

**STATEMENT OF
TOMMY BEAUDREAU, DEPUTY SECRETARY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE
REGARDING
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW
December 13, 2022**

Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide this update on the Department of the Interior's (DOI or Department) implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law or BIL. A key component of the President's plan to rebuild our country, it is a once-in-a-generation investment that is helping communities tackle the climate crisis, creating good-paying jobs for millions of Americans, advancing environmental justice, and boosting local economies.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is a historic down payment on ensuring that future generations have clean air, drinkable water, fertile soil, and an overall quality of life that is currently threatened by the worsening climate crisis. Under Secretary Haaland's leadership, we are working hard at the Department to implement these important investments in an effective, efficient way while also taking care to be responsible stewards of these significant taxpayer funds.

DOI and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

The Department comprises 11 bureaus with over 60,000 employees and more than 280,000 volunteers across 2,400 operating locations that carry out DOI's mission. Our mission is broad. We are charged with protecting America's great outdoors and powering our nation's future; with protecting and managing America's natural resources and cultural heritage, and with providing unbiased scientific and other information about those resources. We honor our trust

responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities.

In total, the Department manages over 500 million acres of federal land, or about 20 percent of the country's land mass. DOI is the largest wholesaler of water in the country, bringing water to more than 31 million people, and we are the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the United States with 58 power plants serving 3.5 million homes. And DOI is the Nation's largest water, earth, and biological science and civilian mapping agency, providing critical information about our natural resources.

This historic legislation has enabled DOI to grow its capabilities and better advance the critical missions carried out by its bureaus.

In sum, of the total \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Law investment, DOI received more than \$30 billion, an amount almost double the Department's annual budget.

DOI's leadership is mindful of the scope of this task, and we take very seriously our responsibility to use these critical resources wisely. One year ago today, we announced that Winnie Stachelberg would join the Department as its new Senior Advisor and Infrastructure Coordinator. In concert with senior leadership, Winnie oversees the Department's implementation of this historic law to help communities tackle the climate crisis while creating good-paying union jobs, advancing environmental justice, and boosting local economies.

Nearly every major division of the Infrastructure Law includes provisions to be implemented by the Department and its bureaus. BIL funding bolstered many of our existing programs and allowed us to develop several new programs. These funds support DOI's ongoing work in land and minerals management, water and science, environmental compliance, fish wildlife and parks, and Indian affairs. The new programs authorized by the BIL focus on climate resilience and water resource and environmental protection.

Specifically, DOI's bureaus and offices administer financial assistance programs and carry out activities in eight key BIL program areas that received significant funding under the legislation. These include:

- Abandoned coal mine land reclamation (\$11.3 billion);

- Orphaned well site plugging, remediation and restoration (\$4.7 billion);
- Water infrastructure programs (\$8.3 billion);
- Indian Water Rights Settlements (\$2.5 billion);
- Wildland Fire preparedness, fuels management, post-fire rehabilitation, and science (\$1.5 billion);
- Ecosystem restoration and resilience (\$1.4 billion);
- Scientific innovation and mapping (\$511 million); and
- Tribal infrastructure projects and climate resiliency initiatives (\$466 million).

More than half the funding addresses legacy pollution and water infrastructure, with additional needed investments going toward wildland fire management, ecosystem restoration, innovative science, and climate resilience. DOI administers the funding, ensures compliance with the law, and measures and reports on progress. Much of the work on the ground is being delivered by our non-federal partners, including Tribes, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and academia. DOI works closely with these partners to administer efficient and effective BIL initiatives.

Outlined below is a brief discussion of the Department's first year accomplishments, including achievements in implementing each of the BIL's program areas.

DOI's Year One Accomplishments

As the official accountable for implementation of the BIL at DOI, I am committed to ensuring effective, efficient, and equitable implementation of the law across the Department.

Our first accomplishment during the past year was to stand up the organizational infrastructure to implement the BIL. In conjunction with the appointment of DOI's Infrastructure Coordinator, we established a cross-functional team to implement and coordinate this investment. The team consists of career Senior Executives and political appointees across the range of programmatic and administrative functions.

