Memorandum

To: Assistant Secretaries
    Heads of Bureaus and Offices

From: Secretary of the Interior

Subject: Implementation and Standardization of the Unified Regions

Last year, the Department of the Interior (Department) embarked on and completed an effort to consolidate 49 regions across 8 Bureaus into 12 common geographic regions.

Since last October, senior executives across most of the Department’s Bureaus and the Office of the Solicitor have served temporarily as Regional Facilitators. They have done an enormous amount of helpful work and provided important feedback, in conjunction with their regional peers, to advance this unified regional structure. Building on their success, I have determined a need to appoint 12 Field Special Assistants and associated Field Committees to ensure the long-term operational efficiency of this regional structure. This memorandum outlines existing authorities, scope of work, reporting structure, and additional insight into the role of these important positions. Key goals for these regional positions include:

- enhancing cooperation and collaboration with States, Tribes, local governments, and other key stakeholders within the region;
- coordinating major intra/interagency efforts as assigned by the Secretary;
- improving problem solving by expeditiously resolving jurisdictional conflicts within the region and/or elevating issues for faster resolution;
- strengthening relationships and direct communication with local States, counties, and communities to ensure their needs are considered; and
- enhancing senior executive leadership opportunities and fostering increased multi-jurisdictional experience.

**Field Special Assistants**

The appointment of Field Special Assistants is not new to the Department and can be found referenced in the Department Manual at 110 DM 3 (attached). The stated purpose is to “provide a direct Secretarial conduit to the Department’s field activities; to assure fast response on field matters requiring Secretarial review; and to provide expertise, leadership, and assistance in the coordination of programs and policies of the Secretary.” The Field Special Assistants will be appointed by the Secretary and shall generally be filled by members of the Senior Executive Service (SES).
The Field Special Assistant in each region will report directly to the Secretary and will typically serve for a period of 1 year. This position will serve as a multi-agency leader and convener for relevant topics and issues as specified by the Secretary. This appointment may be designated to be full time or, in some instances, supplement current SES duties. This individual will play a critical role in coordinating Department-wide perspectives on interdepartmental issues and resolving interbureau issues, as assigned by the Secretary. The Secretary will meet with each Field Special Assistant on at least a quarterly basis to review their activities, accomplishments, adherence to proposed timelines, and suggestions for improvement.

Upon completion of the typical 1-year assignment, another designee will be appointed. During the assignment, if the designated Field Special Assistant is serving in a full-time capacity, the home Bureau for that individual will be expected to backfill with a detail in the temporarily vacant position.

This rotational system will produce useful developmental value for participants in each region. The Field Special Assistant will broaden his or her skills and experience while strengthening relationships across the region. Any temporary Bureau replacement will also develop skills allowing them to have an enriched professional experience and be more competitive for future senior executive vacancies.

A recent survey of the Department showed that a significant percentage of respondents want to be able to be detailed to other positions and Bureaus to understand future career opportunities and paths. This approach creates additional opportunities for growth and a deeper understanding of various Bureau missions. It will also enhance cooperation and collaboration throughout the Department. Individual executives should see value in the opportunity without harboring career concern, as they will return to their original position after 1 year.

**Regional Field Committees**

In accordance with the Departmental Manual 110 DM 3.2, a Field Committee will be established in each Unified Region, comprised of the senior executives appointed by the heads of Bureaus and Offices with responsibilities for a given Unified Region, as well as the Regional Solicitor with responsibilities for the region in question. The breadth of experience, programmatic knowledge, and demonstrated leadership capability of the members of the Regional Field Committees will prove extremely beneficial to the effective and efficient management of each Unified Region. The specific language in the Departmental Manual regarding the committees is attached to this memo.

