reclamation's WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow) programs, which work cooperatively with States, Tribes, and local communities as they plan for and implement actions to increase water supply. This amount includes \$24.0 million in the Drought Response program, which is addressing drought resiliency efforts throughout the West. Cumulatively, projects funded through Reclamation's Water Conservation Program since 2010 are expected to result in water savings of nearly 1.7 million acre-feet. To put that fact into perspective, 1 acre-foot, or 325,851 gallons of water, supplies enough water for the average uses of a family of four for 1 year.

The budget also includes investments to support drought-affected areas of the West. For example, \$16.8 million is requested for the Lower Colorado River Operations Program to implement drought contingency plans and response actions to maintain elevations at Lake Mead. Another \$1.0 million is requested for water infrastructure investments along the Texas border, and \$2.0 million of the request for the Central Valley Project in California is specific to drought planning and resiliency efforts. In addition, the 2024 budget requests \$35.5 million to support the Native American Affairs Program, \$15.0 million of which is dedicated to supporting Tribal drought assistance actions throughout the West.

In addition to those investments, the President's Budget for 2024 proposes legislation to expand the Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund established by the BIL. This proposal would provide another \$2.8 billion in mandatory funding over 10 years to help ensure formal commitments are honored on existing, newly enacted, and anticipated Indian Water Rights Settlements. Included in that total is \$340.0 million in mandatory funding for operations and maintenance costs for Reclamation.

In the past 2 years, Interior has awarded \$2.3 billion available through the BIL to address the 34 congressionally enacted Indian Water Rights settlements as of November 25, 2021, when the

BIL was signed. Indian reserved water rights are vested property rights for which the United States has a trust responsibility. Settlement of Indian water rights disputes breaks down barriers and helps create conditions that improve water resource management by providing certainty as to the rights of all water users who are parties to the disputes. Honoring those commitments promptly is especially important to the health, safety, and empowerment of Tribal communities.

### **Improving Wildfire and Drought Response Using Science**

Wildfire and drought are increasingly detrimental to ecosystems and communities. The budget for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) includes an increase of \$6.5 million for a science initiative to transform the delivery of scientific data and decision-support tools to help natural resource managers. Funding in 2024 will focus on wildfire and drought effects, such as impacts on ecosystems and downstream water quality.

Although critically important to fire-adapted ecosystems and watersheds, studying wildland fires is challenging due to their unpredictability, the extensive damage they may cause, and a lack of pre-existing information to which the response can be compared. This additional funding will allow USGS to evaluate wildfire and drought impacts on ecosystems and affected watersheds to understand the unpredictability and uncertainty about ecosystem response. In addition, science is needed to determine the most effective actions for ecosystem recovery.

Through the transformative fire and drought science initiative, USGS will prioritize partner-guided projects that support timely decision-making needs that could include animal and habitat response to wildfire and vegetation change; pre-fire estimates of potential vegetation and water quantity and quality impacts to evaluate the effectiveness of fuel treatments; and state-of-the-art models to assess fire ecosystems-water interdependencies and their cumulative impacts on the people, lands, and water of drought-affected areas.

### **Building Resilient Communities**

Communities across the country are considering the changing climate not only in the context of disaster preparedness but also as they plan long-term infrastructure and program investments. Interior programs support those efforts in a variety



Upper Colorado Glen Canyon Dam River Outlet Testing.

BOR Photo.

of ways. USGS manages the Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program, which maintains a nationwide network of streamflow and water level information collected from more than 31,000 sites. The budget includes \$120.3 million for this program. The information from the network is available online to help States, Tribes, natural resource managers, scientists, and emergency managers across the country with monitoring for floods and drought and with forecasting water availability for crops and natural resource management.

As part of the USGS Coastal and Marine Hazards programs, researchers use on-the-ground field work, high-resolution data, and modeling to help communities understand and respond to changes in coastal landscapes. Federal, Tribal, State, and local offices around the country use USGS data to inform coastal management and strategic planning. Some organizations use this science to plan evacuation notices, inform city planning, and construct storm-resistant infrastructure. Others use USGS habitat assessments and decision-support tools to restore

coastal ecosystems, developing infrastructure that can buffer against future storm damage and coastal erosion.

The 2024 budget includes \$48.0 million for Interior's Tribal Climate Resilience program to support Tribes in climate resilience planning, assessment, and adaptation activities. The program also funds planning and design work for Tribal communities evaluating the need for or pursuing climate-related relocation. Building upon the success of this program, Secretary Haaland recently launched a new Voluntary Community-Driven Relocation program, led by Interior. This new program was made possible with investments from the BIL and the IRA, with additional support for relocation from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Denali Commission. This initiative complements the annually funded program by taking the next step in the process of relocating crucial community infrastructure away from imminent threats, thereby assisting Tribal communities severely affected by climate-related environmental threats.

The budget includes \$120.8 million for Assistance to Territories, which supports the Insular Areas through the provision of basic services and targeted investments related to climate change, including \$3.5 million for work related to coral reef ecosystems and other natural resource needs and \$15.5 million to promote renewable energy and grid infrastructure in the Insular Areas. The budget for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) includes \$6.0 million to support the implementation of new authority provided in the IRA, authorizing wind lease sales for areas of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) offshore U.S. Territories. Standing up this program has the potential to greatly advance energy and economic resilience in those areas.

The 2024 budget for USGS includes \$10.0 million to work with other agencies and partners to develop and maintain a Federal climate portal that consolidates and provides accessible climate information to users to respond to climate risks and improve climate resilience. The online portal would integrate climate-relevant Federal data, tools, and information to help Tribal, State, and local



As part of research to determine migration pathways of monarch butterflies, NPS scientists gently placed waterproof identification stickers on the wings of adult monarchs. The tag, a lightweight adhesive sticker, has the monarch butterfly identification number and an email address for sending information if the monarch is re-sighted or recaptured. The long-term goal is to fortify monarch habitats along identified routes in the parks.

*NPS Photo by Juan Pablo Esparza-Limón.*

Support across Interior for natural resource conservation, restoration, recovery, and adaptive management is a fundamental part of our mission. The Department estimates the budget includes \$3.2 billion in annual funding for conservation efforts, including critical work for restoration and improvements supporting healthier lands, waters, and ecosystems and their resident species. Within that amount, the budget sustains funding for key conservation and ecosystem management initiatives, including youth corps partnerships. Complementing this annual base investment is targeted funding of \$1.7 billion in the BIL for ecosystem restoration across the country and more than \$5.0 billion in the IRA to address climate change.

governments, communities, and commercial entities understand potential climate-related hazards and guide infrastructure investments. The public will be able to use the data to explore the potential impact of climate hazards on human populations, economies, and natural and built environments free of charge. The tool would support vulnerability and risk assessments and help determine which risks require action, helping ensure new infrastructure and capital improvement projects are climate resilient by allowing for climate impact assessments.

### **Healthy Public Lands and Waters**

Interior manages more than 480 million acres of lands across the United States and is responsible for the protection and recovery of more than 2,375 endangered and threatened species, of which 1,678 are in the United States. This significant stewardship mission requires Interior to be among the leaders as an active partner in ongoing efforts to understand and mitigate climate impacts on natural resources, promote biodiversity, and ensure these valuable assets remain available for the public to experience and enjoy. Interior's conservation and adaptive management work relies heavily on partnerships and interagency collaboration to leverage information and resources.

Interior's leadership role with the National Seed Strategy is an excellent example of the importance and effectiveness of interagency collaboration and private and public partnerships to achieve conservation and biodiversity goals. The National Seed Strategy was developed to increase the diversity and quantity of native seed and other plant materials available for ecosystem restoration projects. The BIL invests \$200.0 million to implement the National Seed Strategy to lay the foundation and funding for the research, development, and partnerships needed to meet the demand of restoring resilient native plant communities with locally adapted native seed.

In 2021, collaborators in the National Seed Strategy effort included 17 Federal agencies, 6 of which are Interior bureaus; 27 Tribes; and 481 non-Federal partners, which collectively invested \$271 million. In the same year, this effort produced 91,208 pounds of native seed, agricultural production of 1,118 native species, and restored 30,446 acres; much of that work brought jobs to rural places and underserved communities. Of the work conducted, 43 percent took place on lands managed by BLM, 19 percent on NPS lands, 11 percent on FWS lands, 4 percent on Tribal lands, and the remainder on other

Federal lands. The 2024 budget for BLM includes \$25.0 million for work related to the National Seed Strategy across BLM programs.

As part of the National Seed Strategy, BLM leads the Seeds of Success program, a national wildland native seed collection partnership project. A recent example of the work supported through this program is an agreement between the FWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and the Southeastern Grasslands Initiative, which established a Seeds of Success Southeast program to grow seed across 10 States, from Virginia and South Carolina to Arkansas and Louisiana.

Youth corps partnership programs remain an important part of Interior's land and resource management mission activities. These programs provide invaluable opportunities for young people to engage in the outdoors, learn more about the environment, science, or possibly a future profession, while gaining the satisfaction that comes from doing work and seeing tangible results. Recently, Secretary Haaland announced program guidelines launching the Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC)—a new partnership-based program authorized under the John Dingell Act that will provide meaningful education, employment, and training opportunities to Indigenous youth through conservation projects on public and Indian lands, and Hawaiian homelands. To leverage Interior's many youth-focused programs, partnerships, and employment opportunities like the IYSC, Interior's budget includes funding to support a DOI-wide Youth Coordinator, consistent with direction in the Dingell Act, who will work with a team from across the agency to facilitate Interior's participation in youth corps programs; and other youth-focused engagement, volunteer service, and outdoor recreation access programs. The budget also proposes appropriations language to allow cost-sharing waivers to expand the use of youth corps partnerships in resource conservation and restoration work.

