

Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Questions for the Record Submitted to Ms. Cynthia Weiner Stachelberg
August 3, 2021

Questions from Ranking Member Barrasso

Question 1: In September 2017, then-Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke issued a reorganization proposal for DOI that included a plan to consolidate the different regional boundaries of several DOI bureaus into 12 Unified Regional Boundaries. In addition to the establishment of 12 new Unified Regions, the reorganization effort also sought to improve and streamline the Department's business operations. The focus was on using shared services and best practices throughout DOI in the areas of information technology, procurement and acquisition processes, and human resources, among others.

- a. **How have business operations changed as a result of the reorganization effort? What are the advantages and disadvantages to the modification of the Department's business operations and use of shared services across agencies?**
- b. **Do you anticipate DOI will continue to retain the regional boundaries established in 2018? If a return to prior boundaries or other arrangement is favored, how would this affect the implementation of shared services as part of the reorganization effort?**
- c. **Given that DOI was recently subject to a data breach, does a streamlined approach to business operations and information technology interoperability provide the Department with more or less protection against future data breaches? If the streamlined business and information technology operations continue, how will DOI ensure that the Department's computer networks for individual bureaus and offices are secure?**

Response: Because I am not currently at the Department of the Interior, I am not familiar with whether the Department reorganization implemented by the previous administration has been the subject of review in this Administration or what the impact of that reorganization has been, to date. If I am confirmed for the position of Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, I would be interested to look at this issue and what positive or negative impacts, if any, it has had on Departmental operations. Regarding the security of computer networks at the Department, I am aware that the Department has a Chief Information Officer who is responsible for the Department's information management and technology, including cybersecurity. If I am confirmed I would look forward to working with the CIO and his team to ensure that the Department's computer networks are operating in an efficient and secure manner.

Question 2: **What are some "success stories" or streamlined environmental review procedures carried out by a specific DOI agency (or agency outside DOI) that could be duplicated by other DOI agencies?**

Response: I am aware that the Council on Environmental Quality is the lead on policy issues related to the National Environmental Policy Act, and I would defer to CEQ for specific guidance on this matter. While I do not currently have detailed knowledge of specific uses of streamlined environmental review procedures carried out by the Department's bureaus, it is my general view that review procedures that provide for robust public engagement and input and that are carried out in a timely and efficient manner by all participants are the most successful.

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Question 3: What existing factors slow or complicate DOI agency environmental reviews carried out under NEPA or other laws?

Response: An analysis of the factors that might slow or complicate environmental reviews within the Department has not been made available to me because I am not currently at the Department. However, it is important to ensure that appropriate resources are available to programs that carry out these processes, clear timelines are established and met, and open communication among participating agencies is practiced. I believe effective leadership can help ensure those conditions exist and minimize unnecessary delays in the Department's work. If I am confirmed I would look forward to reviewing information about this issue within the Department and to learning more about it.

Question 4: If there are factors known to delay or complicate reviews, how might DOI address them? For example, can DOI agencies provide guidance or assistance to applicants to help them navigate the environmental review and application process more efficiently?

Response: As I noted in the response to the previous question, such an analysis has not been made available to me, but it is my view that it is important to ensure that appropriate resources are available to programs that carry out these processes, clear timelines are established and met, and open communication among participating agencies is practiced. If I am confirmed I would look forward to reviewing information about this issue within the Department and to learning more about it.

Question 5: What existing factors are likely to contribute to incomplete environmental reviews carried out by DOI agencies? How might DOI agencies undertake more timely environmental reviews without affecting the necessary completeness and technical rigor of those reviews?

Response: As I noted in the previous response, it is important to ensure that appropriate resources are available to programs that carry out these processes, clear timelines are established and met, and open communication among participating agencies is practiced. If I am confirmed I would look forward to reviewing information about this issue within the Department and to learning more about it.

Question 6: DOI is responsible for the administration of most public U.S. lands and waters. These resources can be vulnerable to natural hazards such as wildfires, drought, severe weather, landslides, and seismic events. The AS-PMB is responsible for developing and overseeing DOI policies and procedures in response to such natural hazard events. This includes promoting hazard preparedness and response, ensuring continuity of DOI operations during catastrophic events, and assisting communities in response to imminent threats.

