

**To:** John Bockmier[john\_bockmier@ios.doi.gov]; Todd Willens[todd\_willens@ios.doi.gov]; Amy Holley[Amy\_Holley@ios.doi.gov]; Andrea Travnicek[andrea\_travnicek@ios.doi.gov]; Aurelia Skipwith[aurelia\_skipwith@ios.doi.gov]; Benjamin Cassidy[benjamin\_cassidy@ios.doi.gov]; Cally Younger[cyounger@blm.gov]; Caminiti, Mariagrazia[Marigrace.Caminiti@sol.doi.gov]; Casey Stemler[casey\_stemler@fws.gov]; Catherine Gulac[Catherine\_Gulac@ios.doi.gov]; Daniel Jorjani[daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov]; David Bernhardt(b) (6) @ios.doi.gov; Douglas Domenech[douglas\_domenech@ios.doi.gov]; Downey Magallanes[downey\_magallanes@ios.doi.gov]; Edward Keable[edward.keable@sol.doi.gov]; Elinor Renner[elinor\_renner@ios.doi.gov]; Heather Swift[heather\_swift@ios.doi.gov]; James Cason[james\_cason@ios.doi.gov]; John Tahsuda[john.tahsuda@bia.gov]; John Tanner[john\_tanner@ios.doi.gov]; Juliette Lillie[juliette\_lillie@ios.doi.gov]; Katharine Macgregor[katharine\_macgregor@ios.doi.gov]; Kathleen Benedetto[kbenedetto@blm.gov]; Kerry Rae[kerry\_rae@ios.doi.gov]; Kevin Haugrud[jack.haugrud@sol.doi.gov]; Larrabee, Jason[jason\_larrabee@ios.doi.gov]; Laura Rigas[laura\_rigas@ios.doi.gov]; Lori Mashburn[lori\_mashburn@ios.doi.gov]; Maureen Foster[maureen\_foster@ios.doi.gov]; Micah Chambers[micah\_chambers@ios.doi.gov]; Nikolao Pula[Nikolao\_Pula@ios.doi.gov]; Russell Newell[russell\_newell@ios.doi.gov]; Scott Cameron[scott\_cameron@ios.doi.gov]; Scott Hommel[scott\_hommel@ios.doi.gov]; Timothy Williams[Timothy\_Williams@ios.doi.gov]; Todd Wynn[todd\_wynn@ios.doi.gov]; Vincent Devito[vincent\_devito@ios.doi.gov]

**From:** Gulac, Catherine

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[Weekly Report to the Secretary 12-07-17.docx](#)

Please find attached the weekly report to the Secretary.

*Catherine Gulac*

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Deputy Secretary

1849 C St, NW, MS 7328

Washington, D.C. 20240

202 208 6291 Office / 202 208 1739 Direct / 202 208 1873 Fax

[Catherine\\_Gulac@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Catherine_Gulac@ios.doi.gov)

**WEEKLY REPORT TO THE SECRETARY  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**December 12, 2017**

**Office of the Deputy Secretary**

**Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

Assistant Deputy Secretary Willens and FWS Assistant Director for Ecological Services Frazer will lead a work session discussion with ES ARD's. The focus is ESA regulatory and operational efficiencies. NMFS will participate. The Deputy Secretary and Deputy Chief of Staff are planning to attend.

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## **Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Jason Larrabee will be in the office.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Aurelia Skipwith will be in the office.

### **Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

Nothing additional to report.

## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

Principal Deputy Director Greg Sheehan will be in the office.

### **Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

On December 8, at the invitation of the Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources, FWS will participate in an event to announce the initial projects to be funded by the 2017 DuPont settlement. FWS is a trustee in the cooperative effort to restore natural resources injured by decades of mercury contamination from the company's former Waynesboro facility. This round of projects focuses on land protection and restoration in the South/South Fork Shenandoah rivers, including restoration efforts that support the local greenway in Waynesboro and access points for recreation. The Governor is expected to attend. FWS is supporting the state's outreach to Congress, news media, and stakeholders.

FWS is nearing completion of its review of a Habitat Conservation Plan for the proposed Coral Reef Commons development project in the Richmond Pinelands area of Miami-Dade County. The project has drawn controversy. FWS prepared an environmental assessment, incidental take permit, NEPA findings, communications plan and a biological opinion for the action. A signed permit for the HCP will be ready next week and will be communicating with congressional offices in South Florida simultaneously. This is the last step in the FWS review of the project.

Within the next week, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) will announce \$724,200 in grants to support six on-the-ground sagebrush conservation projects in Colorado, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. These grants will leverage an additional \$1 million in matching funds from partners, representing a \$1.7 million investment in locally-led partnerships to restore important sagebrush habitat and increase capacity and coordination throughout sagebrush country. The funds were made available through the new Sagebrush Landscapes Program, a partnership between NFWF, FWS, BLM, U.S. Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Montana. FWS actively participated in the Request for Proposal process for this program and will be directly involved with implementation of several of the projects.

FWS Mountain-Prairie Regional Director Noreen Walsh will be quoted in NFWF's press release, and FWS will pursue storytelling opportunities through the lifecycle of several of the grants.

On December 13, FWS and U.S. Forest Service representatives are scheduled to meet in Cloudcroft, New Mexico, with a private rancher and staff from Representative Pearce's (R-NM) office. The rancher's cattle graze Forest Service-managed lands that are inhabited by the ESA-listed New Mexico meadow jumping mouse. Discussions will include development of a framework to address long-term land management practices that will benefit the mouse while meeting the needs of the rancher.

Pending approval by the Department, in early December, FWS plans to publish in the *Federal Register* a draft 10-year General Conservation Plan (GCP) for Utah prairie dogs. Conservation plans such as the Utah prairie dog GCP are developed to allow for incidental take permit authorization for species listed under the ESA. The overall goal of the Utah prairie dog GCP is to reconcile prairie dog conservation with the development needs of local communities in southwest and southcentral Utah, and compensate for impacts to Utah prairie dogs. The GCP also includes a program to allow translocations of prairie dogs from already developed (or adjacent) properties to sites on federal or other protected lands, mirroring portions of the previous state prairie dog management plan. FWS developed the GCP in partnership with the state of Utah, USFS, BLM, and Iron, Garfield and Beaver counties.

FWS and NOAA have completed a public scoping process to evaluate ways to protect seabirds from predation by invasive house mice at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial, located in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. Midway is the largest Laysan albatross colony in the world and more than 3 million birds from 29 species nest on Midway's three islands. All of them are potentially vulnerable to mouse predation. The mice have been documented eating seabirds while they are nesting, resulting in injury and death. Due to their extreme dedication to raising their young, the birds won't leave the nest if attacked. FWS is preparing a draft environmental assessment that will evaluate alternatives to protect seabirds from mouse predation. The draft Environmental Assessment (EA) should be ready for public comment in mid-December. Outreach is planned to include local public notifications through the web and social media, when the draft EA is published, and notifications to members of Congress in Hawaii, with targeted stakeholder outreach.

On October 13, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) received a proposed action from Hecla (the mining company and applicant) for the Montanore project. USFS, Hecla, and an environmental consultant are working on writing the biological assessment (BA) that will include an update of the baseline and new data on grizzly bears for the area. USFS continues to work with the applicant to make sure the information it has is complete as it undertakes development of the BA. FWS is providing technical assistance while the parties undertake this part of the consultation process. The consultant has proposed a meeting between the parties in mid-December to focus on clarifying the best and latest information on grizzly bears; however, that meeting date has not been confirmed.

### **Hot Topics**



Two appeals related to the FWS's 2012 rulemaking terminating the southern sea otter translocation program were heard before a panel of Ninth Circuit judges separately (back-to-back) on Dec. 4 in Pasadena. A decision on the appeals is anticipated in the coming weeks. The appeals raise nearly identical issues. If the court decides the cases in the FWS's favor, the 2012 rule terminating the translocation program and its associated translocation and management zones will stand. If the court decides against the FWS, the 2012 rulemaking will be vacated, the management and translocation zones will be reinstated (along with their associated ESA and MMPA exemptions), and the FWS may be called upon to remove sea otters from the management zone. The decision on these appeals will conclude all outstanding litigation related to our 2012 rulemaking, but new lawsuits may still be filed until the six-year statute of limitations ends on January 18, 2019. FWS has prepared a statement in the event of media inquiries in response to the judges' decisions.

## **National Park Service**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

On December 7, Mike Reynolds, NPS deputy director, will speak at the Pearl Harbor Memorial Ceremony at the Historic Ships in Baltimore Museum. His presentation will focus on the Maritime Heritage Program and the importance of preserving our National Historic Landmarks.

From December 12-15, Sue Masica, acting deputy director, will be at the Denver Regional Office to meet with superintendents and the regional management team.