### **Leveraging Partnerships**

One of the key contributing efforts to conservation, restoration, and increased access to outdoor recreation is the Administration's America the

Beautiful Initiative, a voluntary partnership effort of Federal and State agencies, Tribes, local communities, and private landowners to conserve 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030. America the Beautiful is locally led, guided by science, honors Tribal sovereignty and Federal trust obligations, and supports the voluntary stewardship efforts of private of landowners. Its successful implementation relies on broad public engagement around shared support for resource conservation and restoration, which includes hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts.

### **The Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council**

As part of its ongoing efforts to support hunting and conservation, the Department of the Interior established the Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council last year in partnership with the Department of Agriculture. The 18-member council—made up of hunters, ranchers, farmers, outdoor recreation enthusiasts (including outfitters), and wildlife and habitat managers (including Tribes)—is working with the agencies to expand access to the great outdoors, address climate change, and safeguard the wildlife and health of the natural systems that supply our food, water, and other resources. The council provides insight into how the Federal Government can strengthen wildlife conservation, expand recreational access, and promote rural economic development.

The Federal Advisory Council, chartered in February 2022 and managed by FWS, is a Federal advisory committee of subject matter experts providing recommendations to the Federal Government regarding policies that benefit wildlife and habitat conservation; expand fair-chase hunting, safe recreational shooting sports, and wildlife-associated recreation opportunities; and benefit national and local economies. The first meeting of the council was held in December 2022.

The ability of fish and wildlife to move unimpeded through their habitat is fundamental to their existence, particularly in the face of changing climatic conditions altering our Nation's landscapes. The Department has made wildlife corridors and connectivity a priority, helping to restore free-flowing rivers and key wildlife habitat for big game and beyond. For instance, \$200.0 million in BIL funding will be used to vastly expand fish passage projects across the country, which will improve



Fishing along the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River in Oregon.

BLM Photo.

aquatic habitat connectivity, ensure access to habitat for all life stages of migratory fish and other aquatic species, and improve overall fish health.

Interior will continue to support habitat and mapping work covering 11 Western States in support of Secretary's Order (S.O.) 3362, Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors. This S.O. is strongly supported by 11 Western States, a wide diversity of nongovernmental organizations, and western Tribes. Projects completed because of this S.O. are removing barriers to migrating wildlife and improving the habitat conditions on public and private lands. Although much of the FWS 2024 budget supports habitat connectivity overall, \$3.0 million within the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program is targeted specifically to support these migration corridor activities.

For many years, USGS has led development of the co-produced science needed to manage migration corridors, which is critical to ecologically and culturally important species, including elk, deer, and other ungulates that roam across western landscapes. Because of the widely recognized value of this work and the recognition of increasing threats to western landscapes from drought, fire, invasive species, and climate change, the 2024 USGS budget increases support for migration corridor

mapping and management science by \$2.0 million, for a total of \$2.4 million. The BLM 2024 budget includes \$2.5 million to support migration corridor activities.

The FWS budget includes \$18.5 million for the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures program, which includes support for continued collaboration with a multitude of partners to ensure the migratory pathways of our Nation's birds remain connected and provide the necessary requirements for sustainable populations.

### **Restoring Fish and Wildlife Habitat**

The budget includes targeted investments aimed at protecting biodiversity; restoring fish, wildlife, and their habitats; and halting nature loss. This request includes dedicated funding increases to expand natural resource programs in NPS, BLM, and FWS, totaling \$2.5 billion. For example, the NPS budget includes \$377.4 million for its Natural Resource Management programs across the park system, a programmatic increase of \$74.8 million above the 2023 enacted level. This funding will be used to rebuild natural resource management staffing capacity in the parks and project work addressing climate impacts, including fire risk and migration corridors.

The FWS budget includes \$291.0 million for Wildlife and Habitat Management in the National

Wildlife Refuge System, an increase of \$30.5 million above 2023. The budget also includes increases in species conservation and restoration and recovery, migratory birds, fish and aquatic conservation, and international conservation programs. The 2024 budget includes \$79.7 million to support the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, an increase of \$19.5 million more than the 2023 enacted amount, to further support voluntary conservation on private lands—a key focus of the America the Beautiful initiative. The budget also includes \$20.4 million to support the FWS Coastal program, an increase of \$6.5 million more than the 2023 enacted amount, to support one of the most effective resources for restoring and protecting fish and wildlife habitat on public and privately-owned lands.

### Restoring Refuge Ecosystems

Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon was established to reduce the impact of habitat loss from the construction of Bonneville Lock & Dam. Since the dam was established, FWS and the community have restored and conserved Oregon oak woodlands, pastures, and wetland habitats supporting salmonids, wintering geese, ducks, and other wildlife that thrive in tandem with the river. Last year, the refuge achieved another conservation milestone when it completed a nearly 2-year restoration project to decrease flooding, increase salmon and steelhead migration, and create more naturally functioning habitat by restoring the natural flow of water by removing diversion structures and raising levees to the 500-year flood level. This project—funded by FWS, Bonneville Power Administration, the State of Washington, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation—reconnected the Gibbons Creek watershed and Steigerwald Lake to the Columbia River.

Climate change can impact the prevalence of invasive species and pose a significant risk to biodiversity. Climate-induced ecosystem changes can drive species to move to new areas where they may become invasive or disruptive. Addressing the growth of invasive species continues to be an important component of Interior’s resource management priorities.

This budget builds on work funded in previous years to increase the early detection of invasive

species. Early detection of invasive species makes it easier to implement an effective rapid response strategy to eradicate or control the invasive species before it spreads or causes significant harm to native resources, agriculture, water quality, and human health. The 2024 budget includes \$2.6 million to establish an aquatic invasive species rapid response initiative in FWS. This initiative, coordinated through the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, and other rapid response efforts are among the most cost-effective and successful ways to address invasive species once they have been detected in the environment.

The budget’s investment in invasive species control is coupled with support for legislation to amend Title 18 of the Lacey Act to return the longstanding authority of FWS to prohibit the interstate transport of injurious species. Recent examples of invasive species contaminating commercial products, such as zebra mussel contamination of aquarium moss balls in retail trade transported to vulnerable areas such as the Columbia River basin, demonstrate the need to restore this authority.

### Land and Water Conservation Fund

The investments made through the LWCF directly support the objectives of the Administration’s America the Beautiful initiative by encouraging conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities in cities and towns across the country. The GAOA established permanent, mandatory funding totaling \$900.0 million a year for the LWCF. The LWCF provides funding to the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to acquire lands to be managed by NPS, FWS, BLM, and USFS. The program also supports several important grant programs to encourage local conservation and recreation investments.

The 2024 budget proposes to allocate \$681.9 million for Interior’s mandatory funded LWCF programs. That amount includes \$306.2 million for Interior land acquisition and \$375.7 million for grant programs. Interior’s land acquisition programs prioritize projects with strong local partner engagement, protect at-risk natural or cultural resources, and advance the mission of the bureaus. In addition to the mandatory LWCF funding to be



Pronghorn and elk on wintering grounds at the National Elk Refuge in Wyoming.

USFWS Photo.

allocated in 2024, another \$117.9 million in Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) oil and gas revenue is estimated to be available for LWCF State formula grants.

In 2024, the Department proposes \$12.0 million to establish a new Tribal LWCF Land Acquisition program in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to be derived from discretionary LWCF balances. The program will enable Tribes to directly participate in the LWCF for the first time to acquire lands for the purposes of natural and cultural resources conservation and recreation access. It is envisioned this program would provide funds for eligible land acquisition projects submitted by Tribes, although BIA plans to hold formal Tribal consultation on the establishment of the program, including eligibility criteria. This new program, together with the proposed mandatory funding allocation, and anticipated GOMESA revenue, increases Interior's total LWCF funding to \$811.7 million in 2024.

A table of LWCF funding and a detailed list of 2024 proposed LWCF land acquisition projects are provided in the appendixes.

## Creating Jobs and Meeting Energy and Environmental Challenges

Interior's programs create jobs and spur economic growth in a variety of areas—energy and minerals, recreation and tourism, irrigation and other water-related activities, grants and payments, and infrastructure investment. Enactment of the GAOA, the BIL, and the IRA have and will continue to significantly expand Interior's contributions to America's economic and job growth. The 2024 budget maintains a consistent strategy to emphasize investment in areas that better position the country to be more competitive in the changing economy and environment.

### **Accelerating Implementation**

Congress has enacted historic investments launching Federal and private-sector infrastructure projects that will strengthen and advance all sectors of the economy, build climate resilience, and create more American jobs. The focus now is on project implementation to put those funds to work as soon as possible. The Administration is coordinating efforts across Federal agencies to streamline processes as appropriate to responsibly get these projects underway. Interior is actively

engaged in those efforts, primarily as they concern statutorily required Endangered Species Act (ESA) permit reviews.

The budget includes \$171.4 million, an increase of \$50.5 million from 2023, to increase environmental permitting capacity in FWS to accelerate and improve environmental reviews supporting responsible development of priority infrastructure projects funded through the BIL and IRA. The budget also proposes a governmentwide legislative provision to expand authority beyond existing reimbursable and Economy Act authorities to enable Federal agencies to transfer funds provided under the BIL to FWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service for these purposes. This authority in concert with existing authorities will improve efficiencies and increase capacity for environmental planning and consultation to better support the implementation of infrastructure investments now underway.

In 2024, FWS is advancing electronic permitting efforts that have been underway for several years by proposing to consolidate all ePermitting efforts in the bureau into a single activity to better manage the program's resources and provide visibility to this important effort. FWS implemented ePermits in 2020 as an easy-to-use, modern, secure system that streamlines the end-to-end process for permits processed by FWS. The program helps applicants properly identify and submit complete application packages and supports the agency in performing its duties in the most efficient and effective manner. Although FWS has achieved a secure and modern system that enables permit applicants to apply and pay processing fees for permits online, work remains to be done on ePermits to build and optimize features to better achieve efficiency and streamlining.