- a. What can the federal government do to alleviate the effects of natural hazards such as wildfires, drought, severe weather, landslides, and seismic events? How can DOI, in particular, better prepare for future natural hazard events?**
- b. The COVID-19 pandemic posed a challenge to DOI (and other federal agencies) in ensuring continuity of operations despite a global public health emergency. What role do you see for the AS-PMB in ensuring that DOI agencies will be ready and responsive to safeguard our nation's lands and resources and fulfill the Department's responsibilities in the event of a future emergency?**

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Response: The federal government plays an important role in responding to natural disasters. Providing disaster relief and overarching coordination among states and stakeholders through agencies like the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other partner agencies are critical and necessary functions. At the Department, specifically, working with these relevant entities and Department bureaus and ensuring that there is a well-coordinated and transparent response would be a priority for me, if I am confirmed. As I said at the hearing, it would be important to ensure that the applicable programs at the Department are appropriately staffed and funded, including wildfire response programs, forest management, earthquake monitoring, stream gage and other water monitoring programs. I would look forward to working on these important issues.

Question 7: The Interior Business Center (IBC) supports DOI agencies and offices, as well as federal agencies outside the Department, as a shared service center, providing business management systems and services related to acquisition, financial management, and human resources systems.

- a. **As a shared service provider for more than 150 agencies, the IBC has a responsibility to provide services to customers during emergency situations. What, if any, interruptions in services occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic? Does the IBC need reform to provide uninterrupted service to its federal clients in the future should another emergency situation occur?**
- b. **A recent report from DOI's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that IBC's internal control system had deficiencies in ensuring that it followed the Federal Acquisition Regulation when awarding procurements on behalf of its federal clients. What changes could be made so that all internal processes at the IBC are in compliance with federal laws and regulations moving forward?**

Response: I take questions about the performance of and potential need to reform the function and practice of such an important office seriously, and I would need to know more about the specifics of this matter in order to provide an informed opinion. I am aware that the OIG issued recommendations as part of its report in this matter. If I am confirmed I would become familiar with this issue and determine if it is necessary to take any additional actions to ensure that the IBC is operating at the standards necessary to comply with federal law and applicable regulations to ensure effective operations and the best value for the taxpayer.

Question 8: **Does the \$22 billion unappropriated balance in the LWCF remain credited to the Fund? Or has some or all of the \$22 billion been spent on governmental priorities unrelated to the LWCF?**

Response: It is my understanding that unappropriated monies credited to the LWCF prior to enactment by Congress of the Great American Outdoors Act continue to be credited to that Fund. Only Congress may appropriate monies from the unappropriated balance in the LWCF. If I am confirmed, I would consult with the legal experts in the Solicitor's Office and program professionals at the Department to ensure that this critically important conservation program continues to be implemented in accordance with the law.

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Question 9: Assuming the unappropriated balance remains in the LWCF, would you recommend that Congress appropriate those funds, and if so, for what purposes?

Response: Generally, when Congress enacted the LWCF in 1965, it stated that the funds would preserve, develop, and ensure access to outdoor recreation. I support these goals and, if confirmed, I would look forward to working with this Committee, with Congress, stakeholders, and others to ensure that the law is implemented as Congress intended, including the recent Great American Outdoors Act.

Question 10: The LWCF Act specifies that of the total amount made available to the Fund through appropriations or deposited in the Fund under the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006, not less than 40% shall be used for “federal purposes” and not less than 40% shall be used “to provide financial assistance to states.”

- a. What federal purposes can the monies be used for? Can the monies be used only for purposes related to federal land acquisition by the primary federal land management agencies, or can they be used for a broader set of federal purposes and programs?**
- b. What is the meaning of “financial assistance to states?” Does this refer only to the outdoor recreation grants to states program set out in the LWCF Act at 54 U.S.C. §200305? Or does it encompass a broader set of state grants, such as through the Forest Legacy Program or the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund?**
- c. How should the remaining 20% of LWCF funds be spent?**

Response: I understand that Congress, through the appropriations process, most often specifies how the funding under the LWCF, including for federal, state financial assistance, and for other purposes, can be used and how it is allotted among those categories. If I am confirmed, I would look forward to working with Congress and other stakeholders and would consult with the legal experts in the Solicitor’s Office and program professionals at the Department to ensure that this critically important conservation program is implemented in accordance with the law.