### **Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

On November 28 and December 6, two bipartisan bills to correct an inadvertent state legislative prohibition on the muzzleloader deer hunt held annually at Apostle Island National Lakeshore will be proposed in the Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly. The Apostle Islands National Lakeshore superintendent was asked to provide the State Assembly background on the conflict between the state law and the Federal law concerning this issue. Federal law authorizes hunting at Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, but a 2011 state law changed deer season and had the unintended result of banning the park hunt. The proposed legislation would simply reinstate the established muzzleloader season in the park. The action is supported by sportsmen and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and is consistent with Secretary Zinke's Order 3356 to expand hunting opportunities and increase collaboration with states. No controversy is expected.

On December 7, a posthumous award of the Bronze Star Medal with V device for valor will be presented to the family of Chief Boatswain's Mate Joseph L. George of the USS *Vestal* (AR 4), in recognition of his efforts during the December 7, 1941, Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, in which he saved the lives of several sailors from the USS *Arizona* (BB 39). The award, authorized by Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer, will be presented to George's daughter, Joe Ann Taylor, at the USS *Arizona* memorial by Rear Adm. Matthew J. Carter. It is anticipated that multiple USS *Arizona* survivors will be present for the ceremony.

Tentatively planned for December 12, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area will release the Air Tour Management Voluntary Agreement for the 30 day public comment period. The NPS, the Federal Aviation Administration, and seven commercial air tour operators intend to sign the agreement, once complete, to manage air tours over Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Rainbow Bridge National Monument.

In early December, Cape Hatteras National Seashore will begin a project to remove the Cape Hatteras Fishing Pier, also known as Frisco Pier. This project will be completed by May 1, 2018, and includes removing underwater pilings as well as the visible parts of what remains of the pier. Under private ownership, the pier received catastrophic damage during several severe weather events, which resulted in the permanent closure of the pier in 2010. In September 2013, the NPS reached an agreement with the pier's private owner on the possessory interest value of the structures with the intent to remove, both, the pier and the pier house. Local residents and other interested individuals have started petitions and a Facebook page lamenting the Seashore's decision to demolish the pier; consequently, the Seashore expects media attention. After successful removal of the structures, the Seashore will begin planning for a project to improve the parking lot and provide restroom facilities in the area.

On December 14, Little Bighorn National Monument will host an on-line public meeting to discuss the park's General Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment (GMP-A). The proposed actions are a change from the direction identified in the 1986 GMP and will likely generate significant interest from park advocacy groups and affiliated tribes. The park's original GMP called for constructing a new visitor center off-site which would be costly, have an adverse impact on interpretive requirements, and would require the park to enter into a long term lease with the landowner. The proposed GMP would dismiss all further considerations for off-site construction options. The park continues to engage in consultation with affiliated tribes and finds general support. The public meeting will include a presentation on the plan and an opportunity for participants to ask questions. The public comment period runs from November 17, 2017 to January 4, 2018. Once completed the GMP-A will guide management actions to enhance visitor access, visitor services, and resource protection.

On November 28, the first meeting of the Interagency Long Term Bison Management team was held at Grand Canyon National Park to communicate among participating agencies the long term management of bison on the Kaibab Plateau. Cooperators include Arizona Game and Fish Department and Kaibab National Forest. A subgroup of this team plans to meet prior to December 29th. On November 29, the Grand Canyon National Park Bison Reduction Technical Workgroup met; members include the Kaibab National Forest, Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Inter-Tribal Buffalo Council, and representatives from various national park units that have bison. This group plans to meet again the week of December 14.

On or about December 15, Golden Gate National Recreation Area will complete the Record of Decision for the Alcatraz Ferry Embarkation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. The selected alternative will rehabilitate historic structures for visitor use and ferry operations at Pier 31½ in San Francisco, supporting a commercial services concession that will begin in 2019. Final approval of a general agreement and associated draft leases for a long-term ferry embarkation site at Pier 31½ is expected in January 2018.

In mid-December, the Federal Highway Administration expects to award a contract for repair, repaving, and rehabilitation of several major road projects at Grand Canyon National Park. The work will be completed in 2018 and 2019 and will include work on Desert View Drive, Yaki Point and South Kaibab Trailhead Roads, South Entrance Road, and Village Loop. In January 2018, the park plans on holding a community meeting to discuss the projects.

In late December, the NPS will publish a Federal Register notice announcing that the Department of the Interior (DOI) has authorized the preparation of a World Heritage nomination for the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks in Ohio. With nine component properties including those that form Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, and others managed by the State of Ohio, this series of geometric mounds is approximately 2,000 years old. The nomination file, which will take more than a year to draft, will be developed by local proponents in Ohio with guidance from the NPS. Upon completion and review, the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks will determine whether or not to submit the nomination to the World Heritage Committee.

On December 25, a 45-day comment period concerning a proposed land exchange between Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and the local public utility company will close. The proposed land exchange would enable the Northern Indiana Public Service Company to install a 24" diameter natural gas line through Federal land. Congressional offices have been notified of the proposed exchange. The Federal government will grant an easement interest to allow for the natural gas line. Under this proposal, the Northern Indiana Public Service Company would convey to the Federal government a parcel of land, a segment of 11 acres that would match the value of the easement.

In December, the NPS anticipates the announcement of the Save America's Treasures funding opportunity on grants.gov. Save America's Treasures grants fund the preservation and conservation of nationally significant properties and collections with \$5 million in FY 2017 funding available for this grant. State, Tribes, local governments, nonprofits and Federal agencies excluding the NPS are entities that may apply for this opportunity.

In December, Fire Island National Seashore will release the Final Breach Plan/EIS for a 30-day no action period. The Final Breach Plan/EIS responds to public comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement which was circulated in October - December 2016. Comments ranged from supporting immediate mechanical closure of the breach to leaving the process completely up to nature. The plan identifies Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative because it allows the breach to be managed to NPS resource management policies and wilderness directives while allowing closure if necessary to prevent "loss of life, flooding, and other severe economic and physical damage to the Great South Bay and surrounding area." A Record of Decision may be signed by the Northeast Regional director no sooner than 30 days after the Environmental Protection Agency publishes a Federal Register Notice of Availability of the Final Breach Plan/EIS.

In or after December, the NPS expects to release the final plan/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address the presence of wolves at Isle Royale National Park. The publication of the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency NOA of this final plan/EIS in the Federal Register will initiate a 30-day wait period before the Regional Director of the Midwest Region will sign the Record of Decision. The NPS preferred alternative would introduce between 20-30 wolves to the island over a 3-year time period. A decision is needed because the potential absence of wolves raises concerns about possible effects to the current Isle Royale ecosystem, including effects to both the moose population and forest/vegetation communities. Over the past five years, the wolf population has declined steeply and at this time, natural recovery of the population is unlikely.

In or after December, pending DOI approval, the NPS anticipates publishing an NOA in the Federal Register for the Draft Management Plan and Draft EIS for Saline Valley Warm Springs (plan/DEIS) in Death Valley National Park. The NOA will initiate a 60-day public comment period on the document during which public meetings will be held in the vicinity of the park. The plan/DEIS analyzes five alternatives for the management of the Saline Valley Warm Springs area. The plan/DEIS analyzes five alternatives for the management of the Saline Valley Warm Springs area, and is intended to provide a framework for natural and cultural resource management, administration and operations, and managing visitor access.

In December 2017 or January 2018, the Blue Ridge Parkway anticipates completing environmental compliance and signing required right-of-way and construction permits for the Mountain Valley Pipeline. The NPS and the applicant are currently reviewing draft permits. The Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has alerted the NPS of a likely finding of Adverse Effect under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. This finding is directly related to a new historic district identified by the SHPO, and may require an additional agreement between Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), SHPO and the NPS. The NPS cannot issue permits for the project until the Section 106 process is complete. This pipeline would traverse the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and has been approved by FERC with final decisions by a number of other state and federal agencies still pending.

## **Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs and the Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Indian Education**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

On December 6, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs will hold a hearing on two Tribal water rights settlement Acts: S. 664, Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act of 2017, and S. 1770, Hualapai Tribe Water Rights Settlement Act of 2017. The DOI witness will be Alan Mikkelsen, Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation.

December 6, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs will hold a business meeting at 2:45 pm to markup S. 1870, the Securing Urgent Resources Vital to Indian Victim Empowerment (SURVIVE) Act.

On December 12, BIE Director Dearman will travel to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to host the fourth of five consultations on its Strategic Plan, at the National Indian Programs Training Center.

On December 12-14, BIA Director Rice will travel to Pawhuska, Oklahoma to attend a meeting of the Osage Minerals Council and meet with Regional BIA staff in Muskogee, Oklahoma.

On December 13-14, BIE Director Dearman will remain in Albuquerque to meet with BIE senior managers and others to present and gather input on the strategic plan at the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) and then lead a strategic planning session.

On December 13-14, BIE will lead a strategic planning session at the SIPI campus in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

On December 14, Deputy BIA Director – Field Operations James will travel to Portland, Oregon, to meet with Northwest Regional Staff and present a retirement award to the Regional Director, Stanley Speaks, who is retiring from Federal service on December 31, 2017, after serving 59 years with DOI.

### **Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

This week, Indian Affairs intends to announce, via Dear Tribal Leader letter, an updated schedule for Tribal consultation on potential revisions to BIA's fee-to-trust regulations at 25 CFR Part 151. The letter will also extend the original December 15, 2017 deadline for comments.