The BIL Program Management Office is charged with overseeing the Department's implementation of the BIL and acting as a liaison with internal and external partners to communicate the Department's progress. We hired over 250 staff across our bureaus and offices to work in our existing and newly created program offices, including STEM (science,

technology, engineering, and math) and mission support personnel and program directors. We also established important stakeholder partnerships to help us implement the law and put dollars where they are needed most. DOI hosted dozens of stakeholder meetings and has formally consulted with Tribes. And we have put in place a public-facing website, found at: <https://www.doi.gov/priorities/investing-americas-infrastructure>. This site provides transparency in our work and information to the public on the actions we are taking and how these critical taxpayer resources are being spent.

In Fiscal Year 2022, DOI announced \$6.4 billion in BIL projects. Specifically with regard to distribution of funds and project implementation, as of this date, DOI has funded nearly 1,000 infrastructure projects and put billions of dollars to work in support of the law. A general description of the work we have accomplished during this first year follows.

Cleaning Legacy Pollution Sites

In the context of the Infrastructure Law at DOI, legacy pollution includes orphan oil and gas wells and abandoned mine lands (AML). Both sources of legacy pollution were created by drilling and mining operations, many of which occurred prior to environmental regulation that required cleanup. Millions of Americans live within a mile of abandoned mines or oil and gas wells, which are estimated to be numbered in the hundreds of thousands.

Orphaned wells occur when an operator fails to plug and remediate an oil and/or gas well and no responsible or capable party can be identified for cleanup activities. Orphaned oil and gas wells can emit methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and other noxious gases, contaminate groundwater, litter the landscape with rusted and dangerous equipment, and harm wildlife, jeopardizing public health and safety.

AML sites occur after coal is mined and lands are left abandoned or inadequately reclaimed. Abandoned mine land sites can consist of open portals and pits, refuse piles, dangerous highwalls, and other features, and often cause water pollution, particularly through acid mine drainage. These sites degrade natural resources, create public health and safety risks, emit greenhouse gases, including methane, and often block other potential productive uses of the land.

Remediating these legacy pollution sites enhances land and water resources that lead to further investments and uses, such as agriculture, wildlife habitat, and economic development

opportunities. Orphan well plugging and AML reclamation also creates jobs, often in rural and Tribal communities, improves our environment, safeguards people and property, and generally revitalizes affected communities.

In response to the authority provided in the BIL, DOI launched a \$4.7 billion program to cap and plug orphaned oil and gas wells across the country. In January 2022, we announced the availability of the first \$1.15 billion in funding for eligible states to create jobs cleaning up orphaned oil and gas wells and reducing methane emissions across the country. In May, we announced \$33 million to be allocated to the cleanup of 277 well sites in national parks, national wildlife refuges, and on other public lands, and \$560 million of phase one funding was allocated in August to 24 states. Critical work funded through the BIL has already begun plugging abandoned wells.

We are also moving forward on AML sites. The BIL reauthorized the existing distributions and provided nearly \$11.3 billion to be allocated evenly over the next 15 years. In February, we announced the availability of nearly \$725 million in Fiscal Year 2022 funding for 22 states and the Navajo Nation to create good-paying jobs and catalyze economic opportunity by reclaiming abandoned coal mining lands. The Department has announced over \$643 million in awards in the last two months for Alabama, Alaska, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Funding will be awarded to additional eligible entities on a rolling basis as they apply.

Investing in Water Infrastructure

Aging and inefficient water infrastructure is a major cause of water supply issues for thousands of communities across our country.

Millions of Americans are impacted by the need for modern infrastructure and to repair deficient infrastructure. This challenge is compounded by the reduced and more variable precipitation, rising temperatures, and drier soils driven by climate change. This is especially apparent in many Tribal communities that lack the appropriate water infrastructure to respond to drought conditions.

The investments made through the BIL for critical water infrastructure, dams, and pipelines will improve water reliability, increase drought resiliency, and ensure that additional water resources will be provided to millions of Americans.

To date DOI has announced the allocation of \$3.3 billion to BIL western water infrastructure programs, of which \$1.3 billion has been allocated to 129 projects to boost water infrastructure and tackle western drought, including funding for rural water systems, dam safety, water recycling and reuse projects and repairs for aging water systems, ensuring clean drinking water for families, farmers, and recreational facilities. DOI is also working hard to uphold our trust responsibility to Tribal communities and to ensure these communities receive the water resources they have long been promised.