Question 11: The LWCF Act specifies that “in addition to the sum of the revenues and collections estimated by the Secretary to be deposited in the Fund pursuant to this section, there are authorized to be appropriated annually to the Fund out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated such amounts as are necessary to make the income of the Fund not less than \$900,000,000 for each fiscal year.”

- a. How do you interpret the meaning of this provision?**
- b. If the revenue sources specified in the LWCF act were insufficient to reach the authorized level of \$900 million in a particular fiscal year, would there be an automatic transfer of Treasury funds to the LWCF to reach this authorized level?**
- c. Has this provision been implemented during the history of the operation of the LWCF, and if so, how?**

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Response: Because I am not currently at the Department, I am not familiar with the way the LWCF has been implemented throughout its history. If I am confirmed, I would look forward to working with Congress and other stakeholders and would consult with the legal experts in the Solicitor's Office and program professionals at the Department to ensure that this critically important conservation program is implemented in accordance with the law. As I said at the hearing, I would look forward to creating outdoor recreation opportunities for families and to support local communities that are so dependent on the recreation economy.

Question 12: The DOI Appraisal and Valuation Services Office conducts appraisals of lands that DOI agencies are seeking to acquire or dispose of. The FY2021 Interior appropriations law provided additional funding for this office in part to expand capacity given the increased appropriations from the LWCF for DOI land acquisitions.

- a. How is DOI using the additional funding provided to the Appraisal and Valuation Services Office in FY2021? What areas are being prioritized for appraisal and valuation work? What level of funding might be needed in FY2022 and future fiscal years to support the role of the Office in appraising lands the government seeks to acquire or convey out of federal ownership?**
- b. The Appraisal and Valuation Services Office is likely to have more land appraisal work as a result of additional LWCF funding. How might the Office foster efficiency in addressing its workload while maintaining compliance with appraisal standards?**

Response: Given enactment of the Great American Outdoors Act and its LWCF funding provisions, it is important that the Department have in place an efficient and transparent system to timely process the necessary appraisals for transactions involving the Department and its bureaus. While I am not currently at the Department, I am aware that the Department's FY 2022 budget materials project a 50 percent increase in requests for this Office's valuation services during the next several years. Given this, it is important to ensure that the office is appropriately staffed and resourced and that it is communicating early, and often, with its clients to ensure an efficient process. Because the Appraisal and Valuation Services Office reports to the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, if I am confirmed I will learn more about the Office's operations and needs and will ensure that it has the tools and resources necessary to effectively complete the appraisals and other tasks under its mandate.

Question 13: The Department continues to struggle with issues of sexual harassment and misconduct in the workplace. For example, a 2019 Inspector General's report indicated that DOI needed to improve its efforts in sexual harassment investigations, tracking misconduct, and training. What ongoing or new efforts should DOI pursue to address these issues and to ensure that agency workplaces are consistently respectful, safe, and free of harassment for all employees?

Response: I am aware of past instances at the Department of sexual harassment, including instances that have occurred in remote locations. It is my firm belief that every American has the right to be free from discrimination and harassment, period. If I am confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Department provides all employees an inclusive and respectful workplace that serves the American public.

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Question 14: The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) authorizes four DOI agencies (Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Reclamation) and the FS, within the Department of Agriculture, to charge and collect recreation fees on federal recreational lands and waters. Each agency is authorized to retain the collected fees as mandatory spending. At least 80% of the annual revenue collected is to be retained and used at the site where it was generated, although the Secretary can reduce that amount to not less than 60% if collections exceed reasonable needs. The remaining collections are to be used agency-wide, at the agency's discretion. The agencies have broad discretion in using fee revenues for purposes specified in FLREA that aim to benefit visitors directly. They include facility maintenance, repair, and enhancement; interpretation and visitor services; law enforcement; and certain habitat restoration. The Secretaries may not use more than 15% of collections for program administration, overhead, and indirect costs. Under FLREA, agencies are authorized to charge fees at recreation sites until October 1, 2022.