### **Moving Forward With Clean Energy**

The 2024 budget includes increases in offshore and onshore renewable energy programs to build upon and continue support for the tremendous growth accomplished by these programs in the past year. For offshore renewable energy, in 2021, Secretary Haaland announced an Offshore Wind Leasing Path Forward for lease sales through 2025, laying



Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind Pilot Project.

BOEM Photo.

out a path to help achieve the Administration's goals to deploy 30 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind capacity by 2030, 15 GW of floating wind by 2035, and continued growth thereafter. The Path Forward provides additional transparency and greater certainty about the program by outlining up to seven offshore renewable energy lease sales by 2025. In FY 2022, BOEM approved the South Fork project, initiated Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) for two projects, published draft EISs for two projects, and began the environmental review process for the construction and operation of offshore wind projects in the New York Bight.

As of February 2023, BOEM has conducted 11 competitive wind energy lease sales for areas in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, representing more than 2.5 million acres of commercial wind

energy lease areas offshore California, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Virginia. Together, leases from these sales have the potential to generate 43.5 GW of offshore wind. BOEM conducted the first renewable energy lease sale ever off the California coast on December 6, 2022, and the agency plans to hold the first renewable energy lease sale in the Gulf of Mexico in FY 2023. The bureau is in the planning stages of identifying additional areas in the Gulf of Maine, offshore the Central Atlantic, Hawaii, and Oregon. BOEM has also received unsolicited lease requests for areas offshore Washington and will continue to assess interest in those areas.

As of February 2023, BOEM has approved two construction and operations plans, and those projects are under construction. BOEM is actively processing 16 additional plans and expects to receive one more plan in 2023. If fully approved, these 19 projects have the potential to produce more than 30 GW of electricity and power 10.6 million homes. The IRA authorized BOEM to conduct offshore wind leasing in the U.S. Territories. In FY 2023, BOEM will move forward with its lease planning process in Puerto Rico, and the 2024 budget includes an increase to continue this planning in the U.S. Territories.

Leading into FY 2024, BOEM plans to initiate programmatic EISs for construction and operation of offshore wind projects offshore northern and central California and in the Gulf of Mexico to streamline environmental reviews and consultations. As early as FY 2024, BOEM anticipates receiving additional construction and operations plans for leases in the New York Bight. In subsequent fiscal years, BOEM anticipates the submittal of construction and operations plans for other areas of the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Gulf of Mexico. In FY 2024, BOEM expects to issue up to eight Records of Decision for projects along the Atlantic coast.

The 2024 budget includes \$64.5 million for BOEM's Renewable Energy program, an increase of \$21.6 million above the 2023 enacted level. This request includes a \$12.0 million increase to support

permitting associated with the current Offshore Wind Leasing Path Forward. The budget includes \$92.8 million for BOEM's Environmental Programs, an increase of \$10.4 million, which includes funding for environmental review associated with renewable energy projects.

The budget for the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) includes \$8.4 million to continue to support offshore Renewable Energy deployment. BSEE anticipates receiving more than 40,000 wind engineering, construction, and other technical reports for review through the end of FY 2024. BSEE is working closely with BOEM to develop the necessary framework to ensure offshore renewable energy projects are implemented safely and responsibly.

### **Interior Finalizes Offshore Wind Safety and Environmental Responsibilities**

In January 2023, the Department accomplished one of its key milestones in achieving the Administration's ambitious deployment goal of 30 GW of offshore wind energy by 2030 and 15 GW of floating offshore wind energy by 2035 when it finalized the transfer of worker safety and environmental compliance standards from BOEM to BSEE. This seamless transition of responsibilities will advance regulatory clarity and transparency for the offshore wind industry, while also allowing the bureaus to focus on their specific roles in ensuring all future development is done in a safe and environmentally sound way.

The key authorities transferred to BSEE include evaluating and overseeing design, enforcing operational safety, ensuring environmental compliance, and overseeing decommissioning activities. BOEM is still responsible for determining areas suitable for development, issuing leases and approving modifications, conducting National Environmental Policy Act analysis, and reviewing site assessment plans and construction and operation plans. The transfer of regulations complements BOEM's proposed modernization rule, also published in January 2023, which would modernize regulations, streamline overly complex and burdensome processes, clarify ambiguous provisions, and enhance compliance provisions to decrease costs and uncertainty associated with the deployment of offshore wind facilities.

BLM's onshore renewable program is also making tremendous progress to achieve the Energy Act of



Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Facility in Nevada.

BLM Photo.

2020 goal to permit 25 GW of renewable energy on public lands by 2025. As of December 2022, BLM had permitted more than 126 renewable energy projects, including the following:

- 42 solar projects, with an approved capacity of more than 9,272 megawatts (MW).
- 36 wind projects, with an approved capacity of more than 3,000 MW.
- 48 operating geothermal power plants with Federal interest that have an installed capacity of more than 2,500 MW, with an additional 630 MW approved since 2009 not yet in operation.

As of February 2023, BLM is processing 68 priority utility-scale onshore clean energy projects proposed on public lands in the western United States, including solar, wind, geothermal, and associated interconnect transmission line projects that are vital to grid connection. If approved, these projects would provide more than 35 GW of renewable energy to the western electric grid. In addition to the 68 priority projects currently underway, BLM has over 120 pending applications for solar and wind development for processing when transmission capacity is available. Those additional applications represent potential energy generation of roughly 50 GW. Demand is anticipated to increase because of incentives included in the IRA and State policies requiring a greater shift away from fossil fuel-sourced electric generation.

BLM is taking additional steps to prepare for this increase in demand, including working to revise seven interstate transmission corridors designated under Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. This effort involves amending 19 land use plans to remove barriers or conflicts in the currently designated corridor network to improve the siting, permitting, and reviewing of electricity transmission projects.

BLM is also initiating a programmatic environmental impact statement in support of utility-scale solar energy planning. Through this effort, BLM is reviewing its 2012 Western Solar Plan to identify potential additional areas conducive to solar energy development. The 2012 Plan, developed by BLM and the Department of Energy, resulted in a Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (2012 Solar PEIS) for solar energy development in six southwestern States: Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. The 2012 Solar PEIS identified areas with high solar potential and low resource conflicts to guide responsible solar development and provide certainty to developers. In light of improved technology, new transmission, and ambitious clean energy goals, BLM is updating the 2012 Solar PEIS. BLM is considering adding more States, adjusting exclusion criteria and potentially identifying new or expanded areas to prioritize solar development.

The 2024 budget includes \$72.5 million for BLM's Renewable Energy program, an increase

of \$31.6 million from the 2023 enacted level. This funding supports the Renewable Energy Coordination Offices and includes increases to build staffing capacity and support planning efforts to accommodate the surge in demand and workload. The request supports proactive programmatic assessments and consultations with FWS under Section 7(a)(1) of the ESA. This work will review ecological regions for appropriate renewable energy deployment scenarios in key areas where substantial renewable energy development interest exists. This approach is an efficient alternative to project-by-project consultation. BLM estimates using the ecological region assessment approach will result in ESA project-consultation reviews completed up to 90 percent faster and deliver substantially improved species conservation outcomes.

### **BLM's Online Clean Energy Planning Tools**

BLM is leveraging technology to provide two renewable energy planning tools available to the public through its website.

The [Mapper](#) is an online mapping tool that allows users to overlay solar energy potential on BLM-administered lands with other natural, social, and cultural resource data. The tool can be used to identify areas with high solar energy potential and low resource conflict that may be appropriate for solar energy development.

The [Wind Mapper](#) is an interactive web-based application that displays wind energy resources and relevant environmental data for the western United States. This tool is part of the West-Wide Wind Mapping Project, which maps wind energy resources on the public lands and identifies existing land-use exclusions and other potential resource sensitivities that may affect wind energy development opportunities. The project has mapped the following areas:

- BLM-administered lands where wind energy development is excluded by law, BLM policy, or existing land-use plan decisions.
- BLM-administered lands with potentially developable wind resources, where environmental concerns or land-use restrictions result in more extensive siting considerations for proposed wind energy projects.
- Other BLM-administered lands with potentially developable wind resources.

### **Conventional Energy**

The budget for BOEM provides \$72.3 million for conventional energy programs to support OCS planning, leasing, and oversight, including inventorying oil and gas reserves, overseeing ongoing activities, ensuring adequate financial assurances for decommissioning liability and risk management, developing and implementing the National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program (National Five-Year OCS Program), reviewing and administering oil and gas exploration and development plans and geological and geophysical permits, and conducting economic analyses and resource evaluation. The budget also includes \$92.8 million for Environmental Studies, supporting conventional and renewable energy activities.

As directed by the IRA, in 2022, Interior reinstated bids from Lease Sale 257 and on December 30, 2022, held Lease Sale 258 in Cook Inlet offshore Alaska. BOEM is proceeding with congressional direction to prepare two lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico, Lease Sales 259 and 261. The bureau is on track to meet the statutory requirements that Lease Sale 259 be held by March 31, 2023, and Lease Sale 261 by September 30, 2023. Also, BOEM is continuing the development of the next National OCS Leasing Program. As of February 2023, public comments received on the Proposed Program and Draft Programmatic EIS are currently under review.

The 2024 budget for BSEE includes \$217.1 million for conventional energy programs to support OCS permit application reviews, regulation and standard development for offshore activities, verification and enforcement of operator compliance with all applicable environmental laws and regulations, technical reviews of planned operations and emerging technologies to properly identify and mitigate risks, a robust inspection program employing an annual inspection strategy that includes risk-based inspections, and incident investigations. BSEE's budget also includes \$30.0 million to fund the decommissioning of orphaned offshore oil and gas infrastructure. This funding, along with funding from other sources, will be used to address the most immediate and urgent well, pipeline, and platform decommissioning needs to help reduce the risk of pollution.



