

Appropriations update for May 2013

The Senate Committee on Appropriations held subcommittee hearings on the President's fiscal year (FY) 2014 budget requests for the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Department of Energy (DOE).

Department of the Interior:

The May 7, 2013 hearing before the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies discussed the FY 2014 budget request for DOI of \$10.9 billion, which represents an increase of nearly four percent from FY 2013 and \$513 million from FY 2012 enacted levels. Additional requests include \$48 million for BLM's onshore oil and gas inspection program; \$946 million for basic and applied science, such as research on White Nose Syndrome in bats and improving the use of GIS mapping; and \$600 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Part of the LWCF is proposed to switch to mandatory rather than discretionary funds. Total offshore oil program funding would increase by nine percent under the FY 2014 proposed budget.

Senators questioned Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell on the White Nose Syndrome in bats, Arctic-specific offshore oil and gas drilling regulations, DOI's impending hydraulic fracturing rule, streamlining oil and gas permitting on public lands, the No Child Left Inside movement, the maturing DOI workforce, and the projected approval of an offshore wind lease in Rhode Island. Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) discussed proposed royalty and abandoned hard rock mine reclamation reforms to the General Mining Law of 1872 as well as the application of sequestration cuts to revenues that states receive under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920. DOI officials noted that the Budget Control Act (P.L. 112-25) indicates mineral revenues are subject to sequestration.

Department of Energy:

The May 15, 2013 Subcommittee on Energy and Water hearing outlined the DOE budget request for FY 2014 of \$28.4 billion, a five percent increase of \$1.4 billion over FY 2013 and \$2.1 million over FY 2012 enacted levels.

The budget proposes increases for the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) of 55 percent or \$995 million, and the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) of 43 percent or \$114 million, which would fund an additional 100 projects. The Office of Fossil Energy budget has a proposed 21 percent or \$113 million reduction due, in part, to the decrease in carbon storage activities.

Senators questioned Acting Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman about proposals to sell the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), funds for plutonium waste clean up at Los Alamos National Lab, and the lack of information available regarding the cost, schedule, and scope baseline for the Institute of Electronics and Telecommunications of Rennes (IETR), especially given delays in construction of the high cost facility.