- a. What are the pros and cons of letting FLREA expire, extending it, or making it permanent? If the program is continued, what changes could you suggest as to how it should operate? For instance, would you favor changing the percentage of fees retained by the collecting site or directing revenues to particular purposes, such as deferred maintenance needs of DOI agencies?**
- b. How might you assess whether there is a need to charge new fees or increase fees across DOI areas, or, alternatively, to reduce or limit entrance and recreation fees?**
- c. What is the proper balance between standardization of fees across agencies for similar types of services, and flexibility for agencies to tailor fees to areas and circumstances?**

Response: I know that the recreation fee program and revenue generated by it are important to the operations of the Department's land management bureaus and that this must be balanced against the desire to provide access to our parks and public lands to the recreating public. The Department and its bureaus have come to rely on these fees to provide funding for a wide variety of important activities on their lands, and it is important that reauthorization of this program give thoughtful consideration to these issues. The questions you raise highlight important and complex issues regarding the program, including the programmatic and economic impacts. As I am not currently at the Department, I do not have access to detailed information necessary to answer these questions at this time. If I am confirmed for this position, I would get briefed on these complex issues and would work with those experts in the Department who deal with this program on a day-to-day basis, and our policy analysts, to ensure that the program provides an appropriate level of support to the bureaus and their operations.

Question 15: DOI agencies modified operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Modifications in some areas included partially or fully closing sites, reducing or suspending recreational activities and other services, and waiving fees for entrance. Normal operations have resumed in some areas.

- a. How did COVID-19 affect the amount of recreation fees collected by DOI agencies under FLREA? Is there a need for Congress to counteract any reduction in fee collections by one or more agencies? For instance, should Congress increase discretionary appropriations for the agencies or amend the fee criteria in FLREA?**

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Response: I know that the recreation fee program and revenue generated by it are important to the operations of the Department's land managing bureaus and this must be balanced against the desire to provide access to our parks and public lands to the recreating public. My understanding is that the COVID-19 pandemic generally caused a decline in visitation to our parks and public lands and to the fees collected by the Department pursuant to this authority. However, it is expected that fee revenue will continue to rise as we work to end the COVID-19 pandemic and more people seek outdoor recreation and activities. If I am confirmed for this position, I would be briefed on the issue to better understand how the decline in revenue may have impacted the Department and its bureaus and whether there is a need for Congressional action or support.

Question 16: **During the most recent government shutdown in December 2018-January 2019, NPS used recreation fees collected under FLREA to fund limited operations at park units while the shutdown was in force. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a legal opinion stating that NPS's use of the FLREA funds violated the purpose statute and the Antideficiency Act, and DOI issued a response disputing the GAO opinion. What is your interpretation of the authority of DOI agencies to use FLREA revenues for park operations during a government shutdown?**

Response: I am not a lawyer and I would rely on the Department's legal experts to provide me with guidance on an issue such as this.

Question 17: **On January 14, 2021, the Trump Administration issued an executive order establishing the Wildland Fire Management Policy Committee. The Committee is chaired by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture and includes other agency heads. The purpose of the order is to improve coordination among federal agencies on wildland fire management policy, implementation, and oversight issues. In what ways is the Biden Administration addressing the issues identified in the order?**

Response: The Biden Administration has taken an aggressive approach to addressing wildland fire matters. I am not yet at the Department so I am not currently a part of the discussions regarding implementation of specific policies, but I am aware that Secretary Haaland and Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack have worked together in a coordinated fashion to develop and present their Departments' wildland fire preparedness and response goals, including supporting science as a part of this approach. These goals have included promoting climate resiliency across landscapes and communities, addressing low pay, the need for more full-time responders and other issues to modernize the workforce, and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our wildland firefighters and other first responders. If I am confirmed, I will continue taking such a coordinated, transparent, and proactive approach to this increasingly severe problem.

Question 18: **There are regionally specific guidelines for establishing COVID-19 safety precautions during wildfire season. To what extent were those guidelines successful in protecting firefighters while maintaining adequate wildfire response? How are these guidelines being adapted for the 2021 wildfire season? To what extent is DOI providing access to COVID-19 vaccines for the firefighters or other wildfire support staff?**

Response: I know that President Biden has taken very seriously his responsibility to respond to the pandemic in an aggressive and coordinated fashion. Secretary Haaland and the Department have also been transparent with employees and the public about the need to follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance in the workplace and the importance of getting vaccinated and where to do that. While I am familiar with the

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Department's COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan, because I am not currently at the Department, I am not familiar with the application of these efforts to specific situations or the internal discussions related to updates, adaptations, or other changes based on information from the field. If I am confirmed, I will ensure that I continue to use the latest and best science to guide decisions that we make as we navigate the pandemic and seek to reduce exposures and prevent the further spread of COVID-19 through Departmental activities.