BSEE inspector approaching Murphy Oil's King's Quay deepwater Gulf of Mexico platform to perform a pre-production inspection.

BSEE Photo.

The 2024 budget includes \$123.5 million for BLM's Oil and Gas Management program, an increase of \$10.6 million from the 2023 enacted amount. The BLM budget also includes \$51.0 million for Oil and Gas Inspection Activities and proposes to offset the cost of this program through the establishment of onshore inspection fees. Additional increases in the 2024 budget support increased program capacity and support to implement requirements in the IRA, which modernized the Mineral Leasing Act and mandates collecting royalties on all extracted methane. In addition to administering oil and gas leasing and ensuring environmentally responsible development, the budget request includes funding to remediate legacy well sites in the National Petroleum Reserve—Alaska.

The 2024 budget includes funding for onshore and offshore carbon sequestration programs in BLM, BOEM, and BSEE. Incentives included in the IRA are expected to rapidly increase interest in carbon sequestration, and Interior's bureaus are laying the groundwork to help ensure this expansion is implemented responsibly and safely.

Section 40307 of the BIL amends the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to authorize the

Secretary of the Interior to grant a lease, easement, or right-of-way on the OCS for activities that “provide for, support, or are directly related to the injection of a carbon dioxide stream into sub-seabed geologic formations for the purpose of long-term carbon sequestration.” BOEM and BSEE are working together to develop and publish draft carbon sequestration regulations for public comment and final regulations.

While the rule is under development, BOEM and BSEE will continue to develop their carbon sequestration programs to facilitate program implementation upon final rule publication. The 2024 BOEM budget includes \$6.6 million in Conventional Energy and \$2.3 million in Environmental Programs to establish a dedicated team, train existing staff, hire additional specialized experts, and fund environmental studies, scientific research, data collection, and other activities critical to the establishment and implementation of the new program. The 2024 BSEE budget includes \$1.5 million to prepare for regulating and overseeing safe and effective offshore carbon sequestration activities. The budget includes \$3.4 million to start an onshore carbon sequestration program in BLM.

## **Reclamation Jobs**

The BIL invests nearly \$16 billion, mostly for States and Tribes, to reclaim abandoned coal mine lands and orphaned oil and gas wells in communities across the country. Those projects are addressing legacy pollution—which harms the environment and often risks the public health of communities—while creating good-paying jobs, advancing long overdue environmental justice, and restoring lands for other uses.

The 2024 budget provides annual ongoing support for other related reclamation activities targeting State and Tribal reclamation needs associated with abandoned hardrock mines, legacy pollution on Interior’s lands, and innovative coal mine reclamation projects directly supporting local economic growth. The budget includes \$30.0 million for the Abandoned Hardrock Mine Reclamation Program authorized in the BIL to support State, Tribal, and Federal efforts to inventory and address legacy sites on their lands. Abandoned hardrock mine sites can often pose significant health and safety risks to surrounding areas and can be found across the country. Many States, Tribes, and Federal land programs do not have good inventories or strong programs to manage those sites. This program targets the need to build capacity and begin to address this long-standing problem.

Interior has also spearheaded an Interagency Working Group on Mining Regulations, Laws, and Permitting (IWGMRLP) to examine the existing statutory and regulatory framework for hardrock mining to identify and recommend potential improvements to Federal permitting processes while better ensuring new mining activity engages local and Tribal communities and meets strong environmental standards to promote sustainable and responsible domestic production of critical minerals that are vital to achieving a clean energy economy. The IWGMRLP has hosted extensive listening sessions to solicit input from a multitude of stakeholders and will be releasing its report with recommendations in FY 2023. The Administration looks forward to working with Congress in FY 2023 and FY 2024 to implement much needed mining reforms that will ensure strong social, environmental, and labor standards while making

improvements in the efficiency, transparency, and inclusiveness of the Federal mine permitting system.

On Interior lands, the Department has identified thousands of mines and features that pose safety risks and generate environmental contaminants. Tens of thousands of legacy pollution sites are on BLM lands alone, including more than 50,000 estimated abandoned hardrock mine sites. BLM has the vast majority of abandoned hardrock mines on Federal lands, and many of those sites pose serious threats to the public and the environment. Rural and Tribal communities proximate to historic mining sites feel the physical and environmental impacts of those sites most keenly, but the growing popularity of America’s BLM lands for recreation has placed even more people in harm’s way. The Administration is committed to remediating the physical hazards to repair those lands, improve air and water quality, and at the same time create jobs in rural communities. The budget includes \$62.8 million for BLM’s Abandoned Mine Lands and Hazardous Materials Management program, an increase of \$5.6 million more than the 2023 enacted amount, which will operate in tandem with the national Abandoned Hardrock Mine Reclamation Program to increase efforts to inventory and remediate those sites on BLM lands.

Interior’s Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) works with States and Tribes to regulate active coal mines to ensure



Orange water affected by acid mine drainage flows from a culvert.

OSMRE Photo.

environmental problems do not occur and to remediate abandoned coal mines to address health and safety hazards. High-priority abandoned mine land problems can include clogged streams/stream lands, dangerous piles or embankments, dangerous highwalls, and underground mine fires and polluted water, and pose an immediate threat to health, safety, and the general welfare of communities. OSMRE manages the State and Tribal abandoned mine reclamation grant programs authorized by the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act and the BIL. In 2022, OSMRE invested nearly \$1 billion in coal communities, including nearly \$725 million available to 22 States and the Navajo Nation for reclamation as part of the BIL and \$144.0 million available through the traditional, fee-funded, mandatory AML grant program.

OSMRE also manages the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) grant program, which administers grants to six States and three Tribal Nations to return legacy coal mining sites to productive uses and foster economic and community development. The AMLER program has made more than \$750 million available to America's current and former coal communities to provide economic and community development and achieve

reclamation of historic abandoned mine sites. The 2024 budget includes \$135.0 million to continue support for AMLER grants.

In 2024, the OSMRE budget includes \$2.0 million to provide grants to nongovernmental organizations and local and State government agencies to help operate, maintain, and rehabilitate abandoned mine land passive-treatment systems that were previously constructed to address water pollution from mine drainage. This funding helps local communities protect the investments made in passive-treatment systems installed to address water pollution discharges from abandoned mine lands.

## Strengthening Tribal Nations

This Administration has made a steadfast commitment to honor our Nation's Tribal trust responsibilities and strengthen government-to-government relationships with Tribal Nations, and this budget maintains that commitment to support and expand this work. Through initiatives addressing complex and difficult challenges, such as the legacy of the Federal Indian Boarding Schools, Native language revitalization, and coordinating Federal efforts to address Missing and Murdered



Not Invisible Act Commission, February 2023.

DOI Photo.

Indigenous Peoples, this Administration's commitment to respect the sovereignty of Tribal Nations and address long-standing disparities is unprecedented.

### **Tribal Nations Summit**

In late 2022, the Biden Administration held the first in-person Tribal Nations Summit since the Obama Administration. Attended by more than 300 Tribal leaders, the summit was an opportunity for the Administration to work in partnership with Tribes and announce a new series of actions to support tribally led conservation, education, and economic development. The pledges made by Interior include the following:

- A new Office of Strategic Partnerships to assist with building partnerships, leveraging resources, and promoting innovative solutions for Indian Country.
- A new Office of Indigenous Communication and Technology to assist Tribal Nations and Tribal entities in managing, developing, and maintaining broadband infrastructure and new electromagnetic spectrum leasing mechanisms and in providing technical assistance for the establishment of wireless, digital, and technological projects on Tribal lands.
- A new partnership between BIE and the Trust for Public Land to design multipurposed outdoor spaces at BIE schools that infuse physical activity, education, Native languages, and cultural heritage.
- The renewal of The National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education. Founded in 1999, the congressionally chartered—but long unused—nonprofit organization has a mission to promote educational opportunities for American Indian students attending BIE schools. Through the National Fund, the Department will support tribally led educational initiatives, including its work on Native language revitalization.
- A new Access to Capital in Indian Country initiative was announced to work on an interagency basis to increase economic opportunities for Tribes and Indian businesses. Interior will build on the success of the Indian Loan Guarantee Program to ensure Indian Country has greater awareness, access, and use of Federal financing opportunities.

### **Honoring Tribal Sovereignty**

The 2024 budget makes significant investments in Tribal sovereignty and revitalization, providing

new and expanded funding opportunities and resources for Tribes to manage their lands and waters. The budget includes \$12.0 million for the creation of a new Tribal LWCF Land Acquisition program. During LWCF listening sessions last year, one of the top priorities that sovereign Tribes identified was having direct access to LWCF funding for conservation and recreation projects without partnering with or applying through States. The additional funding will provide Tribes the opportunity to acquire lands or easements to protect and conserve directly through the Department, for the purposes of protecting and conserving natural resource areas, which may also be of cultural importance to the Tribe or have significant recreational benefits for Tribal communities, consistent with the purposes of LWCF funding. This new program will further enhance the ability of Tribes to address the climate crisis, support Tribal sovereignty and self-determination, and provide another important tool to support Tribal co-stewardship.

The budget also proposes \$30.5 million for Indian Land Consolidation within the BIA budget, an increase of \$22.5 million above the 2023 enacted level. The Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations made significant progress in reducing fractionation and achieving Tribal majority interest, but additional funds are needed to sustain the progress of that program, which ended in November 2022, to ensure Tribes can address fractionation to better manage their lands. Proposed funding will support the purchase of fractional interests from willing individual Indian landowners to convey those interests to the Tribe with jurisdiction.

The budget also includes \$12.0 million in the Trust Real Estate program to support the acquisition of lands for Tribal purposes, including funding needed to support newly recognized Tribes without established lands.

Interior's efforts to strengthen Tribal sovereignty extend across the agency and with other Federal partners. For example, in response to Tribal recommendations heard in consultation sessions held with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and with the participation of the National



Cultural celebration at the Alaska Native Heritage Center.

