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February 23, 2018

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is moving forward with major plans to reorganize his department, which includes agencies such as the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Geological Survey. The reorganization plan could potentially affect tens of thousands of federal government employees who may be required to relocate.

Each of the nine agencies within the Department of the Interior (DOI) currently operate under separate and unique regional structures. The Secretary's proposal would change this management structure by establishing unified regional boundaries for all Interior bureaus in an effort to reduce administrative redundancy, shift resources to the field, and improve interagency coordination. According to the DOI's Reorganization Q&A webpage, they are still evaluating options and may decide to treat the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement differently, since those agencies are mainly concerned with offshore areas.

Secretary Zinke first laid out details of his widely-anticipated reorganization plan in a two-day meeting with senior officials on January 14 and 15. He later defended the proposal during a town hall meeting for all DOI employees on February 1, explaining that the plan will not cut jobs or bureaus but will improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of DOI and help streamline its mission. Additional details of the reorganization were provided in the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Budget Request released on February 12, which included \$18 million to help initiate the Department's internal reorganization plan. The initial proposal included a new organizational map (dated January 3, 2018) that defined 13 common regions based on geographic basins and watersheds, rather than state boundaries. The plan would designate regional directors to serve two-year terms, with the position rotating between the different Interior bureaus. State directors and field managers from all bureaus inside a given region would be required to report to the regional director.

Following push-back from numerous Western state governors and members of Congress from both parties, the Secretary revealed in an interview with the Associated Press on February 23 that he is revising his original plan to better incorporate their stakeholder feedback. The redrawn map (as of February 15, 2018) still divides the Interior into 13 regions, but avoids splitting up states like Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah into multiple regions.

Sources: Associated Press, E&E News, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington Post