December 4 - 7, the Indian Energy Service Center (IESC) plans to host two trainings regarding the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Indian Fluid Minerals in Lakewood, Colorado.

On December 11, the Office of Self Governance will be meeting with representatives of the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians to discuss progress in updating the process for appraisals of trust or restricted land through a single Departmental entity.

On December 12, 2017, the Indian Energy Service Center will host the Fort Berthold Federal Partners meeting in Lakewood, Colorado.

On December 12-14, the Division Chief for BIA's Forestry Program will attend the Intertribal Timber Council in Portland, Oregon.

On December 14, BIE will host the last of five consultations on its Strategic Plan, by teleconference.

## **Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

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### **Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

**Media Advisory** - Announcing Assistant Secretary Keynote at Island Government Finance Officers Association Guam and Meeting with Hawaii Governor on Compact Impact.

**Census Bureau of Economic Affairs (BEA) posts GDP for USVI** – BEA releases 2016 GDP data for USVI which had seen an increase. The GDP statistics are collected by BEA through a program funded by OIA.

### **Grant Funding**

In light of the Continuing Resolution for FY18 funding, OIA is making partial payments for the following continuing operations:

- Four Atoll Health Care Program in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to avoid interruption of primary health care services to the people of the 4 Nuclear-Affected Atolls in the RMI - Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap and Utrok.
- Palau Compact - \$2.5 million for general government operations.

OIA grant recipient, the Pacific Islands Health Officers Association (PIHOA), is receiving an extension to spend a prior year grant of \$500,000. The program is meant to expand training available at the local community college level or at regional academic institutions for Public Health lab and program staff in the six US-affiliated Pacific Islands.



## **Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

ASLM Deputy Assistant Secretary Kate MacGregor (exercising the authority of the ASLM) will be in Washington, DC attending regularly scheduled meetings.

ASLM Deputy Assistant Secretary Casey Hammond will be in Washington, DC attending regularly scheduled meetings.

### **Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

On December 11, BOEM plans to publish the Draft Proposed Program (DPP) for the 2019 – 2024 National OCS Oil & Gas Program. Publication of the DPP is the second step in developing the new Program; it follows a Request for Information that was published on July 3, 2017, in response to which BOEM received over 815,000 comments.

On December 11, BSEE Director Scott Angelle will speak at a joint meeting of the South Central Industrial Association (SCIA) and the Bayou Industrial Group (BIG) in Gray, LA. SCIA has more than 250 member firms, representing over 200,000 employees, many of whom are engaged in servicing the oil, gas and marine operations in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico and around the world. BIG is a non-profit, non-partisan organization committed to the growth and sustainability of business and industry in the Bayou Region of southeast Louisiana, including offshore energy companies and service providers.

On December 11-15, BLM Office of Law Enforcement and Security Director William Woody will visit members and staff of the Utah congressional delegation to discuss law enforcement issues in Utah. BLM Deputy Director for Policy Brian Steed and DOI OCL Director John Tanner also plan to attend. Scheduled meetings include Rep. Mia Love (R-UT-4) and Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT). Other meetings are yet to be determined.

On December 12, BLM-NV will hold an online oil and gas lease sale for 208 parcels totaling 388,959.402 acres in White Pine, Lincoln and Nye Counties. The sale will likely be controversial. BLM-NV has received comments from the EPA, Center for Biological Diversity, Great Basin Water District and Nevada Department of Wildlife, regarding a variety of concerns including impacts to air quality, water resources, and sensitive species.

On December 12, BLM-MT will hold an oil and gas lease sale for 204 parcels totaling 98,889 acres in Big Horn, Custer, Carter, Fallon, Garfield, Powder River, Richland, and Rosebud Counties. BLM-MT expects minimal controversy with this sale. Bidding is not expected to be robust.

On December 13, BSEE Director Scott Angelle will attend the USCG National Offshore Safety Advisory Committee (NOSAC) meeting in Houston, TX. The meeting will focus on Safety Management Systems (SMS) for well intervention and an industry review of USCG OCS regulations.

On December 13, pending final approval, BOEM plans to host a webinar to solicit input from the public on draft guidance for the submission of Construction and Operations Plans that contain a design envelop, which would allow lessees the flexibility to defer final design decisions in order to take advantage of rapid technological advances.

On December 13, BLM-CA State Director Jerry Perez will meet with Avangrid Renewables LLC to discuss right-of-way fees and fair market values for the Tule Wind Project. The company maintains that the regulatory basis for the Tule Wind Project's acreage rent does not fairly reflect actual fair market values for land within the project area. The BLM requested additional information from Avangrid to support its position and for further discussion of this matter.

On December 13, the BLM-CA El Centro Field Office will conduct a public scoping open-house meeting as a first step in the preparation of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for United States Gypsum Company's (USG) proposed mine expansion/modernization project near the city of El Centro. The quarry is located about 26 miles northwest of Plaster City. Both sites are located within the BLM's California Desert Conservation Area.

On December 14, BLM-Eastern States will hold an oil and gas lease sale for seven parcels totaling 1,185 acres in OH and LA. The sale will include five parcels totaling 350.06 acres in the Wayne National Forest, Monroe County, OH; and two parcels totaling 834.70 acres in the Kisatchie National Forest, Natchitoches and Winn Parishes, LA. The parcels being offered in the Wayne National Forest are expected to be controversial as several environmental groups are attempting to prohibit hydraulic fracturing in the area. At this time, the level of bidding interest is unknown.

On December 14, BLM-UT will hold an oil and gas lease sale for 75 parcels totaling 94,000 acres in Duchesne, Uintah and Emery Counties. The sale is expected to be controversial due to the nomination of parcels near Dinosaur National Monument. Two of the three parcels nominated by industry for consideration near the boundary of the Monument have been deferred pending consultation with the NPS. The remaining parcel contains both BLM-managed and split estate land, with a small portion in view of the monument. The BLM, however, has applied stipulations for light and noise pollution, and to minimize impacts to air quality and the scenic view shed. Bidding is expected to be robust.

On December 13 - 14, BOEM plans to hold a meeting with the Committee on Offshore Sciences and Assessment (COSA) of the National Academies of Sciences. The Bureau is currently working with COSA members to develop the specific agenda items that will be discussed in the meeting.

On December 14, BLM-WY will hold an oil and gas lease sale for 45 parcels totaling 72,843 acres in Laramie, Sweetwater, Uinta, and Lincoln Counties. Protests received from the Upper Green River Network, University of Wyoming, WildEarth Guardians, and the Wilderness Society have been dismissed as the issues raised are adequately analyzed in the supporting NEPA documents and resource management plans. Protests focused on water resources, Greater sage-grouse, climate change, and the social cost of carbon. This is the first sale that BLM-WY is not deferring the vast majority of parcels in sage-grouse priority habitat management areas,

which has caused a higher than usual level of interest; however, the actual sale is not expected to be controversial and bidding is expected to be average for an oil and gas lease sale in the High Desert District.

On December 14, BLM-CA's Bakersfield Field Office will host a public scoping meeting in Three Rivers to gather comments on a draft of a vegetation/forest health plan for the BLM's only giant sequoia grove on Case Mountain. The BLM manages approximately 444 acres on Case Mountain, which supports the Giant Sequoia Complex and the Case Mountain Extensive Recreation Management Area. The area is also part of the 20,000-acre Kaweah Area of Critical Environmental Concern, designated for the protection of the six distinct giant sequoia groves, other sensitive plant and animal species, riverbank ecosystems and culturally significant areas.

On December 14, BLM-AK Associate State Director Ted Murphy will provide an update to the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group on development activities within the NPR-A. The group brings a broad range of stakeholders together who are actively involved in the management of caribou and includes subsistence users, other hunters, reindeer herders, hunting guides, transporters and conservationists.

On December 14, Acting ASLM Kate MacGregor, BOEM Acting Director Walter Cruickshank, and representatives of BOEM are *tentatively* scheduled to meet with DoD representatives to establish a working group in order to develop and implement a coordination and consultation plan focused on finding mutually beneficial resolutions to minimize spatial conflicts between oil and gas activities and military operations on the OCS.

In mid-December, as required under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, BOEM plans to publish a final rule to adjust the offshore facility limit of liability for damages to reflect the increase in the Consumer Price Index since 2013. The rule will increase the limit of liability under OPA from \$133.65 million to \$137.56 million.

On December 15, BLM-CA Bakersfield Field Office will meet with the California Resources Corporation (CRC), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to discuss CRC's proposal to donate its mineral estate in the Carrizo Plain National Monument in exchange for mitigation credit for projects conducted in the San Joaquin Valley. The BLM is strictly a facilitator for these meetings and does not anticipate having to make a decision.

On December 15, BOEM plans to publish the Notice of Availability for the Final Supplemental EIS for Gulf of Mexico Lease Sales 250-251.