DOI Photo.

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the 2024 budget proposes to transfer the functions of the Office of Subsistence Management from FWS to the Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, along with an increase of \$2.5 million for the program. Subsistence practices are vital to the lifeways of Alaska Native communities and people. Alaska Native people depend heavily on subsistence practices for their nutritional, social, economic, and traditional cultural needs. During Tribal consultations and listening sessions, participants have consistently pointed to the adverse impacts the changing climate is having on Alaska Native subsistence practices and Alaska Native communities alongside the need to expand Tribal co-management partnerships and incorporate indigenous knowledge into subsistence management. The budget includes additional increases in the land management bureaus—FWS, NPS, and BLM—to support resource management associated with Alaska Native subsistence.

### **Addressing Historic Wrongs**

Beginning with the Indian Civilization Act of 1819, the United States enacted laws and implemented

policies establishing and supporting Indian boarding schools across the Nation. The purpose of Indian boarding schools was to culturally assimilate Indigenous children by forcibly relocating them from their families and communities to distant residential facilities, where their American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian identities, languages, and beliefs were suppressed.

In June 2021, Secretary Haaland launched the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative to review the troubled legacy of Federal boarding schools. For more than a century, BIA was involved in the operation of Indian boarding schools in the United States, and the Department is uniquely positioned to assist in the effort to recover that history. The Department has focused initial efforts of the initiative on Tribal outreach, collection and review of Department documents and records, and compilation of existing data within the Department’s jurisdiction. The 2024 budget includes \$7.0 million to continue to move forward with the initiative to implement recommendations in the May 2022 Federal Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report and conduct further outreach,

research, and documentation to locate potential gravesites at former school locations and help to ensure the remains are identified and protected.

During Interior's Boarding School Initiative Listening Sessions, one of the most significant Tribal concerns expressed was the devastating impact that boarding school policies had on the retention of Native languages in their communities. The 2024 budget includes an increase of \$27.5 million to expand BIA grant awards for Tribal Native language revitalization programs that are imperative to restore generational continuity and Tribal culture, which help to strengthen Tribal sovereignty.

### ***Investing in Tribal Communities***

The BIA budget contains several significant investments in Tribal communities, including \$78.1 million for the Tiwahe Initiative, an increase of \$33.5 million from 2023 enacted amount. Under Tiwahe, a portion of the funding assists Tribes at selected sites to implement a tribally driven approach to deliver essential services more effectively and efficiently. The initiative facilitates collaboration within Tribal communities—which can help to leverage resources, share expertise, reduce duplication, and exchange information about families' needs—to formulate the most responsive approach to provide service. Since 2015, the Tiwahe Initiative has focused primarily on promoting family stability through several Human Services programs. The Department's 2024 budget further expands Tiwahe in Social Services, Indian Child Welfare Act, Housing, Tribal Justice Support, and Economic Development programs.

An additional \$12.1 million is proposed to address another long-standing Tribal priority to improve road maintenance. Poor road conditions directly affect the quality of life in many Tribal communities, limiting transportation for public safety and emergency response, travel to school, and travel to work. This additional investment brings total road maintenance funding to \$51.3 million, increasing maintenance for an additional 6,000 miles of BIA roads. Funding will also increase bridge maintenance and safety reviews of 1,000 bridges to inform prioritization, project selection, and planning to better implement construction

funding available through the BIL. The estimated deferred maintenance backlog for BIA roads and bridges is more than \$400 million.

BIA's budget includes additional investments in Tribal communities in areas such as Tribal climate resilience, social services, housing, clean energy, environmental quality projects, economic development projects, and funding to raise the Small Tribe Supplement payment to a minimum of \$300,000 for existing eligible Tribes in this program.

The budget includes \$109.1 million to support the Tribal financial functions managed by the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA). BTFA was established within the Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs in 2020 to house the ongoing financial trust management functions established through trust reforms carried out by the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians. BTFA currently serves as the financial manager for more than \$8 billion of Indian Trust Funds and provides services for 4,100 Tribal accounts and roughly 408,000 Individual Indian Money accounts. The 2024 budget continues to propose BTFA as a stand-alone bureau with critical independent functions for effective management of Indian assets and service to Indian Country. The Department held listening sessions on the future of BTFA, and the input received showed Tribes did not want to eliminate BTFA or its functions, and some Tribes would like to have expanded services from BTFA. The Department looks forward to working with Congress on ensuring BTFA is fully recognized as a bureau to allow the organization to focus on its mission of serving Indian Country.

### ***Promoting Public Safety and Justice***

In meetings with Interior's leadership, Tribal leaders across the country have expressed increased concern for public safety in their communities. Their elevated level of concern is coupled with emerging needs to expand services to address the *McGirt v. Oklahoma* decision and the needs of 31 Tribes that have been eligible for but have not received BIA public safety and justice funding. Interior's 2024 budget submission includes \$717.1 million for Public Safety and Justice Programs and related construction, an increase of \$85.8 million

above the 2023 enacted level. That amount includes \$316.3 million for Criminal Investigations and Police Services programs, an increase of \$42.2 million above 2023. At the increased 2024 level, all Tribes currently receiving funds would receive an equal share of the increase, including those newly participating Tribes that elect to receive BIA law enforcement services available in 2023. The budget includes \$154.6 million, an increase of \$18.3 million above the 2023 level, to support the operational needs of Indian Country detention and corrections programs encountering growing personnel, equipment, and technology costs. Complementing those operational increases, the budget includes \$75.3 million for construction supporting public safety and justice programs, an increase of \$23.8 million.

### **Advancing Indian Education**

The 2024 budget includes \$1.6 billion for Indian Education programs, an increase of \$209.2 million

above 2023 enacted amount, to provide a strong educational foundation for Native children to succeed. Native students face stark inequities in access to education, many of which were highlighted and exacerbated by the pandemic. To help address that gap, the budget invests in the day-to-day operations of BIE-funded elementary and secondary schools. The budget includes \$508.7 million for Indian Student Equalization Program formula funds, which provide the primary support for academic activities in the classroom, instructional services, and teacher training, recruitment, and retention. The budget includes resources to operate and maintain BIE-funded schools and fully funds the estimated \$98.7 million requirement for Tribal Grant Support costs to cover the administration costs for Tribes that choose to operate BIE-funded schools. The 2024 budget also features specific investments, including an additional \$5.8 million to maintain support for distance learning and enhanced technology at



Secretary Haaland and Assistant Secretary Newland in South Dakota on The Road to Healing tour.

DOI Photo.

BIE schools, and \$7.5 million for Native language immersion programs.

The budget includes \$189.6 million for postsecondary schools and programs, including \$133.5 million for Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute and for Tribal colleges, universities, and technical colleges; and \$56.1 million for expanded Tribal scholarships and adult education programs.

Addressing BIE-funded school facilities in poor condition and deferred maintenance backlogs at more than 180 schools in the BIE school system continues to be a top priority for the Department—45 percent of BIE schools are currently identified as in “poor” condition.

The 2024 budget includes \$416.2 million in annual funding for Education Construction, an increase of \$148.3 million over the 2023 enacted level. The budget also includes \$160.1 million for facilities operation and maintenance, which helps maintain the condition of schools. An additional \$95.0 million in mandatory funding for BIE school construction through the GAOA will be available in 2024 to support the replacement of two additional school campuses. The continued emphasis on BIE school infrastructure conditions has produced tangible results, with two new campuses opened to students in 2022.

## Leveraging Science Across Interior

Interior actively uses science to inform and enhance delivery of core mission activities. This commitment to science is evident across Interior. It includes the work Interior’s employees do each day to gather and analyze consistent and reliable on-the-ground measurements of land and water conditions, which help to inform the resource management decisions at Interior and a wide range of partners, States, Tribes, and the public. Interior is leveraging these data and understanding to develop new forecasting and modeling tools to inform and improve how we manage challenging conditions, such as water supply and demand or increasingly severe wildland fires. Interior also conducts basic and applied research to help understand and identify solutions



Scientist tests water conditions to monitor changing contaminant loads.

DOI Photo.

to emerging challenges, such as harmful algal blooms, invasive carp, white nose syndrome in bats, and avian influenza.

Interior’s USGS has a long history of delivering science, methods, and tools to provide timely, relevant, and useful information about the Earth and its processes, including our ecosystems and environment. USGS works in partnership with a variety of Federal agencies and State, Tribal, and local entities across the country. It maintains roughly 20,000 groundwater monitoring wells, more than 11,800 stream gages and 3,800 earthquake sensors, and directly monitors 70 volcanoes. The 2024 budget includes \$1.8 billion for USGS programs and operations, an increase of \$288.3 million from the 2023 enacted amount.

The budget includes \$128.0 million for the USGS Climate Adaptation Science Centers and Land Change Science Program, which provide information, tools, and science applications to meet current and emerging challenges that threaten the sustainability of natural resources and our cities, infrastructure, and rural communities. USGS has nine Regional and one National Climate Adaptation Science Centers across the country, which are affiliated with university partners. The centers work with a wide range of resource managers and other partners to address specific climate-related challenges to natural and cultural resources.

The Land Change Science Program analyzes and synthesizes the effects of changes to the environment, land use, and climate on ecosystems to inform natural resource management policy and decisions—including Interior’s highest priorities, such as wildfires and drought—and collaborate with Tribal partners to assess the impacts on Tribal lands and waters.

