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On December 15, 2018, President Donald Trump announced that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke would be stepping down at the end of the year. During his time as secretary, Zinke faced a string of investigations over allegations that he violated ethics rules, while the Department of the Interior has been under scrutiny over concerns about scientific integrity.

Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt will be taking charge as acting secretary amid a partial government shutdown that is impacting Interior operations ranging from national parks to the administration's regulatory agenda. According to the Interior Department's contingency plan for a potential lapse in appropriations, furloughs were to send home about 76 percent of roughly 2,800 employees at the Office of the Secretary alone.

Bernhardt has been the point person on major Interior initiatives such as changes to the Endangered Species Act and efforts to start drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Although President Trump said he would announce a new secretary by the end of the month, he has yet to name a nominee for Zinke's successor.

Sources: E&E News; Department of the Interior; The Hill.