In mid-December, ASLM Deputy Assistant Secretary Kate MacGregor, BOEM Acting Director Walter Cruickshank, and representatives of BOEM will meet with DoD representatives to establish a working group to develop and implement a coordination and consultation plan focused on finding mutually beneficial resolutions to minimize spatial conflicts between oil and gas activities and military operations on the OCS.

## **Assistant Secretary Policy, Management and Budget**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

- On December 4-5, 2017, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, Scott Cameron will be in Washington, DC, and participating in routine internal briefings. On December 6, 2017, Scott will be in Nevada to meet with the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Idaho Department of Agriculture, staff of the Western Governors Association, US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Region 2, Bureau of Reclamation, and the Superintendent of Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA) to discuss opportunities for improved intergovernmental cooperation in reducing the risks of boats infested with invasive quagga and zebra mussels leaving Lake Mead and infecting currently uninfested waters in other Western States. On December 7-8, Scott will be attending the leadership offsite at NCTC.
- Who: National Invasive Species Council Secretariat
- What: Invasive Species Advisory Committee (ISAC) Meeting
- When: December 6, 2017 from 1:00 pm–3:00 pm EST
- Where: Teleconference (Call in # 1-888-989-4568; passcode 4720680)
- Press: Open (Public Meeting)
- Topic: The committee will meet via teleconference to discuss and consider approval of briefing papers developed by three of its task teams: 1) Federal-Tribal Coordination; 2) Advanced Biotechnology; and 3) Managed Relocation. The committee will also officially approve minutes from its December 2016 meeting and March 2017 teleconference. The meeting agenda and relevant draft documents can be accessed at <https://www.doi.gov/invasivespecies/december-2017-isac-conference-call>.

### **Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

For Hurricane's Harvey and Irma, the Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC) is coordinating DOI efforts for the Natural and Cultural Recovery Support Function (NCR RSF). For Hurricane Harvey, the OEPC's Field Coordinator continues to develop the Recovery Support Strategy, with support from subject matter experts deployed by, the National Park Service. For Hurricane Irma, two OEPC staff members continue to serve as part of FEMA's interagency recovery team at the Joint Field Office in Orlando. Current efforts are focused on refining the Mission Scoping Assessment to identify impacts to natural and cultural resources. For Hurricane Maria, OEPC is coordinating DOI efforts related with Emergency Support Function #10 (Oil and Hazardous Materials) and #11 (Protection of Natural and Cultural Resources), and the Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery Support Function. A Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) staff member and an OEPC staff member deployed to Puerto Rico to serve as Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery Support Function Field Coordinators for the week of November 27, under a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Mission Assignment. A National Park

Service (NPS) staff member and an Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC) staff member are preparing to deploy to the U.S. Virgin Islands to serve as Field Coordinators the week of December 4, 2017.

For the California Wildfires, the Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC) headquarters and San Francisco are coordinating with Emergency Support Function #11 and DOI bureaus to monitor the wildfires in California. The San Francisco Office is working closely with her partners to ensure natural and cultural resource concerns are addressed.

A new Government Accountability Office (GAO) Audit is “Federal Efforts in Environmental Justice (Job Code 102432).” Per request from the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security and the Ranking Member of the Senate Budget Committee, GAO will review: (1) how Federal agencies have identified and assisted minority or low-income populations affected by disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of Federal programs, policies, and activities; (2) how Federal agencies are reviewing and updating their environmental justice strategies, providing progress reports, and evaluating their performance; (3) to what extent the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice is providing guidance and coordinating efforts across the Federal government; and (4) any challenges Federal agencies face when addressing environmental justice issues.

The Government Accountability Office Entrance Conference on “Emerging Threats to Federal Facilities (Job Code 102189)” is scheduled for November 30, 2017 with the Department’s Office of Law Enforcement and Security and the U. S. Park Police. Per request from the Ranking Member of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection Subcommittee, House Committee on Homeland Security and the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Management Efficiency Subcommittee, House Committee on Homeland Security, GAO will review: (1) the extent to which selected Federal agencies identify, share, and assess the quality of information on emerging threats to Federal facilities; and (2) the extent these agencies have taken action to address select emerging threats.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) Exit Conference/pending report “Financial Assurances for Coal Mine Reclamation (Job Code 101326)” was scheduled for November 28, 2017, with the Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement (OSMRE). Per request from the Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; Senator Durbin; the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Natural Resources; the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources; and the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations; and Representative Cartwright, GAO reviewed: (1) amounts and types of financial assurances held for coal mine reclamation; (2) the extent to which financial assurances to reclaim coal mines have been forfeited between July 2007 and June 2016; (3) OSMRE’s process to oversee financial assurances for coal mine reclamation; and (4) challenges that OSMRE and authorized state agencies face in managing financial assurances for coal mine reclamation.

A recent final Office of Inspector General report is “Independent Auditors' Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Financial Statement for Fiscal Years 2017 and 2016 (2017-FIN-026).” Under OIG contract, KPMG, an independent public accounting firm, performed an audit

of the Department's Fiscal Years 2017 and 2016 financial statements. KPMG issued an unmodified (clean) opinion on the financial statements. While not identifying any internal control material weaknesses, KPMG reported three internal control significant deficiencies: (1) General Property, Plant, and Equipment; (2) Accounts Payable; and (3) general Information Technology controls. KPMG identified no instances of noncompliance with laws and regulations. The Office of Financial Management is working with impacted bureaus and offices to develop and implement corrective action plans.

### **30-60 Day Look Ahead**

The first Pilot Program Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint will be accepted for processing under the new Office of Civil Rights streamlined procedures. By way of background, in FY 2017, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) approved the Department's pilot project request for a time period to begin October 1, 2017. The DOI Pilot will enhance the integrity of the program because the Pilot will reduce employees'/managers' time spent in litigation and away from the job; improve morale by enhancing workplace relationships; improve productivity and performance; and create more time for OCR staff to concentrate on improving in other program areas. Additionally, each office within the Office of the Secretary has to pay for EEO investigations out of their operating budget, and the pilot will mitigate the misperception of needlessly investigating and litigating "frivolous" EEO complaints and save the Office of the Secretary an estimated \$120,000 in FY 2018. EEOC staff and federal sector EEO professionals are confident that, if the DOI Pilot is successful, this pioneering change to the EEO process will save many federal agencies millions of dollars annually.

On December 11-14, 2017, Interagency Borderlands Coordinator Range will attend an interagency (U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Border Patrol (BP), National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)) site visit to the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge in southern Arizona. During the site visit, environmental compliance options regarding new surveillance towers within the refuge as well as options relating to managing border patrol access routes in Designated Wilderness areas will be discussed.

On December 12-14, 2017, Acting Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) Director Jeff Rupert will attend the Intertribal Timber Council Executive Board Meeting in Portland, Oregon. Acting Director Rupert will give an overview of the 2017 Fire Season and discuss budget and project priorities for FY 2019.

In early/mid-January, the progress report from DOI for the invasive mussels initiative in the Columbia River Basin and across western waters, will be announced. The Office of Policy Analysis (PPA) is working with the bureaus on the report which addresses action items which were announced by the Secretary in June to address invasive mussels in the Columbia River Basin, and across western waters.

On January 31, 2018 the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Management Directive 715 Report is due to the EEOC.

On March 31, 2018, the No FEAR Act Report is due to Congress.

## **Assistant Secretary for Water and Science**

### **Week Ahead Schedule of Meetings, Hearings, and Travel**

During the week of December 11, Deputy Assistant Secretary Andrea Travnicek will participate in multiple meetings on the Navajo Generating Station in various locations in Arizona on December 11-12, and attend the Colorado River Water Users Association (CRWUA) annual conference in Las Vegas, NV from December 13-14.

### **Week Ahead Announcements and Actions**

The USGS currently is making pre-assessment public presentations in preparation for conducting resource assessments in response to Secretarial Order 3352, which directs the USGS to update assessments of the Alaska North Slope with emphasis on National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPRA), the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), and State lands and waters. The content of the presentations will include descriptions of why the assessment is being done, what methods are being used, and specific documentation of the geological interpretations that form the foundation of the assessment. Meetings currently in progress focus on two geological formations in which significant oil discoveries have been announced in the past two years: the Nanushuk and Torok Formations. The Nanushuk Formation hosts two new discoveries, Pikka–Horseshoe and Willow. The assessment is tentatively scheduled for completion in December 2017.

On December 11, NBC Nightly News is expected to air a segment relating to ongoing efforts to find an economically-viable solution to continuing operations of the Navajo Generating Station, near Page, Arizona. Last week, Interior agencies (USBR and BIA) announced an extension lease to allow the Federal and non-Federal stakeholders' ongoing search for a post-2019 operator to continue. Coverage is expected to be neutral.

On December 12, USGS Associate Director for Energy and Mineral Resources, Murray Hitzman, will appear before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy & Mineral Resources to provide testimony regarding critical minerals in the United States.

On December 12, Reclamation will launch the Eradicating Invasive Mussel Prize Competition seeking ideas to eradicate invasive mussels. This will be the first stage of a potential three-stage prize competition. A news release and video are being prepared to help publicize the competition.

Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) requested Reclamation be the owner's representative during efforts to rehabilitate the spillway at Guajataca Dam. This would include reviewing final designs for permanent repairs that the U.S. Corps of Engineers will be preparing once the temporary repairs are constructed. The Bureau of Reclamation intends to work directly with the U.S. Corps of Engineers as a reviewer of their designs for the permanent repairs. Reclamation will also likely be involved with the risk analysis of the entire project.

In December, the Department will release a new USGS report on critical minerals for the United States. This publication presents resource and geologic information for 23 mineral commodities currently viewed as important to our national economy and national security, many of which are sourced entirely outside of the United States. The report provides an in-depth look at each commodity's use, distribution of deposit types, and current status of production, resources, and reserves. The individual commodity chapters serve as an update to the 1973 commodity chapters of USGS Professional Paper 820, United States Mineral Resources. A DOI news release is planned.

In December, the USGS will announce a recently published paper that finds about 70 percent of wild prairie dogs successfully ingested baits containing an oral sylvatic plague vaccine, or SPV, that were distributed throughout their habitats in Arizona, Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, Texas, Utah and Wyoming. Sylvatic plague can decimate prairie dog populations, which in turn affects the recovery of endangered black-footed ferrets that depend on prairie dogs for food. Protecting wildlife from plague and reducing spread of the disease can also help people and pets that are susceptible to infection. Partners include Colorado Parks and Wildlife and FWS. The paper is published in *EcoHealth* and a Technical Announcement is being planned.



## **30-60 DAY LOOK-AHEAD**

### **Office of the Solicitor**

#### **SIGNIFICANT LITIGATION DEADLINES FOR NEXT THREE WEEKS SEPARATELY REPORTED**

### **Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks**

#### **U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service**

On or around January 8, 2018, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice of availability of the draft revised stock assessment report for the northern sea otter stock in Washington State and open a 90-day public comment period. This action is not expected to be opposed. FWS will notify the state and outer coast tribes, and post the document on the Washington Fish and Wildlife Office website.

On or around January 12, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice announcing the availability of comprehensively revised boundaries for the first batch of Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS) units included in the Hurricane Sandy Remapping Project, affecting 112 existing and 36 proposed new units in Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New Jersey. The notice will announce a 120-day public comment period and also advise of upcoming public meetings to be held via webcast. Landowners, state and local officials (and their representatives in Congress) will likely support the removal of certain areas from the CBRS and similarly oppose the addition of such areas to the CBRS. Taxpayer groups, recreational interest groups and conservation groups will likely support the additions to the CBRS. Outreach will include a news release and FAQs, as well as stakeholder and congressional outreach.

On January 17-18, FWS plans a meeting with representatives from the five range state fish and game agencies, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and other partners to discuss coordination on lesser prairie-chicken issues. The meeting is in Arcadia, Oklahoma. FWS is in discussions with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation regarding increased hunting opportunities on national wildlife refuges in Oklahoma. A follow-up meeting is planned for January.

In January, several border projects involving FWS are anticipated to begin. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will need access to water from a FWS-owned well on Buenos Aires NWR in Arizona for a road repair project. The Border Patrol & Air and Marine Program Management Office (BPAM PMO) plans a road construction project for a 66-mile portion of the Presumido Canyon Road through the Baboquivari Mountains in Arizona. CBP will update existing communications and surveillance towers on and adjacent to the Buenos Aires NWR.

**Endangered Species Act Listing/Delisting Actions**

Pending approval by the Department, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* 90-day petition findings for five species: the oblong rocksnail, sicklefin chub, sturgeon chub, tricolored bat and Venus flytrap. As part of this batched finding, FWS is publishing a correction to the 90-day finding for leopards that clarifies the range and the entity FWS is evaluating in the status review. 90-day findings are just the first step in a lengthy process and tend not to get significant media coverage except for the most high-profile species; however, for substantial 90-day findings, this action might be the first time stakeholders become aware that we are assessing the status of a species. All stakeholders will have ample opportunity to provide input into FWS' eventual 12-month findings. A national news bulletin and congressional notifications are planned.

Pending approval by the Department, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposed listing determination for the Yangtze sturgeon, located in China. While there is no expected opposition to this determination, aquacultural businesses and countries including China may be concerned that the potential listing of this species will have an impact on other species that are traded internationally, such as the Amur sturgeon. Planned outreach includes a news release.

On or around December 14, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to delist the Fossitt speckled dace, an endemic fish species in Oregon, from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife due to recovery. FWS will also make available the draft post-delisting monitoring plan. This action will likely only receive local and regional interest. Oregon Desert Fishes Working Group (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, FWS) has been engaged and is supportive of this action. FWS will conduct outreach to local and regional media, Congressional staff, and stakeholders. FWS does not expect opposition to this proposal. The target date/week is not confirmed, as publication is pending clearance by the Department.

On or around December 14, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* 12-month findings on a petition to list the beaverpond marstonia and a petition to delist the southwestern willow flycatcher. For the beaverpond marstonia finding, FWS does not anticipate opposition by stakeholders except for the petitioners; however, it is likely the petitioners will pursue media attention due to our conclusion that the species is extinct. For the southwestern willow flycatcher finding, FWS anticipates interest from the petitioners. Planned outreach includes separate news releases for each species, with supporting FAQs, and notifications to stakeholders and members of Congress. FWS is required by settlement agreement to submit the finding for the beaverpond marstonia to the *Federal Register* by December 31; therefore we plan to submit it by December 14.

On or around December 14, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final listing determination and designation of critical habitat for the Black Warrior waterdog, an amphibian in Alabama. FWS is designating 659 river miles as critical habitat. The costs of critical habitat are expected to be low. Stakeholders include Bankhead National Forest, the state of Alabama, Alabama Forestry Commission, National Alliance of Forest Owners, National Council for Air and Streams, Tennessee Valley Authority, Warrior-Tombigbee Waterways Association, Weyerhaeuser, Sierra Club, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, and the Center for Biological Diversity. FWS received several substantive comments expressing concern about the inclusion of

unoccupied critical habitat. After reevaluating whether each proposed critical habitat unit was essential for the conservation of the species, FWS determined the unoccupied units did not meet that criterion. Removal of the unoccupied units in the final rule will reduce the level of concern among the interested parties. Planned outreach will include a news release and notifications to stakeholders and members of Congress. FWS is required by settlement agreement to publish the determination in the *Federal Register* by January 4, 2018.

On or around December 14, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposed listing determination for the Panama City crayfish, found in Bay County, Florida. Interested stakeholders include local governments (Bay County Commissioners, City of Panama City, City of Callaway, City of Lynn Haven and City of Springfield), the St. Joe Development Company and the Center for Biological Diversity. There may be some opposition from developers concerned that listing this species could have a negative impact on the development of new residential and commercial properties in the area. Planned outreach will include notifications to local stakeholders, a news release to local media, and social media posts. FWS is required by settlement agreement to submit the determination to the *Federal Register* by December 29; therefore, FWS plans to submit it by December 14.

On or around December 14, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposed listing determination on the Barren's topminnow, found in Tennessee. This action is not expected to be opposed and media coverage is expected to be neutral. Interested stakeholders include Center for Biological Diversity (petitioner), Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and local landowners. Planned outreach includes a news release to all interested parties and the media. FWS is required by settlement agreement to submit the determination to the *Federal Register* by December 31, and therefore plans to submit it by December 14.

On or around January 8, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final rule to remove the eastern puma (cougar) (historically known to exist in southeastern Ontario, southern Quebec, and New Brunswick in Canada, and a region bounded from Maine to Michigan, Illinois, Kentucky, and South Carolina in the eastern United States) from the list of endangered and threatened species due to extinction. Although FWS does not anticipate major public resistance to the final rule, opposition to the conclusion of extinction may be expressed by advocates for puma and large predator conservation. There may be some concern due to "puma" sightings reported by the public. The best available information indicates that these are cases of mistaken identity and escaped captive animals, and, rarely, dispersers from western puma populations. This rule will also acknowledge the current state of the North American puma taxonomy. Interested parties include the states within the eastern United States, the Humane Society of the United States, the Animal Legal Defense Fund, and the Cougar Network. A national news bulletin and congressional emails are planned.

On or around January 8, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to remove the Monito gecko, a reptile in Puerto Rico, from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife due to recovery. It is protected in a natural reserve managed by the Puerto Rico Department of Environmental and Natural Resources that has no public access. As a result, species' protections will remain in place after delisting. This action is a conservation success story and is not

expected to be opposed. The primary stakeholder is the territory of Puerto Rico. Planned outreach will include a news release and web postings.

On or around January 12, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposed listing determination and proposed critical habitat designation for the Island marble butterfly, found in Washington. The proposed critical habitat designation includes approximately 812 acres. This action is not expected to be opposed and media coverage is expected to be neutral. Interested stakeholders include Xerces (the petitioner), federal partners including National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management, and state partners including Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Washington Department of Natural Resources, San Juan County Land Bank, the San Juan Preservation Trust and local landowners. A news release to all interested parties and the media is planned.