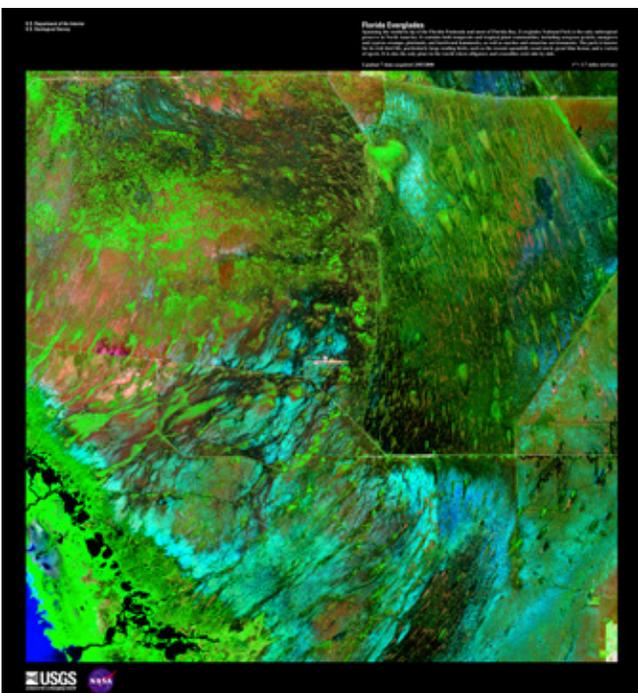
To support and inform collaborative conservation work, the USGS budget includes \$25.5 million for the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas (Atlas), an integrated suite of mapping and visualization tools to display, prioritize, and track the Nation’s conservation, restoration, and stewardship efforts. The Atlas would provide a comprehensive picture of conservation and restoration work in America—from local on-the-ground practices to National efforts. The Atlas would leverage existing authoritative data to include information from partners, including State and local governments, about their land and resource conservation efforts.

The Department of the Interior continues to work closely with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to develop sustainable land imaging for the upcoming Landsat Next mission. Together with NASA, USGS is planning

a new Landsat Next mission that will launch a constellation of three satellites into orbit at the same time. The Landsat Next mission concept will take advantage of new technologies, such as smaller satellites and improved sensors, to sustain the 50-year Landsat data record while delivering greater capability to meet the ever-increasing demands of the user community. Landsat Next will deliver far more capabilities than Landsats 8 and 9, meeting more user needs with improved spatial resolution and faster revisit times. USGS will also establish a commercial data pilot program to augment data from the Landsat satellites. The 2024 budget includes an increase of \$17.0 million to support these efforts.

The budget for USGS also includes \$30.0 million to leverage breakthroughs in high-performance advanced computing to better serve USGS essential core missions. The USGS Advanced Research Computing Environment would invest in scalable, on-demand, high-performance computing infrastructure and modern artificial intelligence/machine learning architectures that provide timely, accurate Earth systems forecasting for drought, weather, land management, wildland fires, landslides, and volcanos. Expanding advanced research computing within USGS will help transform the delivery of science to natural resource managers across Interior and to States, Tribes, local communities, and other agencies to better deliver actionable data and information relevant to decision makers. The USGS budget includes several additional funding increases targeted specifically to promote the application of USGS science and modeling toward specific natural resource challenges.

For many Interior bureaus, scientific research and applied science are integral to their core missions, and many require specific scientific and technical expertise for their work. A strong example is the work BOEM has been doing to stand up a safe and responsible offshore wind energy program on the OCS. BOEM and the Department of Energy are jointly funding three research projects, which began in 2022 and will last 5 years, studying the impacts of offshore wind on wildlife and how to lessen them.



Landsat image of the Florida Everglades.

USGS/NASA Photo.

## Promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion of Underserved Communities

Interior is taking steps across the Department to expand equity, diversity, and inclusion beyond day-to-day management policies to incorporate this concept in the delivery of our missions. This effort is consistent with the Administration's whole-of-government approach to advance equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity. Interior's 2024 budget request supports the actions needed to recognize and redress inequities and to proactively advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within the Department's workforce. The Department seeks to ensure that everyone, no matter their background or ZIP Code, can enjoy the benefits of green spaces and the outdoors.

### Supporting the Next Generation of Native American Biologists

With the support of the FWS and the Sloan Indigenous Graduate Fellowship Program, the first cohort of Native American graduate students joined a new program at the University of Montana.

Although each student navigated their own path to graduate school, several aspects of their journeys rang true for them all—including the importance of dedicated mentors and hands-on experience. Each student had a mentor who helped guide them from their undergraduate programs into their graduate programs, offering encouragement and advice along the way. The students also spoke about how important hands-on experiences were in getting them to where they are today.

For example, as a young volunteer, one student worked with FWS on fish passage and restoration projects for Rio Grande suckers and received an undergraduate degree in wildlife science. As a graduate student in the Wildlife Biology program at the University of Montana, the student now studies the potential of using acoustic monitoring to assess Mexican spotted owl occupancy and habitat use on the Mescalero Apache reservation. Results from this project will help inform spotted owl conservation and forest management. After graduation, the student would like to work for a State or Federal wildlife agency and hopes to someday return to their community to share knowledge as a wildlife biologist.

## Increasing Representation and Tribal Co-Stewardship

Reflecting the Administration's commitment to accessibility and inclusion, the budget includes an additional \$10.0 million as part of an Increasing Representation in Our Public Lands initiative. Funding is included in the budgets of FWS at \$4.0 million; BLM at \$3.0 million; and NPS at \$3.0 million. The initiative will provide support for recent or potential new designations that preserve important places and tell the stories of those that have been historically underrepresented, such as the recent designations of the New Philadelphia and the Blackwell School National Historic Sites. The New Philadelphia National Historic Site in Berry, IL, is the newest unit of the National Park System, authorized in December 2022. It is the first known town planned and legally registered by an African American before the Civil War. The Blackwell School in Marfa, TX, is a newly authorized park unit. The designation helps tell the history of Texas school districts that established separate elementary schools for Mexican American children through the practice of de facto segregation.

The Administration's commitment to strengthen Tribal sovereignty extends across Interior and other Federal agencies. In 2021, Secretary Haaland and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack signed Joint Secretary's Order 3403 (S.O. 3403) committing to Tribal and Federal co-stewardship of Federal lands, waters, and wildlife, including through collaborative and cooperative agreements with Tribal Nations. Since then, Interior and USDA have implemented several significant and innovative co-stewardship arrangements to provide Tribes a greater role in the management of Federal lands and waters that have cultural and natural resources of significance and value to their respective communities. At the end of 2022, Interior and the USDA Forest Service had signed more than 20 new co-stewardship agreements with Tribes, Alaska Native corporations, and consortiums.

At the 2022 White House Tribal Nations Summit, the Department of Commerce announced its commitment to this effort by signing onto Secretary's Order 3403. This commitment furthers an all-of-government approach to co-stewardship

and ensures that additional agencies—such as NOAA within Commerce—will further the Administration’s co-stewardship goals in their management of waters, fisheries, and other resources of significance and value to Tribes across multiple agencies.

The responsibility for meeting Tribal trust responsibilities and promoting Tribal sovereignty stretches throughout Interior. Interior’s 2024 budget includes targeted increases to expand Tribal co-stewardship across the Department. The NPS budget includes \$7.1 million to directly support Tribal participation in management of Federal lands and waters with cultural and natural resources of significance and value to Indian Tribes and their

citizens, including sacred religious sites, burial sites, wildlife, and sources of indigenous foods and medicines.

The budget for FWS includes increases of \$3.5 million to advance improved co-stewardship and engagement with Tribes on Indigenous Knowledge research and conservation planning. Implicit in the Marine Mammal Protection Act is the realization that cooperative management of subsistence harvests between FWS and Alaska Native organizations is more likely to achieve the goals of the Act than management by a Federal agency alone. The budget provides strong support to continue to build these relationships with partners such as the Eskimo Walrus Commission and Alaska

### Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Bison Range

In 1908, the Federal Government established the National Bison Range in the middle of the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. The bison herd there descends from a free-ranging reservation herd started by Tribal members in the 1800s, when Plains bison were near extinction. In December 2020, the Montana Water Rights Protection Act restored the bison range’s land to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and created a 2-year period for transitioning management of the bison range from

FWS to the Tribes. In June 2021, as part of that process, Interior transferred all lands that make up the bison range, approximately 18,800 acres, to BIA to be held in trust for the Tribes. In January 2022, ahead of schedule, the Tribes assumed full management of the bison range. FWS and the Tribes continue to partner to ensure the land and resources are managed at a high level, including prioritizing improvements to address deferred maintenance to enhance safety for the public and wildlife.



The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Bison Range in Montana.

USFWS Photo by Dave Fitzpatrick.

Nannut Co-management Council, which is the FWS co-management partner for polar bears.

Many of Interior's bureaus have dedicated Tribal liaison services to support Tribal engagement. The NPS 2024 budget proposes separate funding for Tribal Heritage Grants within the Historic Preservation Fund to support Indian Tribes, Alaska Native villages and corporations, and Native Hawaiian organizations for the preservation and protection of their cultural heritage, in addition to other important ongoing Tribal programs.

The USGS budget includes an increase of \$7.2 million for Tribal climate adaptation science as well as geospatial and geologic research focused on Tribal lands. The Bureau of Reclamation budget includes \$35.5 million for its Native American Affairs Program, which supports a variety of Reclamation activities with Tribes, including technical assistance, the Secretary's Indian Water Rights Settlements Program, and outreach.

### **Strengthening Interior's Ongoing Commitment to Diversity and Equity**

The Department is responsible for protecting and preserving the treasures of this Nation and aims to build a workforce that represents the treasures of this Nation—its people.

In 2022, the Department published its first Equity Action Plan, which outlined efforts to advance equity through all DOI operations, remove barriers to equal opportunity, and deliver resources and benefits equitably to the general public. The Equity Action Plan is a key part of Interior's efforts to implement Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, and Executive Order 14091, Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through The Federal Government, which calls on Federal agencies to advance equity by identifying and addressing barriers to equal opportunity that underserved communities may face as a result of some government policies and programs.