In February, we announced \$1.7 billion to support completion of enacted Indian Water Rights Settlements, aimed at funding infrastructure for Tribes to store and transport water to provide access to reliable water supplies. This is helping to deliver long-promised water resources to Tribal communities and a solid foundation for future economic development. And in May, the Department announced more than \$10 million for Tribal water systems repairs and another \$10 million for irrigation projects and power utilities owned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), an important component of addressing climate change impacts and expanding economic opportunity in Indian Country.

Improving Wildland Fire Management

Climate change is creating longer fire seasons and American communities continue to bear the brunt of the resulting cycle of intensifying droughts that lead to more extreme wildfires, poor air quality, and flooding. Wildfires can undercut the many benefits and services that lands managed by DOI, including those held in trust for Tribal nations, provide, such as hunting and fishing, recreational opportunities, foraging, clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, and the protection of cultural resources. Wildfires can also significantly affect public health, threaten drinking water and cause billions of dollars in damages to homes and infrastructure.

The funding provided by BIL bolsters DOI's wildland fire workforce and supports fuels management, the post-wildfire rehabilitation of lands, and wildland fire science and technologies

that improve landscape resiliency, help us better detect and monitor wildfires, and significantly reduce risk to communities and ecosystems.

To date we have allocated \$407 million in BIL funding for the wildland fire workforce, fuels management, post-fire rehabilitation, and wildfire science. Critically, more than 3,800 DOI federal wildland firefighters received special pay supplements in 2022 that will continue through 2023. DOI has allocated \$105 million of the BIL funding to date for these payments and other important investments for the workforce, including improvements in firefighters' training. DOI and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service also established a joint mental health program for firefighters. The Administration is working on a longer-term proposal for reforming firefighters' pay beginning in 2024.

Of this total, DOI has allocated \$257 million in BIL funding to accelerating the pace and scale of fuels management work, which reduces risk through strategic removal of vegetation that is a potential wildfire hazard. BIL and other funding supported completion of fuels management projects on nearly 2 million acres of land, an increase of 18 percent over last year. A portion of this funding is also being used to continue development of a wildfire risk mapping and mitigation tool, which is being developed jointly with USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. In addition, DOI has approved allocations of \$39 million in BIL funds to accelerate the pace and scale of burned area rehabilitation, and \$5 million for fire science research.

We also developed and submitted to Congress the required Five-Year Monitoring, Maintenance, and Treatment Plan that will guide our long-term strategic approach to address wildfire risk, better serve communities, and improve the conditions on lands managed by the Department working in collaboration with other federal, Tribal, state, and local partners. And with USDA and Homeland Security, we established the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission. Composed of federal and non-federal members, the Commission has begun meeting and will make recommendation on how federal agencies can better prevent, mitigate, suppress, and manage wildland fires.

Critical Ecosystem Restoration

Natural ecosystems are threatened by a number of factors, including climate change, wildfires, and invasive species, among others. Critical investments in ecosystem restoration will help to restore and connect core habitats and improve climate resilience. Restoration work benefits the environment and creates jobs and has an economic ripple effect as jobs are created in the tourism, outdoor recreation, and commercial fishing sectors, as well as other sectors that depend on plants, animals, and healthy landscapes. The \$1.4 billion in ecosystem restoration and resilience funding in the BIL will enable the Biden-Harris Administration to deliver those benefits across the nation.

Earlier this year DOI, USDA, and the Department of Defense jointly announced a \$1 billion America the Beautiful Challenge that will combine federal funding, including \$375 million in funding provided to DOI through the BIL, along with other federal conservation programs and private sources. The intention is to invest in projects that advance collaborative conservation, use the best available science, innovative practices, and Indigenous Knowledge to help conserve and protect lands and waters. This one-stop-shop solicitation streamlines the grant application process and facilitates the coordination of funding for projects across landscapes, watersheds, and seascapes to achieve larger and more durable benefits on the ground.

Along with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the agencies announced over \$91 million in America the Beautiful Challenge grants for projects in 42 states, and 3 U.S. territories this year. These grants support projects that conserve, restore, and connect habitats for wildlife while improving community resilience and access to nature. This will create jobs, strengthen our economy, address equitable access to the outdoors, and help tackle the climate crisis.

It is worth noting that the request for proposals received an unprecedented response, with applicants submitting 527 proposals requesting a total of \$1.1 billion. The grant slate announced addresses about 10 percent of this overall level of demand, illustrating how much impactful conservation work is ready and waiting for investments like these.