Question 19: DOI coordinates wildland fire management and funding across the DOI agencies through the department-level Office of Wildland Fire (OWF). Funding for wildland fire management fluctuates annually but generally has increased over the past 20 years, in part due to the unpredictable nature of wildfires and the variable cost of wildfire suppression. Starting in FY2020, Congress authorized a special budgetary mechanism—referred to as the wildfire funding fix or the wildfire adjustment—to provide a certain amount of funding for wildfire suppression operations. Please describe the impacts of the wildfire adjustment on DOI operations and budgeting.

Response: While I am not yet at the Department, I have been told that the use of the wildfire adjustment has been successful and it enabled supplemental fire suppression funding without the need to cut other programs. I also understand that the Department's FY 2022 budget request assumed those funds would continue. If I am confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Department is focused on continuing effective authorities, like this one.

Question 20: The federal government's wildland firefighting workforce consists predominantly of seasonal hires, many of which are temporary positions filled annually. This has led to concerns about efficiency and the recruitment and retention of firefighters, particularly when compared with employment opportunities at the state level or in the private sector.

- a. In the FY2021 budget request DOI sought funding to examine converting some seasonal positions into a full-time, permanent, year-round workforce. Please describe the status of this effort.**
- b. Due to the nature of responding to wildland fire emergencies, federal employees involved in wildland fire management often are required to work and earn overtime and/or premium pay. In each of the past five years, several DOI wildland fire employees earned the maximum amount of annual premium pay established by federal law. Some may be concerned that the cap on premium pay impacts effective wildfire response strategies because some of the most experienced employees may be unable to participate, or some employees may continue to work but not claim appropriate compensation. Others may be concerned with the cost to the federal government. How would you manage these concerns?**
- c. In contrast, many of the entry-level federal wildland firefighting positions are compensated at the lower range of the federal pay range. The positions for most federal wildland firefighters generally are classified by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as Forestry Technicians or Range Technicians, though some may be classified as Fire Management Specialist. OPM has the authority to establish new occupational series. Would you support establishing a new occupational series for federal wildland firefighters and/or for other positions related to the prevention, preparedness, control, suppression, or management activities of wildland firefighters? What would be some of the challenges and opportunities for DOI to establish a new occupational series?**

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Response: I understand that the Department is currently in the process of hiring hundreds of new firefighters and is converting over 500 temporary positions to permanent positions. I support the President’s proposals to increase firefighter pay. I have been told that the Department is also in the process of implementing pay incentives for firefighters that will both increase pay and competitiveness with other employers, such as states, local governments, and private employers. If I am confirmed, I will make this a priority issue and would work closely with the USDA’s Forest Service, which also has considerable need to address these issues in an effective way.

Question 21: In your hearing Senator Manchin asked you where you intend to focus most of your attention. You responded by saying, *“I see a couple of areas of focus to start out. One of the first is really ensuring that the Department is fully staffed.”*

With regards to the staffing of the Department, should individuals who plan or are otherwise involved in tree spiking incidents and threaten the physical safety of federal officials expect to be hired by the Department?

Response: I understand that there are laws enacted by Congress, including the Civil Rights Act, as well as federal hiring statutes and regulations that must be observed when making hiring decisions at federal agencies, including at the Department. If I am confirmed, I will follow the laws enacted by Congress, and I would ensure that the Department’s personnel office was able to hire the best candidates for positions. I do not support threatening the physical safety of federal officials.

Question 22: If confirmed to the position of Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget you will oversee, among others, the Office of Law Enforcement and Security, and the Office of Occupational Safety and Health.

- a. If confirmed as the leader over these important offices, would you expect an individual who is aware of spiked trees to immediately inform and cooperate with law enforcement?**
- b. Should individuals who disagree with federal policies threaten the physical safety of federal officials?**

Response: Yes, and I believe it is also important to understand the context that may influence an individual’s behavior. I do not believe that individuals who disagree with federal policies should threaten federal officials. If I am confirmed, I will work with others in the Department to follow the law.

Question 23: On the “USA JOBS” website – the website where people can apply for jobs in the federal government – there is the following statement: *“If you misrepresent your experience or education, or provide false or fraudulent information in or with your application, it may be grounds for not hiring you or for firing you after you begin work...Making false or fraudulent statements also may be punishable by fine or imprisonment.”* Should this policy apply to individuals who apply for jobs at DOI and BLM?