## **Interior's First Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Council**

As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's work to prioritize equity and inclusion across the Federal Government, in February 2022, Secretary Haaland established the first-ever DEIA Council to incorporate those practices into the Department's work across its many bureaus.

*"The Interior Department has a unique responsibility to be a model for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. As we celebrate the diversity of our Nation, we are actively seeking ways to create opportunities for traditionally underserved communities to enjoy increased access to and benefits of our public lands and waters. By advancing equity across the Department—from our work to spur a clean energy economy and increase access to outdoor spaces to our contracting and employment efforts—we can create opportunities for the improvement of communities that have been historically underserved, which benefits all Americans."*

—Secretary Deb Haaland, February 17, 2022

Establishing the council through Secretary's Order 3406 took a proactive step toward embedding DEIA principles and actions into everything the Interior Department and its bureaus do to fulfill our mission. The DEIA Council includes executive leadership from across the Department to coordinate the development and implementation of specific policies, programs, and initiatives. With representatives from senior leadership in every bureau, the council works to ensure decision-making processes include input from employees at all levels.

The DEIA Council supports the development and use of the best available data, tools, and resources to assess whether underserved communities and their members face systemic barriers to full and equal access to the Department's services, facilities, benefits, contracts and grants, and employment opportunities. The council also works to ensure decision-making processes are informed by input from not only employees but also stakeholder engagement and consultation processes, as appropriate.

In support of the DEIA Action Plan, the 2024 budget includes program increases of \$11.1 million for the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Civil Rights; Office of Human Capital; and Office of Collaborative Alternative Dispute Resolution to do the following:

- Provide resources to the Department's first-ever DEIA Council to coordinate, develop, and implement policies and initiatives promoting the integration of DEIA across the agency.

- Conduct barrier and workforce analyses and increase equal employment opportunity (EEO) and DEIA training to employees across the agency.
- Address EEO adjudication resourcing and compliance gaps identified by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission resulting from two technical assessments of DOI's EEO program.
- Improve the Department's Public Civil Rights reporting and tracking capabilities.
- Strengthen the Department's Affirmative Employment Programs, including the development of diversity and recruitment flexibilities and assessment of hiring programs to improve recruitment results.
- Expand capacity for alternative dispute resolution and EEO complaint mediation.

The budget also includes \$2.0 million to coordinate and manage Departmentwide Justice40 efforts to help deliver at least 40 percent of the overall benefits from certain Federal investments to disadvantaged communities.

## Building Agency Capacity

Interior is strengthening the Department's delivery of core programs and services for the American people. Efforts related to improving Interior's workforce and operations and better leveraging technology and information are underway across the Department.

### **Strengthening Interior's Workforce and Infrastructure**

Interior's mission activities rely on a talented and dedicated workforce, and many bureau operations are labor intensive and complex. At the end of 2020, however, Interior's staffing was at a 10-year low, with 60,558 FTEs. Despite the pandemic, by the end of 2022, staffing had increased to 61,857 FTEs. When fully enacted, the Department's 2024 budget would support an estimated 68,329 FTEs, an increase of 4,009 FTEs from the estimated 2023 level. As the Department rebuilds its workforce, Interior is working to recruit, hire, and train the



National Park Ranger hat.

NPS Photo.

next generation of talented people who will reflect the diversity and strength of the United States. The budget includes \$438.5 million to fully support anticipated fixed cost increases in 2024, which assumes a 5.2-percent increase in Federal salaries. Full funding for these fixed costs prevents the need to absorb these must-pay costs through hiring freezes or reductions in program funding.

NPS is dependent on staffing to carry out its mission at national park areas across the country. Over time, full-time staffing across the National Park system has eroded due to absorption of fixed costs and other challenges. As part of a multiyear effort, NPS is working to build up its full-time Federal staff across the park system. The 2024 budget includes an increase of \$25.4 million to continue this support to build operational capacity across existing and new park areas, the U.S. Park Police, and NPS Special Agents.

Interior manages an infrastructure portfolio valued at more than \$400 billion, which captures a variety of structures, including dams, storage buildings, and national icons. The Department is responsible for roughly 43,000 buildings, 115,000 miles of road, and 83,000 structures. Operations, maintenance,

renewal, and modernization of infrastructure are a significant focus of Interior's funding that directly help to create jobs and benefit local economies.

The 2024 budget includes more than \$3.0 billion, an increase of \$40.5 million above the 2023 level, to address the Department's infrastructure operations, maintenance, renewal, and modernization needs. Interior's annual request for infrastructure funding is in addition to \$1.6 billion in mandatory funding available to Interior each year through 2025 through the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) included in the GAOA. Those funds are available to address the Department's deferred maintenance backlog in NPS, FWS, BLM, and BIE schools. The USFS also receives up to \$285 million in LRF funding each year.

At the end of 2023, Interior's LRF program will have initiated 276 projects touching all 50 States; Washington, DC; Puerto Rico; and the U.S. Virgin Islands. When completed, those projects are estimated to address \$3.4 billion of Interior's deferred maintenance backlog, create an average of 17,000 jobs each year, and contribute an average of \$1.8 billion each year to the overall gross domestic

product. The 2024 budget proposes to allocate another \$1.6 billion in project funds. A list of 2024 projects is provided in the appendixes.

The request also includes \$53.6 million across multiple bureaus to support a 4-year plan to fully transition the Department's light duty fleet acquisitions to zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs). As with funding provided to NPS and Reclamation for that purpose in recent years, this funding will be used to conduct fleet planning (including ZEV integration), electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) site evaluations, EVSE installation, and ZEV acquisition. This planning helps to ensure ZEVs are integrated into Interior fleet plans; prioritize facilities for deployment; determine infrastructure needs, such as increased electrical supply and access for EVSE; and coordinate installation to ensure Interior can maximize the use of the charging stations across the bureaus and other Federal agencies. By leveraging the buying power of the Federal Government and transforming its fleet of more than 600,000 cars and trucks to an all-electric fleet, the Administration can both save money for American taxpayers and accelerate the Nation's industrial capacity to supply domestically produced



Laurel Dormitory in Yellowstone National Park.

NPS Photo by Jacob W. Frank.

ZEVs and electric batteries to create new good-paying jobs and address the climate crisis.

### **Customer Experience**

The 2024 budget includes \$4.5 million in the appropriated Working Capital Fund, complemented with \$200,000 in BTFA, to help improve Interior's customer service by better understanding our customers, reducing administrative hurdles and paperwork burdens to minimize "time taxes," enhancing transparency, creating greater efficiencies across Interior, and redesigning compliance-oriented processes to improve the customer experience and more directly meet the needs of the people of the United States. The funding will support the implementation of action plans for the Department's High Impact Service Providers (HISP). Within the Department, four programs have been identified as HISPs:

- BIA probate activities;
- BTFA management of Individual Indian Money accounts and beneficiary services;
- FWS trip planning through fws.gov; and
- NPS digital experience and volunteer services.

### **Investing in Technology and Information Management**

The 2024 budget includes \$10.1 million to enhance data management practices and conduct program evaluations to inform evidence-based decisions. That amount includes \$2.1 million to establish a robust data management program to organize data through an enterprise data inventory to better support analysis and evaluation across the agency. Another \$6.1 million will support evidence and program evaluations of programs, initiatives, and processes across Interior to assess how well they are working to achieve the intended goals.

To better support that data-driven work, the 2024 budget includes \$59.7 million for the operation and maintenance of the Financial and Business Management System (FBMS), an increase of \$5.3 million from the 2023 enacted amount. The request includes funding required for ongoing operations and maintenance of the Department's integrated FBMS system of record. Modernizing Interior's core

business system to ensure a strong administrative backbone is critical to the continued execution of Interior's mission activities.

The 2024 budget includes \$67.8 million to fund cybersecurity efforts, an increase of \$23.4 million. The budget continues to fund extremely high-priority, recurring operations and maintenance costs for incident remediation activities and provides resources to be directed against emerging threats. The request includes an increase of \$23.4 million to support a Zero Trust (ZT) architecture, which will advance Interior's adaptation of a modern security model founded on a principle requiring all devices and users, regardless of whether they are inside or outside an organization's network, to be authenticated, authorized, and regularly validated before being granted access. Within the \$23.4 million increase is \$5.0 million for a secure access service edge (SASE) solution, which focuses on securing access points to meet the required ZT security and performance standards.

Like many Federal agencies, the Department currently depends on older technologies for remote work, such as virtual private networking (VPN). During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department spent countless hours ensuring that its VPN system could handle network requirements. In response, the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) piloted a SASE solution that met all the security and performance requirements outlined by the Department of Homeland Security, the Office of Management and Budget, and Interior.

Also included in the ZT increase is \$18.7 million for a Log Ingestion, Search, and Retention Solution. Recent cyber events, including the SolarWinds incident, underscore the importance of increased government visibility before, during, and after a cybersecurity incident. Every activity in the IT environment, from emails to logins to firewall updates, is considered a security event. All these events should be logged to enable cybersecurity monitoring, prevention, control, and analysis of activities enterprise wide. With a log ingestion, search, and retention solution, the Department will examine the electronic audit log files of



Christiansted National Historical Site, Saint Croix, U. S. Virgin Islands.

DOI Photo.

confidential information for signs of unauthorized activities. In turn, the logs will be analyzed through the Enterprise Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) system the Department is implementing. The SIEM system can tie systems together for a comprehensive view of IT security and to protect and mitigate against cyber events. Information from logs on Federal systems has been invaluable in the detection, investigation, and remediation of cyber threats.

The 2024 budget proposes appropriations language to establish a nonrecurring expenses fund (NEF), which will allow the Department to transfer unobligated balances of expired discretionary funds from 2024 and subsequent years, no later than the fifth fiscal year after the last fiscal year of availability, to the NEF as no-year funds to support specific purposes. The NEF will provide funding for critical infrastructure projects that may require significant one-time investments, such as IT modernization projects. Those requirements often do not coincide with the timing of the budget formulation process and are difficult to forecast. In many cases, those costs either cannot

be accommodated within existing funds or are emergency requirements that would otherwise require the Department to reprogram existing funds from other priority projects.

The Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR) ensures that revenue from Federal and Indian mineral leases is effectively, efficiently, and accurately collected, accounted for, analyzed, audited, and disbursed in a timely fashion to recipients. Revenue distributions, which totaled \$21.5 billion in 2022, benefit States, Tribes, individual Indian mineral royalty owners, and U.S. Treasury accounts. The 2024 budget for ONRR includes an increase of \$5.0 million to address new royalty rates and other changes enacted in the IRA, which are expected to increase the complexity of royalty reporting and audit requirements. The request will fund additional staff and counsel support and strengthen ONRR's audit and compliance activities. The request also expands ONRR's Tribal audit program to include agreements with two additional Tribes.

Interior field operations rely heavily on communications. In some places, smartphones

provide that vital link, but across much of the landscape, the Department’s legacy land mobile radio (LMR) system, a technology largely unchanged since the 1950s, is the first and often only source of communication—when it works. The 2024 budget includes \$32.2 million for DOI’s Field Communications Modernization (DIFCOM) as part of a multiyear investment strategy. Funding in 2024 is included in the budgets for BIA, BLM, FWS, NPS, and USGS, as well as a small amount for IT program oversight in the OCIO. This approach will assess and invest in updated technology, where it makes sense, while considering the Department’s historical reliance on the traditionally more expensive LMR network in areas of the country where LMR remains the most reliable means of communication. In 2024, DOI will focus on modernization in Alaska, the Southeastern United States, and Hawaii and other Pacific Islands as it leverages deployment of communications networks outside Interior’s owned infrastructure, such as FirstNet and other dedicated public safety broadband, as well as improved satellite systems in locations where terrestrial broadband is not feasible.

Field communications modernization will also tie into and enhance other new capabilities being

implemented across DOI communities of practice. From first responder needs—such as electronic records keeping, tracking for asset management accountability, and hazard warning—to resource management data collection and in-field collaboration, this modernization enables last-mile connectivity to those tools in the field, improves safety, increases efficiency, and delivers data for better management decisions.

Across the regions targeted for modernization in 2024, initial planning and design work will identify solutions that are standardized and consistent by leveraging existing systems, such as the FirstNet network. The initial planning will also work to identify potential sites for infrastructure sharing with commercial entities and partners where it would be beneficial to all parties. The assessments will identify where Interior can consolidate or replace LMR sites with lower cost options. As Interior reduces long-term field communication costs and increases capabilities through modernization, the strategy also supports the goal of increasing rural and Tribal broadband, as many sites could also be used by commercial providers alongside public safety systems.



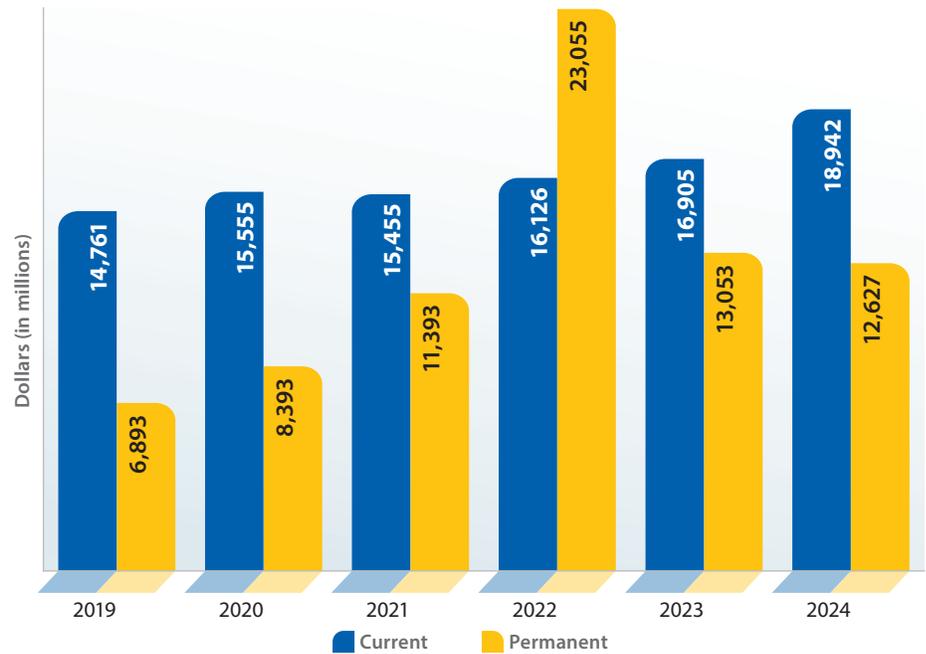
Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in Oregon.

DOI Photo.

## The Numbers

The Department's 2024 budget request totals \$18.9 billion in current authority. Of that amount, \$17.5 billion is requested for programs funded by the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. The 2024 request for the Bureau of Reclamation and Central Utah Project Completion Act, funded in the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, is \$1.5 billion in current appropriations. In 2024, Interior will generate receipts of \$19.6 billion.

### Department of the Interior Funding



## Budget Authority and Receipts

(dollars in millions)

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Request	Change
<b>BUDGET AUTHORITY</b>				
Total Current Appropriations (w/o supplementals and cap adjustment).....	16,126	16,905	18,942	+2,036
Permanent Appropriations (w/o mandatory proposal).....	23,055	13,053	12,627	-425
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>39,181</b>	<b>29,958</b>	<b>31,569</b>	<b>+1,611</b>
[Net discretionary BA] .....	[15,985]	[16,762]	[18,276]	[+1,514]
<b>RECEIPTS</b>				
Outer Continental Shelf .....	11,862	8,372	7,721	-651
Onshore Mineral Leasing.....	8,512	7,920	7,342	-578
Other Offsetting Receipts .....	3,783	2,303	2,261	-42
Other Receipts .....	2,145	2,312	2,244	-68
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>26,302</b>	<b>20,907</b>	<b>19,569</b>	<b>-1,338</b>

## Department of the Interior Facts

**Land**—Interior manages more than 480 million acres, or about 20 percent of the land area of the United States; more than 700 million acres of subsurface minerals; and more than 740 million acres of submerged land in five national monuments. The Department has jurisdiction over almost 2.5 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf.

**Parks, Refuges, and Public Lands**—Interior manages 424 units of the national park system, 568 national wildlife refuges, 71 fish hatcheries, 1 historic fish hatchery, 23 national conservation areas and similarly designated areas, and 28 national monuments in BLM's national conservation lands.

**People**—Interior has nearly 70,000 employees in approximately 2,400 locations across the United States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Territories, and the Freely Associated States.

**Volunteers**—Interior benefits from more than 160,000 volunteers, who provided more than 5.4 million hours of service in 2022, valued at an estimated \$162 million.

**Conservation**—More than 776,000 acres of high-priority abandoned coal mine sites have been reclaimed through OSMRE's Abandoned Mine Lands program. FWS acts to protect 2,375 endangered and threatened species, 1,678 of which are in the United States.

**Revenues**—Interior collects revenues from energy, minerals, grazing, timber, land sales, and other revenue-producing activities. Interior's estimated revenue projections in 2023 are \$19.6 billion.

**Water**—The Department is the largest supplier and manager of water in the 17 Western States. Reclamation manages 489 dams and 338 reservoirs that deliver water to more than 31 million people and 1 of every 5 western farmers, irrigating 10 million acres of farmland.

**Energy**—Interior manages lands, subsurface rights, and offshore areas that produce approximately 17 percent of the Nation's energy, including 14 percent of natural gas, 26 percent of oil, and 46 percent of coal. Federal lands also host projects that account for a significant portion of the Nation's renewable-energy-generating capacity, including 14 percent of hydropower, 1 percent of windpower, 63 percent of geothermal energy, and 6 percent of solar energy.

**Visitation**—Annually, more than 81 million visits are made to BLM public lands, nearly 312 million visits to national park units, roughly 80 million visits to national wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries, and more than 90 million visits to Reclamation recreation sites.

**American Indians**—The Department provides services to American Indians and Alaska Natives from the 574 federally recognized Tribes in the 48 contiguous States and Alaska. BIE provides education services to 45,000 students in 23 States attending 183 elementary and secondary schools and dormitories and supports 33 BIE-funded community colleges, universities, and postsecondary schools. There are 96 BIA-funded corrections programs and 191 bureau and Tribal law enforcement programs.

## Department of the Interior Facts *(continued)*

**American Indian Trust**—Interior has responsibility for the largest land trust in the world. Today, the Indian trust encompasses approximately 56 million surface acres and 59 million acres of subsurface mineral estates. On those lands, Interior manages more than 133,000 leases for uses such as farming, grazing, and oil and gas production on behalf of individual Indians and Tribes. BTFA manages approximately \$8.3 billion of trust funds held in about 4,100 Tribal accounts and about 408,000 open Individual Indian Money accounts.

**Science**—Interior provides unbiased, multidisciplinary science for use in understanding, mapping, and managing natural resources and hazards. Data are available to the public from more than 11,800 streamgages and more than 3,800 earthquake sensors. Interior is also responsible for operating three earth observation satellites—the Landsat 7, 8, and 9 missions. USGS has been providing Landsat data products from its archives at no cost since 2008. In 2022, USGS distributed more than 150 million remotely sensed data products, with 4 billion data deliveries via the commercial cloud.



The Department of the Interior hosted the 2022 White House Tribal Nations Summit. Over two days, the Summit provided an opportunity for Biden-Harris Administration and Tribal leaders from federally recognized Tribes to meaningfully engage about ways the Federal government can invest in and strengthen Native communities, as well as ensure that progress in Indian Country endures for years to come.

*DOI Photo.*