DOI has announced an additional \$115 million for locally led projects to restore rivers and streams and protect aquatic habitat, conserve strategic sagebrush areas and increase outdoor recreation access.

The Department is proud to be working to remove 100 barriers for fish passage and reopen 5,015 stream miles through this year's investments in the National Fish Passage program. This program, which is facilitated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has decades of proven experience providing financial, technical, and planning assistance to our partners to improve the health of our waterways, reconnect rivers, improve climate resilience, and enhance local economies.

Minerals Science and Mapping Efforts

While the United States contains abundant earth and mineral resources, we do not yet have a comprehensive inventory of these critical resources, which are necessary to power everything from household appliances and electronics to clean energy technology, like batteries and wind turbines. A lack of geological, geophysical, and topographic data hampers exploration for many of these minerals. Mapping and making geologic and geophysical data accessible to all can enhance interpretation of our mineral resources and deliver information to decision makers which can strengthen national security and create private sector jobs.

In June, DOI announced substantial investments in the U.S. Geological Survey's Earth Mapping Resources Initiative, including over \$74 million distributed in 30 states to invest in geoscience data collection, mapping, data preservation, and scientific interpretation of areas with potential for critical minerals. Funding for this effort included \$64 million from the BIL. These investments will help us improve understanding of critical mineral resources throughout the nation, a key step in securing a reliable and sustainable supply of these important resources.

Tribal Climate Resilience

The U.S. Global Change Research Program and the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicate that we will experience more intense and frequent precipitation for shorter periods of the winter, longer and warmer growing seasons accompanied by drought, and earlier snowmelt in higher elevations causing flooding.

Given the increasing impacts of climate change, it is critical to focus on building more resilient communities. Tribal communities are on the front lines of climate change impacts, including from the loss of key cultural species and lands loss due to erosion, flooding, and thawing

permafrost. Funding provided in the BIL provides critical resources for Tribes to plan for and mitigate the impacts on climate change.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides a total of \$466 million to the BIA over five years, including \$216 million for climate resilience programs. Of that funding, \$130 million is provided for community relocation and \$86 million is provided for Tribal climate resilience and adaptation projects.

In early November, DOI announced \$45 million - \$20 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law - to build climate resilience in Tribal communities. These projects will support Tribes and Tribal organizations in adaptation planning, climate implementation actions, ocean and coastal management planning, capacity building, relocation, managed retreat, and protect-in-place planning for climate risks.

And just two weeks ago, President Biden announced a new Voluntary Community-Driven Relocation program, led by DOI, to assist Tribal communities severely impacted by climate-related environmental threats. Through investments from the BIL and from the Inflation Reduction Act, the Department committed \$115 million for 11 severely impacted Tribes to advance relocation efforts and adaptation planning. Additional support for relocation will be provided by the Federal Emergency Management Administration and the Denali Commission, to total \$135 million. These projects will yield critical information to inform replication in other communities and initiate a long-term strategy for future relocation and climate resilience efforts.

Looking Ahead

DOI hit the ground running when it came to BIL implementation, and we aim to keep up that pace as we continue forward. Already in FY 2023 we have announced \$43 million for BIL projects across the country within the first month of the fiscal year. As new projects and funding opportunities are announced, we will continue our oversight responsibilities to ensure the American people receive efficient implementation and tangible results from this historic investment.

We will continue our productive partnerships with our federal, state, Tribal and non-governmental organization partners to implement the law, in addition to continuing to engage with Congress. We intend to ensure continued efficient implementation by continuing to build

and fine-tune our organizational infrastructure with 600 more skilled staff. We will continue to develop and implement strategies that enable us to focus on Administration and Departmental priorities, including environmental justice and Justice40, increased domestic sourcing, and focus on climate resilience. And we will continue on-the-ground execution of our eight key BIL programs.

Conclusion

The BIL provided a historic investment in our nation and the Department of the Interior and its assets are a significant part of that investment. We have a responsibility to implement the law efficiently and effectively, and we look forward to continuing to implement this landmark legislation to improve our infrastructure, environment, and economy for the American people. Our mission to protect America's great outdoors and power our future has been strengthened by this law and we are honored to be part of the federal family overseeing its implementation.

Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, and Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.