On or around January 15, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* final listing delisting determinations for Eureka Valley evening-primrose and Eureka dune grass, two plants species that occur in Death Valley National Park, California. FWS will delist Eureka Valley evening-primrose, and will reclassify Eureka dunegrass from an endangered to a threatened species. The primary partner and stakeholder is the National Park Service who supports the actions. Some environmental groups opposed delisting the two species. However, in response to new information, we are no longer delisting Eureka dunegrass and are instead reclassifying it to a threatened species which may reduce the level of concern among the interested parties. Planned outreach will include a news release and notifications to stakeholders and members of Congress.

On or around January 17, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a final determination on a proposed rule to downlist the Tobusch fishhook cactus from endangered to threatened. This plant species has shown significant recovery due in part to collaborative conservation efforts with partners. Supporters of this action include the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas Department of Transportation, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, The Nature Conservancy. FWS has gained significant positive coverage on downlisting proposals, and anticipates more interest when this final determination is announced. Outreach planned includes a news release and social media postings.

On or around January 19, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a taxonomic change for the orangutan. The original listed entity included all orangutans in the genus *Pongo*. However, the orangutan has recently been reclassified as belonging to two distinct species: *P. pygmaeus* and *P. abelii*. Therefore, we are revising the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife to reflect the current scientifically accepted taxonomy and nomenclature of the orangutan. This change does not alter regulatory protections afforded to the orangutan and is not expected to be opposed. Since this is a technical correction, minimal outreach is planned.

On or around January 24, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to downlist the Hawaiian goose (nene) from endangered to threatened. FWS will also propose to establish special regulations for the conservation of the species under section 4(d) of the ESA to allow for flexibility in managing lands. Landowners of resort, golf course, agricultural, residential, and recreational properties are likely to support the reclassification and associated 4(d) rule while conservation groups may be opposed. Interested stakeholders include the State of Hawaii, federal

agencies, conservation and bird groups, various private landowners, and the public. Outreach includes a news release, social media, emails and phone calls to Congressional offices and stakeholders.

On or around January 24, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a notice of availability of a draft post-delisting monitoring plan for the black-capped vireo. While this action is not expected to be controversial, stakeholder who oppose the delisting of the species, may express use this notice to express their concerns about the delisting. Stakeholders include the petitioners, Pacific Legal Foundation, Jim Chilton, New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association, New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau, New Mexico Federal Lands Council, and Texas Farm Bureau, and the Office of Travis Co. Judge and Big Bend National Park. Planned outreach will include notifications to local stakeholders, a news release to local media and social media posts.

On or around January 31, FWS plans to send to the *Federal Register* a proposal to downlist the Borax Lake chub, in Oregon, from endangered to threatened. This action will likely receive the most interest at the local and regional level. The Oregon Desert Fishes Working Group (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, FWS) has been engaged and is supportive of this action. FWS will conduct outreach to local and regional media, Congressionals and stakeholders.

#### **Migratory Bird Management Actions**

In December, FWS plans to publish in the *Federal Register* the proposed 2018-19 hunting regulations for certain migratory game birds. FWS annually prescribes frameworks, or outer limits, for dates and times when hunting may occur and the number of birds that may be taken and possessed in hunting seasons. These frameworks are necessary to allow state selections of seasons and limits and to allow recreational harvest at levels compatible with population and habitat conditions. Planned outreach includes congressional and stakeholder notifications and a news release.

#### **National Park Service**

On January 1, 2018, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park plans to implement a \$10 permit fee to anchor vessels overnight in Aquatic Park Cove using an online reservation through Recreation.gov. The online registration system and overnight anchoring fee for boats in the Aquatic Park Cove will provide boaters a convenient way to reserve a mooring in advance of visiting the park. It also will allow the park to inform visitors entering the Cove about security issues, swimmer safety requirements, and environmental regulations. Through a comparability study conducted by the park of three different Bay Area sites that offer similar experiences, accessibility and amenities, the analysis showed that the park's present fee anchoring permits are below similar operations, and that even with the fee of \$10, the Aquatic Park Cove will remain one of the most affordable anchoring experiences in the Bay Area. Recreation.gov does not have an app, but its site is mobile responsive.

January 5, 2018, is the new deadline for public comments on alternatives for the Chesapeake and Canal Plan/EA. The NPS and Georgetown Heritage, the Business Improvement District (BID) for Georgetown, extended the comment deadline to ensure the public has ample opportunity to

provide feedback. Early design concepts for Alternatives were presented at a public meeting on November 2.

January 5, 2018, is the new, extended deadline to submit comments on the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Grand Canyon National Park Expanded Non-native Aquatic Species Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. In addition to the open houses scheduled on December 6 and 7, the NPS is also conducting an additional open house in Phoenix on December 12. The park released the EA for public comments on November 15, and announced the extension on November 30. The purpose of the plan is to provide additional tools to prevent, control, minimize, or eradicate potentially harmful, non-native aquatic species in the Colorado River and its tributaries from the Glen Canyon Dam downstream and through Grand Canyon National Park.

Tentatively planned for January 8, Springfield Armory National Historic Site will hold a ceremony to formally recognize the NPS ownership as sole custodian of the Colonel J.B. Benton Small Arms Collection (BSAC). Benton was the founder of the Springfield Armory in 1871, and subsequently became Commanding Officer. The NPS and the U.S. Army Center for Military History (CMH) have a long, intricate history related to the BSAC. The NPS has cared for these objects for more than four decades in a world-class curation storage facility in compliance with the latest DOI standards and this ownership status has been questioned periodically by the CMH. Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA-1) will attend the ceremony as well numerous members from the CMH.

In January 2018, Golden Gate National Recreation Area will launch a required-reservation system for privately owned vehicles and concessioners at Muir Woods. The contract requires the concessioner to make the reservation system accessible on mobile devices.

In January 2018, Golden Gate National Recreation Area anticipates final approval of a General Agreement and associated Draft Leases for a long-term ferry embarkation site at Pier 31½ in San Francisco. The site will have improved visitor and vessel services to/from Alcatraz Island.

In January 2018, roof repair of the Lincoln Memorial begins. On September 19, a \$2.8 million contract for the work was awarded to Arrow DJB JV II, LLC of Upper Marlboro, and Maryland. Funded by the FY17 NPS appropriation, the work is expected to be completed in August 2018. The contract also includes repair of cracks in the white marble at the memorial's penthouse level, caused by the 2011 earthquake. This is the first phase of a \$25 million dollar restoration of the Lincoln Memorial that will include expanded exhibit and public use areas, funded in part by an \$18.5 million donation from businessman and philanthropist David M. Rubenstein.

In January 2018, the final rule to allow bicycle use on a portion of the East Shore Trail at Rocky Mountain National Park is expected to be published in the *Federal Register*. The East Shore Trail is an existing hiking and equestrian trail that runs north/south along the east shore of Shadow Mountain Lake near the town of Grand Lake, Colorado. A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed in February, 2015, that approved bicycle use on a two-mile segment of the trail. Rerouting trails along the East Shore to safely accommodate bike use triggered the rulemaking process per the NPS Bicycle Rule policy. The proposed rule was published in the

*Federal Register* in December 2015. Substantive comments received during the proposed rule public comment period were addressed.

The January/February 2018 issue of *Westways Magazine*, the official publication of the Southern California Automobile Association of America, will feature Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in an eight-page spread. The article is timed to coincide with the park's 40th anniversary.

Through March 2018, the NPS will conduct annual deer management actions at Catoctin Mountain Park, Antietam National Battlefield, Monocacy National Battlefield, and Rock Creek Park. This will be Catoctin's ninth season of deer management operations, Rock Creek Park's fifth season, and the second season for Antietam and Monocacy National Battlefields. Park staff members are conducted deer population density surveys in October and November 2017 to determine the number of animals to remove, as determined through their deer management plans. Sharpshooters from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service will remove deer from closed park areas during the daytime in some parks and from park roads after dusk in all parks. Venison will be donated to local food banks

On February 1 and 2, 2018, Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL-5) and possibly additional members of the House Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition (SEEC) are planning to visit coastal areas of Everglades National Park and sites in Northeastern and Central Florida Bay. Topics during the visit will include Hurricane Irma effects, and Everglades Restoration and Ecosystem Sustainability programs.

On February 19, 2018, President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter will speak at the Plains High School, a part of Jimmy Carter National Historic Site, during the annual Presidents Day celebration. The Congressional delegation, state and local officials will be invited to attend.

In the spring of 2018 Mojave National Preserve expects to begin the public comment period on a Management Plan for Developed Water Sources and Environmental Assessment (PDWS/EA). The plan will provide a comprehensive strategy and water management techniques to ensure the preservation of wildlife, historic, wilderness, and recreation values in the management of developed and undeveloped water resources in the park (wildlife guzzlers and developed springs). The process is being closely watched by local hunting and conservation groups concerned about how the park will manage wildlife guzzlers, which are viewed by some as necessary for maintaining a healthy bighorn sheep population.