Each Field Committee will specify goals and activities for their region in coordination with the Secretary and their respective Field Special Assistant. The Field Special Assistant will maintain relevant timelines for all assignments and will work directly with the Field Committee to ensure timelines for assigned tasks are maintained. Each respective Field Committee will adhere to principles outlined in a charter or guidance document to be established in coordination with existing Regional Facilitators.
To assist them in this effort, a draft template of a charter is attached. Each Field Committee charter may be tailored to some degree to satisfy the unique circumstances in each Unified Region, though it will establish a consistent approach across all the Unified Regions. Potential regional variation will occur because of differences in workload, the variety of activities that require interbureau contact and collaboration, the extent of interactions with other Federal agencies, and the potential necessity of collaboration across regions. Employees based in one region may work across regional lines into an adjacent region, as appropriate. The Field Committee will function as a useful conduit for communication and collaboration.

**Conclusion**

This regional leadership will provide a clear and distinct point of contact for stakeholders to elevate and seek prompt resolution on issues that involve multiple agencies of the Department.

This approach to serving the public and our employees will produce quicker results, better guidance, and increased efficiency, thereby satisfying local communities and stakeholders that the vital missions of the various Bureaus and the entire Department are being fully realized. These leadership roles will also enhance collaboration and shared understanding of the missions, issues, and perspectives among Bureau regional leadership. I want to thank the Regional Facilitators for their recommendations and feedback throughout this entire process. I look forward to appointing the first set of Field Special Assistants to fulfill this new and crucial role within the next 2 weeks.

Attachments
3.1 **Duties and Responsibilities.** From time to time the Secretary may establish one or more Field Special Assistants to the Secretary to provide a direct Secretarial conduit to the Department's field activities; to assure fast response on field matters requiring Secretarial review; and to provide expertise, leadership, and assistance in the coordination of programs and policies of the Secretary. The functions of a Field Special Assistant are to:

A. Maintain active liaison with appropriate Federal, State, Inter-State and private interests.

B. Alert the Secretary to State and local legislative proposals, public opinion, and interest group participations which affect or could potentially affect programs in the field.

C. Represent the Department and coordinate Department participation in major interagency and inter-governmental efforts when directed by the Secretary.

D. Chair the Department's field committees and coordinate matters of program and policy in the field where more than one bureau or program is involved. The functions of the Department's field committees are described in 110 DM 3.2.

E. Serve as Departmental Defense Liaison Officer (DDLO) to coordinate with other Departments and Interior organizations matters pertaining to Emergency Preparedness.

F. Serve as the Secretary's representative on Federal Regional Councils.

3.2 **Field Committees.**

A. Field committees serving appropriate geographic areas are established to serve as an instrument for achieving Department policy objectives in coordination at field level. Field committees are composed of regional directors or other ranking officials appointed by the heads of bureaus and offices, and the Regional Solicitor in each respective geographic area. Under the general direction of appropriate bureau officials, field committee members are responsible for participating and assisting in field committee activities.
B. The Departmental field committees promote the development and execution of coordinated regional natural resource programs for the Department and facilitate the coordination of field activities which involve two or more bureaus, or which have special significance to the Department's overall objectives. In carrying out these responsibilities the field committees develop and submit periodic reports to the Office of the Secretary; prepare Departmental reports on special problems; and serve as focal points for exchange of information among bureaus within the Department and with other Federal, State and local agencies, and public and private groups on matters of mutual concern. The field committees have no supervisory relationship or responsibility with respect to bureau programs and operations.

3.3 Emergency Preparedness. A Field Special Assistant to the Secretary serves as Departmental Defense Liaison Officer (DDLO) and in such capacity maintains a regional emergency operations plan for continuity of Departmental programs in those areas assigned to the Secretary of the Interior by Executive Order 11490. Liaison with Bureau Defense Liaison Officers (BDLOs) is maintained for possible diversion of personnel and equipment to accomplish pre-attack, trans-attack, and post-attack operations.