Response: Yes, if confirmed I will follow the laws enacted by Congress.

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Questions from Sen. Lankford

Question 1: Ms. Stachelberg, at your confirmation hearing we discussed the balance between the legislative branch and the executive branch. I would like to get clarity on a couple of questions related to that discussion.

- a. Do you believe that Congress has the authority to determine the range of federal agencies' authorities?
- b. Would you describe Congress limiting or changing the role or authorities of a federal agency as Congress "interfering" with those agencies?
- c. Would you support the Department of the Interior going forward with actions to meet its policy objectives if those actions or objectives were not authorized by Congress?

Response: Yes, the Constitution gives Congress the authority to pass bills and, if approved by the President, those bills become law and can change federal agency authority. While I cannot speak to the motivation or actions of others, as I said at the hearing, if I am confirmed, I will follow the laws and regulations that are in place and will work hard to implement the policies of the President and the Secretary. I would look forward to working with you and with Congress in a productive and transparent fashion.

Question 2: As you should know, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act was passed with nearly unanimous, bipartisan support in the wake of *Employment Division v. Smith*, to provide sweeping safeguards for religious liberty. Its terms prohibit the government from imposing a substantial burden on religious exercise absent a compelling interest that is narrowly tailored in a way least restrictive of such exercise. RFRA applies to all federal entities and regulatory actions and extends to all religious practices, including the use of real property.

- a. Do you support RFRA as passed by Congress in its entirety?
- b. Will you uphold RFRA if confirmed?

Response: As I said in the previous response, I will follow all the laws that are in place and will work hard to implement the policies of the President.

Question 3: The Supreme Court has, in multiple decisions, reiterated that religious organizations cannot be discriminated against in the distribution of a public benefit for which they otherwise qualify because of their religious beliefs or identity.

- a. Will you commit to ensuring that no policy of your Department will disqualify a religious organization from receiving aid or participating in grant programs simply because of the organization's religious beliefs or because the organization receives statutory protections for religious freedom like those in Title VII and Title IX?

Response: I commit to following all the laws that are in place and will work hard to implement the policies of the President.

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Questions from Sen. Cassidy

Question 1: As you know, one of the primary responsibilities you have is to oversee the Department's budget. In 2019, the Department disbursed more than \$11 billion in FY19 from all oil and gas activity. Offshore revenues are funding coastal protection projects in the Gulf region and programs important to this Administration such as the Land Water Conservation Fund, Historic Preservation Fund and deferred maintenance across all federal land. The Department is currently considering policy changes in relation to its federal oil and gas leasing program and its federal oil and gas royalty rates.

What role will the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget have and how will you inform the Secretary when it comes to weighing the economic return of federal leases in a way that encourages future revenue generation versus raising costs in a way that discourages generation of those revenues for programs important to the Department's mission and Administration's conservation goals?

Response: I know this is an issue that is important to your state and to others in the region. Because I am not yet at the Department, I have not been a part of the ongoing review of the oil and gas leasing program requested by the President and am not aware of the content or recommendations that might be contained in a report. I understand, however, that the report will contain recommendations for both the Department and Congress to implement to improve stewardship of the lands managed by the Department, create jobs, consistent with the President's plan, and address our future energy needs. I also agree with Secretary Haaland that oil and natural gas will play a major role in our country for years to come. If I am confirmed for this position, I commit to following the law and to doing all I can to ensure that we are engaging with the Department's stakeholders in a meaningful way as we move forward to implement the President's plan.

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Question from Sen. Hickenlooper

Question: The Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Policy, Management, and Budget acts as the Department's Chief Financial Officer. Do you see any compelling reason why the Bureau of Land Management should continue the practice of non-competitive leasing, where largely unproductive land which could not be leased at auction is subsequently leased for \$1.50 an acre for oil and gas production, with the administrative costs footed by BLM and ultimately the taxpayer?

Response: As I said at the hearing, this is an important and interesting issue. I am aware that the Department, at the President's direction, has been working on a review of the oil and gas leasing program with an eye toward reform of the program. If I am confirmed, I look forward to working with you and others in Congress on looking at areas where we can make improvements, including any potential reforms of the leasing program.