### **NEPA Documents**

The Federal Transit Authority is requesting comments for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Section 4(f) Evaluation for the King of Prussia Rail Project in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The purpose of the proposed project is to provide faster, more reliable public transit service to the King of Prussia area. The project is within the viewshed of Valley Forge National Historical Park, and the park has been actively involved with the planning and believes the project will benefit the park by lessening congestion in the area and providing alternative transportation options for park visitors. The Northeast Regional Office has reviewed the document and has drafted a comment letter on behalf of DOI's regional environmental

officer, as delegated by DOI for all 4(f) evaluations. DOI agrees that all efforts are being made to select the most prudent and feasible alternative and will provide formal concurrence upon review of the final Section 4(f) evaluation.

On November 29, 2017, the NPS learned through a press (Newsday) inquiry and press release that the Animal Welfare Institute and Wildlife Preserves, Inc. filed a lawsuit in the Eastern District Court of New York challenging the Fire Island National Seashore (FIIS) White-Tailed Deer Management Plan. As of December 1, 2017, neither the NPS nor DOI have been officially served with the complaint by the plaintiffs. On April 28, 2016, the NPS Regional Director reviewed and signed the FIIS Final White-tailed Deer Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision (ROD). The plan/EIS was developed over four years of study, public comment and review. Under the plan, the NPS moved to use fencing, public education, and culling to reduce the population to roughly 20-25 deer per square mile. On November 2, 2016, the Friends of Animals filed a lawsuit in the Eastern District Court of New York, that suit has been settled.

December 18 is the new extended deadline to submit comments on the Arches National Park Traffic Congestion Management Plan Environmental Assessment (EA). The park released the EA for public comments on November 1, and announced the extension on November 30. The plan proposes a reservation system for entrance during peak visitation season and peak visitation hours, and would take effect spring 2019. This system would give visitors certainty of entry, reduce or eliminate long entrance lines, spread visitation more evenly across the day, and improve the visitor experience by ensuring available parking space.

### **Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs and the Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Indian Education**

On December 20, SIPI's Fall trimester ends.

On January 11-12, the Advisory Board for Exceptional Children will be meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Advisory Board was established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) to advise AS-IA on the needs of Indian children with disabilities.

On January 12, Dr. Sherry Allison, SIPI President, will serve as a keynote speaker at the Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, California.

January 13 is the deadline for comments on BIE's Strategic Plan.

January 16-19, BIE will be hosting a Strategic Plan planning session in Washington, DC.

January 23-24, the Self-Governance Advisory Committee (SGAC) January quarterly meeting will take place in Washington, DC. Representatives of the Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs are invited to attend on January 24.



February 26 - March 1, the IA Safety Manager/Division Chief will travel to Washington, DC, to attend the quarterly DOI, Occupational Safety and Health Council Meeting at the USGS Headquarters Office in Reston, Virginia.

### **Items of Note/Expected Legislative, Legal, Policy Issues**

The American Indian Chamber of Commerce honored Division of Economic Development (DED) Economic Development Specialist Anne Jennings as its Education Fund Procurement Technical Assistance Center Warrior at its annual Warrior Awards Luncheon on November 17, 2017 in Anaheim California.

On November 30, 2017, Emery Sutherland, a SIPI student, was one of eight students from participating Achieving the Dream institutions to be selected as a 2018 DREAM Scholar. Achieving the Dream's DREAM Scholars program is designed to enhance key leadership, critical thinking, and networking skills. Nominated by their institution and chosen through a competitive national application process, DREAM Scholars engage in a learning experience that culminates in attending and presenting at DREAM 2018 in Nashville, TN, from February 20-23, 2018.

On November 27, the U.S. Supreme Court announced it will not hear an appeal by water agencies in the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians' landmark lawsuit asserting rights to groundwater beneath the Tribe's reservation. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals previously ruled the Tribe has a right to groundwater dating back to creation of the reservation in the 1870's. The Supreme Court's denial of the agencies' petition means the Tribe has prevailed in its claim to groundwater rights.

On November 29, Congress passed the Indian Employment, Training and Related Services Consolidation Act of 2017. This legislation identifies programs in an additional seven Federal departments for inclusion in a Tribe's Public Law 102-477 plan through Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance contracts and compacts. Currently, only three departments had programs that could be included: Interior, Health and Human Services, and Labor.

The BIE recently partnered with LRP publications to provide all BIE schools with three valuable education resources to help us better serve BIE students: The Special Ed Connection; the Title I Admin.com, and the DirectSTEP eCourses. The BIE is currently running hour long orientation webinar sessions to acquaint staff with these resources.

There are currently leasing regulations from ten Tribes awaiting the Department's approval under the Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Homeownership (HEARTH) Act: Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes, Lummi Nation, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Coquille Indian Tribe, Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Band, Little Traverse Bay Band, Ramona Band of Cahuilla, Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Pechanga Band of Luiseno Mission Indians, and the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin. Leasing regulations from a few additional Tribes are also in various stages of review, including some under statutory authority that is similar to the HEARTH Act but specific to the Tribe. These additional leasing regulations will be presented for Departmental approval as soon as possible.

***Regulations Ready for OS Review***

- The proposed rule Indian Electric Power Utilities (25 CFR 175) has been signed and has been surnamed by the Counselor to the Secretary for Energy Issues. The regulations affect only a limited number of Tribes because there are only three BIA electric power utilities. BIA is awaiting final Office of the Secretary approval to publish.
- The final rule confirming the prior effective date of the CFR court's operation on the Wind River reservation is with the Office of the Executive Secretariat awaiting Office of the Secretary approval to publish.

**Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs**

**Postponed to January 2018 Travel to the RMI** – AS-IN Domenech and OIA Director Nikolao Pula will travel to the Republic of the Marshall Islands for discussions with RMI President Hilda Heine, U.S. Ambassador to the RMI Karen Stewart and travel to Majuro, and Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site at Kwajalein Atoll.

**Postponed to January Pacific Region Biosecurity Planning regarding Invasive Species.** On December 6, 2017, AS-IN Domenech will meet with Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Environment) Karnig Ohannessian and staff regarding Pacific Regional Biosecurity planning for Invasive Species.

**Interagency Group on Insular Areas (IGIA)** – Expected to be held on Tuesday, February 27, 2018, the IGIA is co-chaired by the Secretary and the White House Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. This is the largest annual convening of high-level federal officials discussing issues of concern to the U.S. territories. It is also attended by the Governors and the Delegates.

**Coral Reef Task Force Meetings** - The winter meetings of the Coral Reef Task Force are likely to be held the last week of February 2018 here in Washington, D.C.

**Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management**

On or about December 18, OSMRE Western Region plans to submit the Cordero Rojo Mine's Mining Plan decision documents to OSMRE Headquarters for review and approval by ASLM. Cloud Peak Energy's Cordero Rojo Mine is a surface mine located in Campbell County, WY. The mine employs 383 people and produces approximately 20 million tons of coal per year.

On December 18, ASLM Deputy Assistant Secretary Kate MacGregor will give remarks and participate in a question and answer session in an offshore energy forum hosted by the Consumer Energy Alliance (CEA) in Florence, SC. Anticipated attendees will likely include local elected officials, chamber of commerce representatives, business leaders, and other interested parties. The Department will participate in a series of offshore energy forums that will be hosted by CEA between November 2017 and April 2018 in Gulf and Atlantic states.

On December 21, BOEM plans to publish an RFF in the *Federal Register* seeking input on a proposed path forward for renewable energy leasing offshore of the Atlantic Coast. The RFF describes the process and factors used by BOEM to identify and forecast areas along the Atlantic Coast where future leasing should be focused and development is most likely

On December 22, the BLM-CA Central Coast Field Office intends to sign the Decision Record for the Trio Jacalitos Canyon APD in Fresno County, CA. This APD has been on hold since 2013 when the BLM identified the need for additional wildlife, botanical, and cultural inventories. The BLM review was reinitiated in 2017 when the proponents provided notice that the inventories were being completed. This APD is likely to draw the attention of environmental organizations. Public notification for the proposed APD was posted on the BLM's National NEPA Register on October 2, 2017.

On or about January 2, OSMRE Western Region plans to submit the Bridger Mine Mining Plan decision document to OSMRE Headquarters for review and approval by the ASLM. Bridger Coal Company's Bridger Mine is an underground mine located in Sweetwater County, WY that employs 540 people. If the modification is approved, production is estimated to be 2.24 million tons per year.

On January 6 - 8, BLM will host a meeting to develop an interagency strategy to contain the spread of quagga mussels from the Lower Colorado River at the Colorado River District/Lake Havasu Field Office in Lake Havasu, AZ. Development of this strategy was identified as one of the Department of the Interior's top priorities to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive mussels in the June report to the Western Governors Association.

On January 8, BLM-CO will attend the Western States Land Commissioners Association (WSLCA) Winter Meeting in Denver. The WSLCA is an organization representing 23 state land management agencies that together manage more than 440 million acres of surface and subsurface state lands throughout the central and western U.S. The BLM has an MOU with the WSLCA to advance the long-term goals of both the BLM and member states by resolving state-Federal land exchanges and other appropriate realty actions.