2/22/82 #2389
Replaces 9/7/79 #2201
PROPOSED
REGIONAL FIELD COMMITTEE CHARTER
UNIFIED REGION [UR# & name]

I. PURPOSE
Regional Field Committees (RFC) supporting the Department of the Interior (Department) unified regions are established to serve as an instrument for achieving Department policy objectives through coordination at the field level.

On August 22, 2018, 12 unified regions were established for the Department. This reorganization from 49 regions across 8 bureaus to unified regions brings greater efficiency, accountability, collaboration, and consistency across our bureaus.

The RFC is chaired by the unified region’s Field Special Assistant (FSA), a Department executive appointed by the Secretary.

II. AUTHORITIES
The Department will implement the Charter pursuant to existing Departmental Manual (DM), Part 110 Chapter 3, Field Special Assistant to the Secretary. Department Unified Regions were established under the authority of the revised 105 DM 3.

III. OBJECTIVES
The Regional Field Committees promote the development and execution of coordinated regional programs for the Department. They also facilitate coordination of field activities that involve two or more DOI bureaus or that have special significance in the Department’s overall mission.

In carrying out these responsibilities, the RFCs help develop periodic reports that the FSA submits to the Office of the Secretary and prepare Departmental reports on special problems. They also serve as focal points for exchanging information among bureaus within the Department and with other Federal, State and local agencies, and public and private groups on matters of mutual concern. The RFCs have no supervisory relationship or responsibility with respect to bureau programs and operations.

In addition to addressing the broad regional objectives listed above, the [fill in region name] will also address the following specific regional priorities:

[Regional facilitators, add to and/or replace the following items with specific priorities in your region.]

1. Issues that are highly complex, and/or contentious that involve multi-bureaus/agencies, or involve several jurisdictions; complex conflicts with energy projects; and nationally
significant issues under litigation. Complex Endangered Species Act issues (e.g. multi-
bureau/agency section 7 consultations).

2. Improving efficiency when issuing permits from multiple bureaus for the same project.
3. NEPA products (development of EAs/EISs) involving multiple DOI bureaus

IV. COORDINATION
In coordination with their FSA, each RFC will specify particular goals or activities for their region within the FSA’s scope of responsibilities, along with relevant timelines. These will be shared with the Secretary, who will adopt or modify them as appropriate. On at least an annual basis, the Secretary will meet with each FSA to review their activities, accomplishments, adherence to proposed timelines, and suggestions for improvement. The FSA will coordinate with the RFC to address feedback, questions or concerns raised by the Secretary during this review. This annual progress review will be shared with the FSA’s home bureau director and assistant secretary.

V. MEMBERSHIP
Regional Field Committees are comprised of Department bureau regional directors/state directors or other ranking officials appointed by the heads of bureaus and offices, and the Regional Solicitor in each respective geographic regional area.

VI. MEETINGS
The RFC shall be convened by the FSA at least bi-monthly (six times per year). Meetings may be conducted in person or by teleconference (or a combination of both). Additional meetings to discuss emergencies or complex topics will be scheduled as needed. Any subcommittees established under the aegis of the field committee will determine their own meeting schedule depending on the need.

VII. CONDUCT OF ACTIVITIES
The agencies will continue to use their own resources - including their own funds - to conduct activities related to accomplishing the objectives enumerated in this Charter. In implementing this Charter, each agency will operate under its own laws, regulations, and policies and be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

The salary, travel and administrative needs of the FSA (and any administrative staff assigned to him/her) will be supported by the FSA’s home bureau. Any travel or other expenses incurred by RFC members for committee-related work will be funded by committee members’ home bureaus.

VIII. MODIFICATION, TERM, AND TERMINATION
This charter may be modified and amended upon written request of any party and the subsequent written concurrence of the other parties.

The term of this charter commences upon the date of the last of the XX signatures appearing below and shall expire five (5) years from the date of the last of the signatures appearing below.

Should circumstances warrant, this charter may be amended before the five-year period is up, with Consensus of the regional field committee members.

IX. SIGNATURES- See attached signatory pages.