In mid-to-late January, BOEM tentatively plans to publish a Notice of Unsolicited Request for a Submarine Transmission Cable Right-of-Way (ROW) and a Request for Competitive Interest and Public Comment. This follows a request for a ROW grant from Clean Power Northeast Development, Inc. for its Atlantic Link Submarine Transmission Cable Project, which would consist of two high-voltage direct current cables and one fiber optic cable that stretches approximately 230 miles in length, from Colson Cove, New Brunswick, Canada to Plymouth Massachusetts.

On January 21, BOEM plans to publish a Proposed Sale Notice proposing a multi-factor auction for two unleased areas within the Massachusetts Wind Energy Area.

On January 22 - 23, ASLM Deputy Assistant Secretary Kate MacGregor, Acting BOEM Director Walter Cruickshank, and other representatives of BOEM are tentatively scheduled to attend a meeting in Sacramento with DoD and offshore wind developers to discuss wind exclusion areas proposed by DoD off the State's Central Coast.

On January 31, BLM-CA staff will participate in an oil and gas operator seminar that focuses on surface and environmental requirements associated with new oil and gas projects (Applications for Permits to Drill (APDs) and Sundry Notices). The BLM will provide seminar participants a refresher on the items the BLM needs regarding biological, cultural, and paleontological reviews to ensure a quick turn around when new permits are submitted.

In February, the BLM-CA Bakersfield Field Office staff will participate in a USFS-led public meeting in Fillmore about four Applications for Permit to Drill in the Sespe Oil field, which is adjacent to . USFS is the lead agency on the NEPA analysis. This meeting will generate public interest. Previously, BLM-CA had received inquiries from Congresswoman Julia Brownley's (CA-26-D) office.

In February, BLM-CA's Bakersfield Field Office will participate in a USFS public meeting in Fillmore, CA regarding four APDs in the Sespe Oilfield, which is adjacent to a USFWS refuge and a California Condor sanctuary. The USFS is the lead Federal agency for the preparation of the NEPA analysis. The BLM anticipates a negative reaction to the proposed wells from local residents who in the past opposed oil and gas development and because of the presence of several active anti-oil and gas organizations in the surrounding counties.

## **Assistant Secretary Policy, Management and Budget**

### **Assistant Secretary for Water and Science**

On December 21, Reclamation will issue an Environmental Assessment for the Snow Lake Water Control Structure. Public comment was taken for the draft EA October 2-17, 2017, and due to the amount of interest, additional analysis is being completed. A new comment period will run from December 21, 2017 to January 11, 2018.

In December/January, the USGS will announce a new paper that finds salinity levels have decreased within the Colorado River Basin from 1986-2011. The study, conducted in cooperation with the Colorado Basin Salinity Control Program, examined salinity trends from 1986-2011 to better understand where salinity originates and how it is transported through the watershed. USGS scientists developed models and incorporated long-term data from sites throughout the Upper Colorado River basin to provide the first ever estimate on how salinity moves from groundwater to streams. 89-percent of the salinity in the Colorado River comes from groundwater that discharges into streams, also known as baseflow. The paper will be published in *Hydrological Processes* and a technical announcement is planned.

In December, Reclamation will announce the selected ideas for the Arsenic Sensor Challenge. The challenge sought ideas for a rapid, low-cost monitoring of arsenic that would benefit water treatment plant operations, wastewater monitoring, contaminated site remediation, private well owners, scientific research and other interested parties.

In December, Reclamation intends to publish a Notice of Availability for a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement for the Yolo Bypass Salmonid Habitat Restoration and Fish Passage Project. The document addresses methods to improve fish passage and increase floodplain fisheries rearing habitat in the Yolo Bypass to benefit Sacramento winter-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley steelhead and the Southern Distinct Population Segment North American green sturgeon. The NOA will be published in the Federal Register once the decision memo is signed by the Deputy Secretary. The Federal Register Notice is pending Bureau approvals. Two public meetings have been rescheduled for public comment on January 17 in Woodland and January 18 in West Sacramento.

Westlands Settlement legislation (H.R. 1769) is pending before the House of Representatives that would settle more than 20 years of litigation against the United States and reduce the threat of continued adverse legal action. Reclamation has a statutory obligation to provide drainage service within the San Luis Unit, and is subject to injunction orders entered by the U.S. district court in 2000 in the Firebaugh case to provide drainage without delay. Reclamation adopted a plan for drainage service in a 2007 Record of Decision. The estimated cost of implementing that plan is \$3.8 billion. Currently, approximately \$3.1 billion of this drainage service work remains to be implemented. H.R. 1769 (Valadao) would affirm an agreement between the United States and Westlands Water District (Westlands) in central California (Settlement). The Settlement, authorized by H.R. 1769, would relieve the United States of all drainage obligations within Westlands. Westlands would assume this obligation including indemnifying the United States of any past, present, or future claims, while agreeing to permanently retire a minimum of 100,000 acres of lands within Westlands. The Settlement would also relieve Westlands of certain financial obligations, authorize the conversion of Westlands' current 9(e) water service contract to a 9(d) repayment contract, and transfer title to certain CVP facilities that lie within Westlands boundaries to Westlands. The present value of the debt forgiven as part of the Settlement is estimated to be \$331.1 million in 2015 dollars. The legislation would eliminate a statutory obligation for construction estimated to cost more than three billion dollars. The district court has stated it will not grant further stays of the current injunction past January 15, 2018. If legislation is not enacted prior to that deadline, Reclamation will be required to expend significant funds to implement the Control Schedule of drainage measures for Westlands approved by the court and will likely face additional litigation. Interior is in the process of finalizing for clearance an administration position letter to Congress that supports H.R. 1769 and encourages its passage by the House.

*North Coast Rivers Alliance et al. vs Reclamation* (Case No. 16-cv-307-LJO-MJS) regarding San Luis Unit Interim Renewal Contract(s) (IRC) litigation, whereby the environmental documentation surrounding Westlands Water District (Westlands) IRCs is at the center of attention. Litigation on each of Westlands IRCs has been ongoing in one form or another for many years. In July 2016, the 9th Circuit affirmed in part, reversed in part, and remanded the District Court's rulings on the adequacy of Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA) for the San Luis Unit IRCs that covered 2012-2014 time period. In response to the 9th Circuit ruling, its timing, subsequent motions, and the fact that the 2014-2016 IRCs had expired, Reclamation prepared a Revised EA for the current IRCs covering the period 2016-2018. On August 9, 2017, Plaintiffs filed a response to Reclamation's status report notifying the Court of the revised EA

once again questioning its adequacy. The report is a preview of what Plaintiffs will argue in the case going forward.

During the week of December 18, Congressman Jim Costa (D-CA) is tentatively planning to visit Shasta Dam, Red Bluff Fish Passage Improvement Project, the Sites Reservoir location and the State of California's Oroville Dam.

Reclamation, with co-lead Washington State Department of Ecology in cooperation with the Yakama tribe; U.S. Forest Service and Bonneville Power Administration have prepared a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for the Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Plant and Keechelus Reservoir-to- Kachess Reservoir Conveyance Projects. The anticipated Notice of Availability publication date is December 29, followed by a 60-day public comment period.

In December/January, the USGS plans to announce a new paper that finds desert tortoises may be unable to survive in their current habitat by 2070 due to projected increasing temperatures in the Southwest, according to an upcoming collaborative study done by the University of California, Santa Cruz, and 40 scientists from across the globe, including the USGS. Federally threatened Agassiz's desert tortoises have been experiencing population declines in the Southwest since they were listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1990. Using models that analyze the effects of climate on ecological/physiological and life history characteristics of desert tortoises, scientists developed predictions of the suitability of future desert tortoise habitat in North America. The paper has been submitted for publication to Science and a news release is planned.

On January 8, oral arguments in the *Texas v. New Mexico* case over Rio Grande water have been scheduled before the U.S. Supreme Court. Although the litigation was filed by Texas against New Mexico, the United States was allowed to intervene as it involves Reclamation's Rio Grande Project and the associated water. New Mexico legislators met last week and the New Mexico Attorney General's Office presented the latest on the litigation. On January 12, 2018, Reclamation is scheduled to make the FEIS available to the public.

On January 12, Reclamation is scheduled to make the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Pojoaque Basin Water Supply Project available to the public via publication of a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. The package is set to be e-filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on that same day. The FEIS has been surnamed by the Commissioner's staff and is now being reviewed by the Indian Water Rights Office, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Solicitor's Office.

On January 25, the city of Atlanta will host a Celebration of Success luncheon event focusing on the Urban Waters Federal Partnership in the Proctor Creek Watershed showcasing the multiple projects accomplished over the last few years. Invitees include representatives from the NGO, local community, corporate, and local, state, and federal governments. EPA has asked for representation from headquarters and regional director levels.

In January, the Bureau of Reclamation is planning to release the FY 2018 Desalination and Water Purification funding opportunity. The DWPR Program is helping Reclamation and its partners confront widening imbalances between supply and demand in basins throughout the Western United States through testing and development of new advanced water treatment technologies.